
COVID-19: ANALYSES AND FORECASTS

THE CHANGING DYNAMICS OF LIBERAL INTERNATIONAL ORDER: COVID-19 AND ITS GLOBAL IMPLICATIONS

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The abrupt outburst of novel Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) disrupts the global political, economic and social fabric, exposed the under-prepared global health system, interrupted the global economy, and global supply chains. The identification of virus and subsequent handling revealed the inherent inability of the liberal international order, its proclaimed liberal values and illiberal behavior, inability to reform institutional structure to accommodate a diverse pool of emerging powers and the tensions between its defenders and its challengers. These enduring problems are fully exposed during the pandemic era and require a reconfiguration in the post pandemic world. So, the paper sets its objective to investigate the impact of coronavirus on operations of liberal international order, and post-virus scenario. It addresses the following key questions: (a) To what extent liberalism and globalization facilitate the spread of infectious diseases and what are the consequences of pandemic for the stability of the system? (b) How has the pandemic changed the dynamics of current order and how it facilitates the challengers such as China? It is argued that liberal adherence to individual freedoms, market economy, and free flow of cross border movement is a source of prosperity for states and individuals; simultaneously the social behavior of individuals and states operating under the liberal system help pandemics to flourish. The crisscrossing of individuals with least restrictions put global health at greater risk, thereby increasing the demand for authoritarianism, propelled nationalism, protectionism and intensified the competition between the major powers. It is projected that the post-pandemic era will witness the greater transformation in the liberal international order. The Chinese authoritative approach to contain virus at home received greater applause, thus helping Beijing to extend its networks and expand space for its model. The mask and vaccine diplomacy by the PRC is a major challenge to the US-led liberal international order thereby reducing the US hegemonic capability and increasing Beijing's soft power projection.

Keywords: *globalization revisiting, COVID-19, liberal international system, pandemic, protectionism, China's rise.*

Introduction

The Novel Coronavirus, (COVID-19), was first reported in the city of Wuhan, China in December 2019. The occurrence triggered a public health emergency as authorities were unaware of the nature and magnitude of the virus. The Chinese government di-

rected mammoth human and financial capital; still the identification of zero patient is mysterious. The *South China Morning Post* revealed that the first case of coronavirus was reported on November 17, 2019, but the scientists were not yet confirmed about the pathogen (Ma 2020). The whistle-blowers working in the Chinese medical community claimed that only by late December Chinese doctors realized that they were dealing with a new type of virus which is similar to pneumonia, but with severe consequences for human health. Although the initial reporting was slow, yet by the end of 2019 China identified 266 individuals infected with the new virus. Once China realized that the virus is novel in its nature and has capacity to transmit from human to human, on 31st December, 2019 Beijing reported the World Health Organization (WHO) about the severity of virus. The WHO issued first guidance on coronavirus on 10th January, 2020 urging the governments around the globe to speed up efforts to contain the spread of virus, but the inability and slow response of states helped the virus to spread and WHO to declare coronavirus a global public health emergency on 11th March, 2020.

The US sponsored liberal international order received the overwhelmed appreciation from states and individuals for its defense of civil liberties, market economy, multilateral institutions and democratic values. A large group of intellectuals agree that unprecedented peace and prosperity has been produced by this order, and the US leadership is deemed necessary. It is the USA that has paid abundant costs to uphold the order, but has also benefited substantially (Gourevitch 2018). The foundations of current liberal order rests upon three core values: (i) the liberal ideology that emphasizes the democratic values and norms along with market economy and open trade; (ii) the principle of multilateralism, which underlines that international cooperation and management of international affairs can only possible through the multilateral institutions; (iii) it developed a group of states based on converged values and norms to promote common good, democratic values, peace, security and economic prosperity around the globe (Huang 2021). The defenders of order argue that open markets, economic interdependence, and international institutions help states to resolve disputes peacefully and improve the wellbeing of states and individuals (Arreguin-Toft 2017). The political, economic, social and cultural interdependence not only limits the chances of war and violence, but also promotes peace and harmonious society globally (Jorgensen 2018). The integrated economy harvests the enormous benefits for multinational corporations (MNCs) to invest in foreign countries, expand the production and consumer base and increase the functions of global supply chains. Globalization deepened the interdependence among states and individuals and turned the world into a global village through easy access to money, technology, travel, and culture (Doyle 1996). Meanwhile, liberalism and globalization becomes the true carrier of epidemics such as SARS, Ebola, HIV-AIDs, N1H1 flu, and now COVID-19.

