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QUESTION: The Great Powers and the War against COVID-19

Following the sheer chaos inflicted upon global public health and the international economic system dominated by American commerce and Chinese manufacturing fed by fossil fuel energy producing countries, including the Middle East, there has been very little discussion on the impact the coronavirus pandemic has had on existing power structures in the international system.  More so, for a change, global political events are not being dictated by one or two superpowers, but governments everywhere are now racing to face the same challenge, adopting different methods from total quarantine and lockdowns to herd immunization. The virus, although originating in China’s Wuhan, has been one of the world’s great global equalizers. Unlike humans, viruses do not care where its victims come from, what religion they follow, or what ideology they believe in. All are at risk, and as economies shut down and resources are stretched, international power dynamics may see a shift in the age of the coronavirus. Meanwhile, the International Monetary Fund’s (IMF) managing director, Kristalina Georgieva, has stated that the human cost of the pandemic has been “immeasurable” and that the global economic outlook was negative, saying “a recession at least as bad as during the global financial crisis or worse.” (ABDULRAZAQ, 2020).

furthermore, the president of the United State, Donald Trump has announced that the measures the United States has taken in terms of social distancing that has undoubtedly had an impact on trade will be abandoned in favor of [opening America for business in weeks](https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/live/2020/mar/23/coronavirus-us-live-news-updates-donald-trump-fauci-us-cities-spike-cases) and not months.  However, Trump’s decision comes despite an enormous surge in coronavirus cases afflicting the United State, with over [143,000 confirmed cases resulting in 2,490 deaths](https://www.theguardian.com/world/ng-interactive/2020/mar/27/coronavirus-map-of-the-us-latest-cases-state-by-state). They have been several argument on what this indicates weakness, and not strength. That Trump has based his entire political manifesto on economic prosperity and strength through isolation. He has gone to incredible lengths to boast about how the [American economy has never been better](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-45827430) and the United State military is now [completely rebuilt and stronger than ever](https://www.defense.gov/Explore/News/Article/Article/2074985/trump-touts-military-rebuilding-space-force-strikes-against-terror/) under his direction. Nevertheless, the virus has forced significant shut downs across the economy with stock markets plummeting and share prices falling. (ABDULRAZAQ, 2020).

Also, since the time of the outbreak, China has been shown to have suppressed and censored information relating to the coronavirus which allowed the disease to not only spread out of control in China but across the world, creating the present problem.  The Chinese government may live to regret that decision as the impact on populations around the world has now acted as something of an eye-opener to governments who were previously content to avoid confronting Beijing. Thus, now that China has directly impacted the global economy as well as public health by failing to alert the international community, the lack of trust engendered by such censorship could serve as a catalyst for a global consensus on clipping China’s wings. However, if the coronavirus leads to a new cold war with China rather than Soviet Russia as the adversary, Beijing will find itself forced into more direct confrontation with Western powers it would rather do business with. Those same powers will now feel suddenly vulnerable at diminishing their own domestic production capabilities in favor of subcontracting out to cheap Chinese labor controlled by one of the most pervasive economic powers in the world. Therefore, such an outcome could see an entire process of rebalancing as governments clash and economies recalibrate to prepare for a whole new confrontation ushered in by the unpredictable effects of an invisible virus that will have very visible consequences. (ABDULRAZAQ, 2020).

Also, there have being cases of conspiracy theories about the deadly virus. The virus continues to spread around the world, with new cases [being reported all the time](https://theconversation.com/coronavirus-outbreak-a-new-mapping-tool-that-lets-you-scroll-through-timeline-131422). Spreading just as fast, it seems, are conspiracy theories that claim powerful actors are plotting something sinister to do with the virus. One [conspiracy theory](https://www.independent.co.uk/infact/coronavirus-outbreak-conspiracy-theories-fake-news-china-wuhan-vaccine-a9308321.html) proposes that the coronavirus is actually a bio-weapon engineered by the CIA as a way to wage war on China. Others are convinced that the United Kingdom and United State governments introduced the coronavirus as a way to make money from a potential vaccine. Although many of these conspiracy theories seem far-fetched, the belief that evil powers are pursuing a secret plan is widespread in every society. The spread of fake news and conspiracy theories around the coronavirus is such a significant problem that the World Health Organization (WHO) has created a [“myth busters” webpage](https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/myth-busters) to try and tackle them. Also, In light of these results, people who endorse conspiracy theories about the coronavirus may be less likely to follow [health advice](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/) like frequent hand-cleaning with alcohol-based hand rub or soap, or [self-isolating](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-51506729) after visiting at-risk areas. (Daniel Jolley, 2020).

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