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IRD 402

Foreign policies of the Great Powers

Assignment Question: The Great powers and the War against COVID-19.

The Coronavirus disease 19, or as it is otherwise called, COVID-19 is a highly transmittable and pathogenic viral infection caused by a severe acute respiratory syndrome which emerged in Wuhan, China and spread across the globe. It is a popular and common theory that bats could be possible primary reservoir. The intermediate source of origin is unknown, however, the rapid human to human transfer has been confirmed widely. So far, there is no clinically approved antiviral drug or Vaccine available to be used against COVID-19.

On December 31, 2019, the World Health Organization’s (WHO) was informed by the Chinese government about several cases of Pneumonia with unfamiliar ethology. The outbreak was initiated from the Hunan seafood market in Wuhan city of China and rapidly infected more than 50 peoples. On January 12, 2020, the National Health Commission of China released further details about the epidemic, suggested viral pneumonia. Those who had this viral pneumonia were all found to have visited the seafood market. This virus which started in China has now spread all over the world and become a global pandemic. According to the John Hopkin University, there are over two million confirmed cases. This virus has been detected in more than 200 countries and territories, with the United States, Italy and Spain recording the highest cases besides the host country China.

After early blunders, China’s government is working hard to turn Covid-19, first detected in Wuhan in November, into a national success story. It claims draconian measures to suppress the disease have largely worked. Now, by assisting Italy and other badly infected countries, china is reinforcing its credentials as a global leader. The virus has become a soft power tool to overtake its superpower rival, the US. China’s challenge to US hegemony was already strengthening on many fronts before the Covid-19 crisis erupted. The US may accelerate this shift. For US allied democracies that value open governance, civil rights and free speech, this is a worrying prospect.

This pandemic is set to become the biggest catastrophe after the Second World War and is pushing economies towards depression. Economic stimulus packages and lockdowns are being imposed by governments around the world to flatten the outbreak curve. Despite isolationist rhetoric, Trump’s foreign policy has continued to focus on global leadership in the international liberal order. This is evident in the continuity of the US’ host of security commitments and plans across the globe, especially those ensuring the indo-pacific region remains a shared space, the centre of gravity in the connected world. This is mainly because of china’s assertive military posture in the indo-pacific region and challenges to the US hegemonic power that has provided stability in the post-World War 2 period.

COVID-19 will shake the confidence of the US and the Western world, especially the industrialised nations of G7. It will prompt them to manage their supply chains to mitigate overreliance on china, shifting instead to the developing countries with manufacturing capabilities in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The US- China great power politics is sure to become intense in the post-COVID-19 era.

References

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