Coronavirus has become one of the greatest challenges to the liberal order. A pandemic is not confined by the state boundaries and COVID-19 has tested the ability of international cooperation (Kliem 2021). It is not the globalization of trade, rather it is a globalization of the viruses and epidemics exposing the weakness and fragility of the system itself (Abbas 2020). The devastation by the pandemic requires collective action, but reality looks other way around. The USA and China have failed to provide the global leadership which produced huge economic and human loss to global community. The United Nations (UN) and World Health Organization (WHO) have played at best, but the restrained response has exposed the bitter truth of failed multilateralism and control of member states. Even the European Union (EU) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) appeared less effective owing to the outbreak of nationalism and

knee-jerk reactions. In this context of authoritarianism, hyper-nationalism and failed multilateralism, it is projected that the post-COVID-19 world will witness the sweeping changes in international system and will bring mammoth implications for the American hegemony and the system itself. The paper proceeds to explain its argument in the following sequence. The next section illuminates the liberal ideology and its potential contribution in the proliferation of coronavirus, followed by the socio-economic impacts of the virus. The third section unpacks the global hostility and harmony in the age of the virus and challenges to the global cooperation. The ensuing section illuminates the impacts of COVID-19 for liberal international order, followed by the conclusion.

Liberalism and Proliferation of COVID-19

The outbreak of virus in Wuhan, China sickened billion of individuals (at the time of writing) in 215 countries. More than 1.5 million humans lost their life and numbers are going on. The World Health Organization (WHO) declared the situation a pandemic and urged the global community to put in place best practices to contain the virus (Taylor 2020). Though, vaccine has been developed and peoples are getting vaccinated, yet virus is still spreading devastation and disrupting the global political, economic and social life. Since December 2019, the Chinese government, vigilantly monitoring the situation and containing it to turn into something more severe, nonetheless has stopped it to transform into a pandemic and the true facilitator is the liberal international order.

The liberal tradition in international relations is closely connected with the development of modern liberal state. The tradition highlights four imperatives for cooperation: interdependence, trans-nationalization, the growth of international institutions and democratic values (Doyle 2011). Liberal intellectuals saw great potential for human progress in the modern civil society and the capitalist economy. The thought is closely associated with personal freedom, transparent society, democratic political system, private ownership, economic openness, and multilateral institutions (Sorensen 2013). The proponents argue that expansion of trade and technology not only increases the dependence of states, but also transformed the interaction patterns of individuals, groups, and organizations. The idea of complex interdependence developed by Robert Keohane and Joseph S. Nye radically transformed the traditional state to state relations. Now, there is a host of transnational relations between individuals and groups outside of the state. The international relations became more like domestic politics having significant space for non-state actors (Sorensen 2013).

The global political, economic, and social structure has largely been transformed through the speedy expansion of liberalism and globalization. The states and individuals are free to conduct trade and economic transactions, travel, and interact across the borders. Simultaneously, the cross-border free flow encourages and supports the rapid expansion of pandemics and viral diseases (Norrlöf 2020). The same is the case of coronavirus. The democratic states in Europe and the USA absurdly underestimated the magnitude of virus and allowed their societies and businesses to function. Yet, by mid-January 2020, virus-infected cases were started to emerge in South Korea, Thailand, Japan, and the USA. Trump's administration imposed the travel ban on foreigners who had traveled to China in the past fourteen days, but the decision was too late as the virus had already been penetrated deep into the state.

The liberal democracies in Europe confronted the first major outbreak of the coronavirus as an eruption of more than 150 cases in Italy. The discovery of coronavirus in Italy alarmed other European states as the free flow of individuals could help the virus

to expand. The Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte suspended all inbound and outbound China flights and implemented a six-month state of emergency, making him the first European leader to implement such bold steps. After a rapid increase in positive cases, Italy replaced China as the most affected country in 2020. France, Germany, Spain, and the UK followed Italy in coronavirus reported cases. The deadly spread of virus not only irked the governments, meanwhile it has mounted anxiety and fear in the general public. The public in the European states and the USA urged the governments to intervene and control the deteriorated situation (The Guardian 2020).

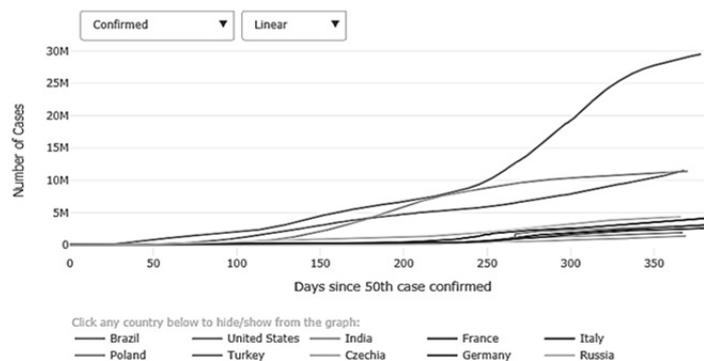


Fig. 1. Cumulative Cases by Days after the 50th Confirmed Case

Source: Johns Hopkins University, Coronavirus Resource Center

The coronavirus seriously injured the social and economic structure in Europe, the USA and elsewhere, exposed the vulnerability of unprepared health care systems. The freedom of movement and open society facilitated the proliferation. The governments adhere to private freedom, so initially they were reluctant to impose any kind of restrictions, which deliberately helped the virus to penetrate deep into the society and state (Hu 2020). The containment of virus in Wuhan bought some time for the West to trace and curb the virus, but the fear of political backlash discouraged the governments to impose a complete lockdown and curtail for granted democratic rights. So, the initial handcuffed response and lack of testing kits have helped the virus to spread across the Western hemisphere and the USA. The uncontrolled spread has exposed that the liberal order and freedom of movement are the real carriers of virus. The unrestricted movement across the borders and lack of a predetermined plan had played a significant role in virus proliferation.

Socio-Economic Impacts

The outbreak of coronavirus is more than a nightmare for global community. It not only jeopardize human life but also disrupted the social and economic order. At first, the absence of any credible vaccination persuaded states to put in place a stringent lockdown, completely halting the social and economic life and disrupting the global supply chain. The coronavirus ravaged the globe and hit all the major financial capitals, the common man understood that the capitalist ideology and liberalism have failed to rescue on this critical occasion and capitalism is an anathema to the world humanity (Naureen 2020). The activities of production industries, supply chains, and financial markets were sus-

pending, resulting in billions of dollars of loss to global economy and massive unemployment.

The rapid spread of coronavirus had dramatic impacts on financial markets all over the world. The unprecedented level of risk caused investors to suffer significant losses in minimum time. The OECD revised its estimates in early March 2020 and forecasted global economy to contract by 2.4 per cent for the whole year as compared to 2.9 per cent in 2019. The Chinese economy contracted by 6.8 per cent in the first quarter of 2020, during which some 460,000 Chinese firms closed (Campbell 2020). By March, China's services and manufacturing sector experienced record lows, its automobile sales records an eighty-percent decline, and exports shrank by some 17 per cent in January and February combined (Zamurrad 2020). The data released on March 16, 2020 indicated that five million peoples lost their jobs in just two months. The data also exposed the downfall in industrial output by 13.5 per cent due to a slow demand in consumption and stringent lockdown policy (Fernandes 2020). The Asian output is also projected to lose \$2.1 trillion, and about 23 million individual lost their jobs in 2020. The global supply chains and services sector are worst affected by the pandemic. Ports, airports, train stations, tourist places, hotels, cinemas, markets, and public transport are suspending their operations causing the biggest hole to global economy. The global supply chains halted their operations and workers were laid off due to increasing financial load. The US Institute for Supply Management informed that 75 per cent of companies reported disruptions in their supply chains. The global trade fell in every region and the WTO predicted the global trade to fall up to 32 per cent in 2020 (Fernandes 2020).

In March 2020, the US stock market hit the circuit breaker mechanism four times in ten days. Since its birth in 1987, the breaker was only once turned down in 1997. Together with the US market crash, the financial markets in Europe and Asia also plunged. On March 12, 2020, the FTSE, the UK's main index, dropped by more than 10 per cent (Ji 2020). The Japanese stock market plunged by more than 20 per cent from its highest position in December 2019. Central banks and authorities introduced emergency policy instruments into the market. For instance, on 15th March, the Federal Reserve (FED) announced a zero-percent interest rate policy and at least a \$700 billion quantitative easing program. The European Union also responded with an emergency relief program and introduced a package of 540 billion euros to support the member states. The package tends to support workers, businesses, and the EU member countries.

More than 30 million Americans filed for unemployment insurance in the period from mid-March to late-April 2020, raising the prospect of a deep economic stagnation and a substantial upsurge in the unemployment rate. Preliminary data for the first quarter of 2020 exposed that the US GDP fell by 4.8 per cent at an annual rate. An estimated \$26 billion foreign investment has been pulled out from developing Asian economies and more than \$16 billion out of India, increasing concerns of a major economic recession in Asia. It is also estimated that some 29 million people in Latin America could fall into poverty, reversing a decade of efforts to narrow income inequality. More than 30 million Europeans in Germany, the UK, France, Italy, and Spain have applied for state support of their wages, while the Eurozone economy contracted by 3.8 per cent at an annual rate. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) projected that government spending and revenue measures to sustain economic activity adopted through mid-April 2020 amounted to \$3.3 trillion and that the loans, equity injections, and guarantees totaled an additional \$4.5 trillion. As a result, the IMF predicted that global borrowing will rise from 3.7 per cent of global GDP in 2019 to 9.9 per cent in 2020 (Jackson *et al.* N.d.).

The outbreak of pandemic largely affects global trade and GDP. The global GDP and trade sharply declined in the first half of 2020. The estimates indicate the virus could trim the global economy by 2.0 per cent per month if current conditions prevail (Jackson *et al.* N.d.). The global trade could also fall by 13 per cent to 32 per cent on the depth and extent of the global economic downturn. The pandemic is affecting a broad swath of international economic and trade activities: from tourism and hospitality, medical supplies and other global value chains, consumer electronics, and financial markets to energy, food, transportation, and other social activities. The weaker social and health system in developing countries could have far-reaching negative impacts on economic and trade activities.

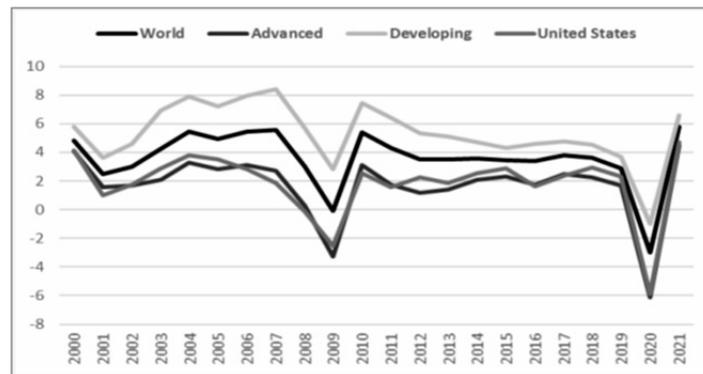


Fig. 2. Gross Domestic Product, Percent Change

Source: *World Economic Outlook*, International Monetary Fund, April 14, 2020 (IMF 2020).

Note: Data for 2020 and 2021 are estimates.

The World Bank termed the decline in global economic activity as ‘Great Lock-down.’ The Fund concluded that the world economy would experience its ‘worst recession since the Great Depression, surpassing that seen during the global financial crisis a decade ago’ (IMF 2020). Furthermore, the IMF projected that the world economy would shrink by 3 per cent in 2020, before growing up by 5.8 per cent in 2021; global trade is estimated to trim in 2020 by 11 per cent and oil prices are recorded to decline by 42 per cent. The economic activity in the OECD block is projected to contract by 7.8 per cent in 2020, with the US economy decline by 5.9 per cent. The developing economies will face negative impacts of pandemic and would shrink by 2 per cent. The greater uncertainty in magnitude and length sparked the anxiety in global corporate decision making, shaved off millions of jobs, sinking billions of dollars, and increased unprecedented burden on already crumbling global financial system.

COVID-19 and Global Harmony versus Hostility

The rapid proliferation of coronavirus is indiscriminately consuming human lives and devastating the social and economic order of the globe. Its advent ignited a new geopolitics. The US and its allies accused China of instigating and spreading the virus. The two powers are locked into an intense trade war after Donald Trump's presidency, and this animosity is expected to deepen in the post-COVID world. Since 2017, China has been treated as a ‘long-term strategic competitor’ in the US official documents, and disputes over trade policy and trade balances often feature in the President Trump's state-

ments (Perthes 2020). The USA views China as a serious strategic threat to its global dominance and competing Beijing in the military, economic, political, and technological domain. The skeptics argue that China can acquire ‘dominant global political, economic and technological influence, set rules and standards across the board, and establish a kind of illiberal sphere of influence’ (Rudolf 2020).

The spectacular economic growth in the last three decades has enabled China to quadruple its national wealth, expand the manufacturing and trade sector; it also allows China to invest the accrued profit in the military modernization. This has encouraged China to establish regional hegemony in Asia where it is establishing new alliances and strategic partnerships with countries such as Pakistan, Vietnam, Sri Lanka and Nepal (Lika 2020). Beijing has established a new multilateral institution – the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and also launched the most ambitious project of the twenty-first century – the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) – to redirect the America-led international order (French 2020). It also leads the Shanghai Cooperation Organization to promote peace, trade, economic cooperation and eradicate terrorism. So, the immediate task for the USA is to reinvigorate the lost American prestige and to limit the Chinese influence in regional and global politics. The Sino-American relations went under tremendous alteration over a couple of issues. Washington accuses China of the unfair trade policies, stealing the US technologies, artificial island development in the South China Sea, punitive laws in Hong Kong, and of inhumane treatment in the Xinjiang region.

The war of words between American and Chinese officials is furious amidst the coronavirus pandemic. The former President Donald Trump at a media briefing claimed that the virus had originated in a Chinese lab and labeled it as ‘China virus’ (Al Jazeera 2020). The remarks of the American President exposed that the United States view rising China as the biggest threat to its hegemony and liberal international order. President Trump's remarks not only exposed his racist mindset but also reported that his xenophobia might have negative implications for the coronavirus fight. The US President criticized China for covering up the outbreak and accused the WHO of failing to hold Beijing to account. He said that the WHO ‘gave us a lot of very bad advice, terrible advice and were wrong so much and always on the side of China’ (BBC News 2020). The President suspended the funding for world health agency for not being capable to develop an early warning system for the pandemic, and accused the WHO for mismanagement. The USA is providing nearly \$500 million to the organization per year and expects a fast, adequate and transparent role, said the President.

Although the USA and China are involved in an acrimonious relationship, yet both states are leading the coronavirus fight around the globe. China successfully confined the virus at home and extended its firm support to the world community. Beijing sent its paramedics to treat the infected individuals and provided generous economic and medical support to many countries. Pakistan being China's time-tested and all-weather friend received the most generous support. Pakistan's National Disaster Management Commission stated that China provided 80 per cent of the total anti-pandemic assistance Pakistan received from the world (The News International 2020). The Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson stated at a media briefing that China assisted over 130 countries and international organizations to fight the coronavirus pandemic. The assistance included medicines and equipment, testing kits, ventilators, face masks, surgical gloves, protective kits, and disinfectants (CGTN 2020). On the other hand, the USA also bolstered its efforts to help the most vulnerable nations. Washington mobilized all the necessary resources to respond rapidly as a part of its comprehensive and generous response. The State De-

partment and USAID provided an initial investment of around \$274 million in emergency health and humanitarian assistance to help the countries in need (USAID 2020).

The pandemic requires a unified action from the world leaders. The virtual meeting of world health assembly, the WHO's decision-making body, was held on 18–19 May 2020. During the two-day session, a proposal was put forward to investigate the handling of coronavirus, lessons learned, and implications for the global health system. The WHO approved to hold an impartial and transparent inquiry to probe the handling of the pandemic in the fastest timeframe. The resolution for an enquiry was endorsed by the global leadership demonstrated that the leaders are looking for a sustained and collaborative response. Yet, the war of words between the USA and China slows down the progress in containing and curing the virus. The geopolitical competition between the two giants seriously hampers the multilateral cooperation and effectiveness of the global institutions. President Trump wanted to secure victory in the upcoming elections, so he was hitting hard China for proliferating the virus. On the other side, China also flexed its muscles and demonstrated its power and will to act effectively in the global politics. The Chinese leadership strongly resisted the US call to grant Taiwan the observer status in the WHO claiming that the territory is a part of mainland China. The rivalry between the two major powers has far-reaching implications for the post-COVID stability and peace in the world.

The Impact of Coronavirus on Liberal International Order

The liberal international order is under serious scrutiny after the rapid proliferation of coronavirus. The associated variables of social and economic interdependence which are celebrated for peace and prosperity have helped the virus to cross the borders of states and to devastate the economic and social order of the globe. The proliferation of virus exposed that the complex interdependence among the states and societies can ruin the social and economic structure of the globe. It is the liberal international system and democratic institutions in the Western hemisphere which refrain states to take timely and decisive measures to contain the deadly virus, ultimately giving it chance to proliferate in the society and risk the lives of individuals.

COVID-19 is a serious blow to the liberal international order. The pandemic exposes the inherent instabilities and enduring weaknesses with open societies connected through an open international system. The pandemic is threatening the liberal international system in the three inter-related ways. First, the open societies embedded with free cross border movement of peoples, services, goods, and assets have emboldened the virulent effects of the deadly disease. Since January 2020, the global number of infections has increased precipitously and crashed the stock markets (Norrlof 2020). Despite the WHO initial warnings about the spread of virus, states allowed their manufacturing, trade, tourism, international air travel, services, and other sectors to function. Second, the imposition of quarantine and lockdown seriously undermined the political freedoms. The unprecedented actions to contain the virus and closure of borders for non-nationals and non-residents are against the true nature of liberal international order. The number of racist accidents has also increased in Western democracies as the virus was associated with China. Third, the economic stagnation has emboldened the nationalist sentiments in democratic societies. The contraction in economic output, international trade, and rising unemployment increased the room for far-right groups to consolidate their power. Stephen M. Walt, a prominent American international relations expert argues that the post-pandemic world will witness a more powerful state and a reinforced nationalism (Kose 2020). Govern-

ments of all types adopted the emergency measures to manage the crisis and suspended some social and political freedoms. All these actions are against the true spirit of liberal international order. When crisis is over, the powers conferred to state authorities will further relinquish and a shift in power will also accelerate from West to East.

Is Nationalism Replacing Globalism?

The disintegration of the Soviet Union ended the Cold War among the two superpowers, thereby making the USA a dominant power. The triumph of democracy triggered a new debate in international relations that democracy and economic liberalism is the only viable system for states to adopt and nationalism has no room in contemporary society. Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye argued that economic and social interaction gave birth to complex interdependence (Elkins 2004). Earlier, international relations were directed by state leaders dealing with other states. But under conditions of complex interdependence, that is no longer the case. Now the international relations involve states, different government agencies, individuals, and other non-state actors of many different levels. So this complex interdependence has raised the prospects of a new start for international relations, which is called globalization.

Once the ideological rivalry ended, the USA accelerated the efforts to expand the sphere of liberal international order. The enhanced interaction in the global economic, trade, social, and cultural spheres transcends the boundaries of states which have significant political implications. The collapse of the American stock market, the 9/11 bombing, and the Arab Spring movement in the Middle East all have significant economic, political, and security implications for the rest of the world (Kauppi 2013). States and peoples around the globe often get information about emerging events through the advances in digital and social media technology. Globalization disregards the state boundaries and makes economic self-sufficiency virtually impossible. The significant activities of multinational corporations, non-governmental organizations, and other pressure groups have increased the threat to the state monopoly, which consequently threatens the very idea of state sovereignty. States started losing control over individuals, markets, and other non-governmental institutions (Obstfeld 2019). There are some instances when terrorist groups like ISIS and Al-Qaeda (terrorist organizations forbidden in Russia) set the parallel states and challenged the state authority.

Globalization also facilitated the individuals to cross over state borders through the least restrictions on visa and international travel. To reap the fruits of an integrated economy and open market, states around the globe opened their societies for international travelers and traders. The free movement of individuals' advances social and cultural values, increased the cooperation in trade, medical, technology, and tourism. Meanwhile, the developing states and minority groups experienced the explicit threat to their cultural values and economies. The strong states received preferential treatment from multilateral financial institutions, and exported democracy and their cultural values to non-Western states. This process of globalization further enlarged the inequality between the developed and developing worlds. Globalization actually facilitated the individuals to move without restrictions and increased the vulnerability of states to pandemics. For instance, the spread of Swine Flu, Ebola, HIV-AIDs, SARS, and now COVID-19 are facilitated through the open state borders (WorldAware 2019). Initially, the pathogen of COVID-19 discovered in the Chinese city of Wuhan, but in a rapidly interconnected world, it found new niches in a matter of months.

Economic and social liberalism received a widespread recognition and transformed international relations. The increased activities of manufacturing firms and cross border trade generated prosperity and persuaded states to further open their economy and society. The accelerated globalization dragged states into a competition to win the markets and natural resources to sustain their development and prosperity. Globalization of economic shocks and conflicts also increased the mass migration which threatens indigenous societies. So, 'over the past years, nationalism is rising everywhere and in everything. From the election of Donald Trump to Brexit, the nationalist policies of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi and the Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the success of far-right parties in Italian, German and Austrian elections in 2017, and 2018, nationalism appears to be on the rise globally' (Bieber 2018).

The surge of nationalism is directly connected with globalization, economic integration, trade, and media. The nationalism gave birth to the far-right policy aimed at protecting domestic societies from the scourge of globalization (Abdulsattar 2013). The far-right leaders accuse globalization of plundering economy and class conflicts. For them, the spread of globalization spoiled their cultural identity and eroded the economic prosperity through unequal trade balance and importing millions of migrants from the rest of the world. Europe and the USA experienced a major surge of nationalism. 'America First' slogan won the US national election for Donald Trump. The nationalist parties in Europe also succeeded to make coalitions with governments and India is ruled by an ultranationalist Hindu ruler Narendra Modi (Obstfeld 2019).

The proliferation of COVID-19 will significantly alter the globalization process. The voices for border controls and enlarged role of the state in public affairs are in demand in many states. Incidents of racial discrimination have been reported in many European states, the US, and India. In the USA racial discrimination and racism have been reported against the individuals of Chinese origin or those who are assumed to be Chinese (Rachman 2020). The proliferation of virus proved that market forces are not capable enough to support peoples; rather they increase the risk to human life. Prominent International Relations expert, Kenneth Waltz argued that 'we will see a further retreat from hyper-globalization, as citizens look to national governments to protect them and as states and firms seek to reduce future vulnerabilities' (Foreign Policy 2020). In short, the post-COVID-19 world will be less open, less interconnected, and less free. Robbin Niblett stated that it seems highly unlikely in this context that the world will return to the idea of mutually beneficial globalization that defined the early twenty-first century. The most devastating impact of coronavirus will be the resurgence of state control in the social and economic domain. Though the many restrictions on travel will be lifted, a full restoration of a globalized world would be difficult. More nationalist voices and closed borders will be an emerging phenomenon in the post coronavirus world.

COVID-19 and Future of Liberal International Order

The abrupt contagion of coronavirus has exposed the inherent inability of the post-war liberal international order led by the USA. The variables of the welfare state, individual freedoms, and integrated economy are at the stake due to draconian lockdowns put in place to contain the virus. The coronavirus is not just an infectious disease rather it is an imminent risk in the sense that it will have far-reaching impacts on the system itself.

At first, nationalism and authoritarianism recaptured the lost ground in many European states and elsewhere to contain the virus and it proved successful. The states indiscriminately closed their borders, enacted the new emergency laws, suspended the per-

sonal freedoms, and increased the sweeping powers of the state. The German Interior Minister termed the coronavirus as a matter of national security rather than a health crisis. A truck was stopped at the German-Swiss border containing critical medical equipment when the German Chancellor imposed an immediate ban on protective medical equipment. The French President Emmanuel Macron stated that ‘we are at war against the virus’ (Vogel 2020). President Trump also approved the repatriation of illegal migrants from Mexico and other places to keep safe the USA. The pandemic has allowed unprecedented restrictions on the civil liberties and freedoms across the world irrespective of democratic and authoritarian regimes. ‘Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban has used the crisis to increase the extent of his political control by sidelining parliament and ruling by decree’ (Hall 2020).

The lukewarm response of democratic states to contain the virus exposed the weakness of democratic system. Power-sharing is the essence of democratic system, where numerous government bodies are competing to maximize organizational interests rather than a uniform national interest. So, the game of power politics revealed the inability of democratic system to manage the pandemics like coronavirus. Italy, the USA, Spain, and even the United Kingdom are the worst examples of democratic failure. On the other side, the authoritarian Chinese model proved successful in the containment of pandemic and received a widespread recognition (Doshi 2020). Once the Chinese government recognized the magnitude of the virus, it abruptly locked down the entire cities and even caged millions of individuals, which is not possible in democracies. The Chinese virus management has amplified the legitimacy of an authoritarian system and the voices have been raised in various states to follow the Chinese model. Thus, the major blow to liberal international order will be the rise of authoritarianism and nationalism across the globe. States are prioritizing the lives of their nationals rather than material benefits and democratic values (Bieber 2020).

Second, the pandemic revealed that capitalism and globalization are unable to cope with such a crisis. It demonstrated the support for anti-globalization and protectionism. Joseph Stiglitz, a prominent economist wrote an essay, ‘*The End of Neo-liberalism and the Rebirth of History*’ in which he criticized neoliberalism’s faith in unfettered markets to the surest road to shared prosperity. There is a general tendency among the liberal intelligentsia that COVID-19 reversed the cycle of globalization. Earlier, the 2009 global financial crisis exposed the deep-rooted weakness of capitalism and globalization. The private capital and privatized medical care failed to ensure public healthcare at large (Jose 2020). Third, the inability of the USA to control the contagion at home and lack of critical supplies of life-saving drugs exposed the US weakness to provide public goods. It is now apparent to most partisans that Washington has botched its initial response. The missteps of the American leadership have undermined the confidence in the capacity and competence of the US governance. Both, the US government and the private companies have proved ill-prepared to produce and distribute the supplies of critical tools for testing and response. China skillfully filled the leadership vacuum spared by the USA by offering generous material assistance to many states in Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. The mask and now vaccine diplomacy proved that China is prepared to lead the international order. It is anticipated that the post-COVID-19 era will experience a power transition from the West to the East, where China will assume the leadership in regional and international order (Kose 2020).

Fourth, the post-COVID-19 world will witness a surge in regionalism and localism. The budgetary constraints and power policy seriously undermined the performance of

international institutions. The limited financial resources and the US-China rivalry paralyzed the WHO to save billions of individuals from infection. This has raised the prospects for the establishment of new multilateral institutions and the capacity building of existing regional institutions. The regionalism will be more effective and practical to deal with the spread of future pandemics. Regional states will play a leading role in these institutions by offering material and political assistance. Last, though the liberal international order is not going to demise completely, a parallel order will emerge under the auspices of China. Beijing has already established a parallel order through the initiatives of BRI, AIIB and SCO. These ambitious projects demonstrate that China is taking over the USA in managing the global affairs. China has already controlled the virus at home and reopened its economy; the early opening provides an edge to Beijing to recover from economic meltdown. In a nutshell, a China-centered international order will emerge after the coronavirus.

Conclusion

The outbreak of coronavirus has sickened billions of individuals and devastated the global economy and supply chains. The ill-prepared global health system failed to provide equal basic health facilities to individuals and exposed its inherent stagnation. The coronavirus demonstrated the weakness of the global health care system and it has serious implications for the liberal international order. A wave of authoritarianism and anti-globalization will gain a wide recognition. The poor performance of capitalism and the market system exposed that the state is the only actor having the capacity and willingness to deal pandemics like the COVID-19. In the meantime, global power will be shifted from the West to the East, where China will embrace the leadership position. Beijing's timely and decisive response at home and its efforts to contain the virus at global level set a new path for global leadership. The post-COVID world will witness a more transparent and benign China with a resolve for a prosperous and peaceful world.

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