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**Assignment**

The great powers and the war against COVID-19

**Answer**

COVID-19 allegedly made the jump to humans at one of Wuhan’s open-air “wet markets” in December 2019. They’re where customers buy fresh meat and fish, including animals that are killed on the spot. Some wet markets sell wild or banned species like cobras, wild boars, and raccoon dogs. Crowded conditions can let viruses from different animals swap genes. Sometimes the virus changes so much it can start to infect and spread among people. Still, the Wuhan market didn’t sell bats at the time of the outbreak. That’s why early suspicion also fell on pangolins, also called scaly anteaters, which are sold illegally in some markets in China. Some coronaviruses that infect pangolins are similar to. As COVID-19 spread both inside and outside China, it infected people who have had no direct contact with animals. This means that the virus is transmitted from one human to another. This growing worldwide transmission is what now a pandemic.

The United States is currently the epicenter of COVID-19, with over 800, 000 confirmed cases and over 40,000 confirmed deaths. The first case of person-to-person transmission in the United States was confirmed in Chicago, between a married couple, after the wife returned from China. This was on January 1st 2020. As of today, New York is the most affected state in the United States, with over 250,000 confirmed cases and about 15,000 confirmed deaths.

Although it is widely believed that the source of the current coronavirus outbreak is a “wet” seafood market in Wuhan, there’s still a lot of argument over its source. In addition to viral pneumonia, Novel coronavirus germinated a lot of racism and fear. With Sino phobia on the rise, social media becomes the place of speculation, debate, hatred, but also hope, enlightenment and various viewpoints. Many people suggest that Coronavirus is a bioweapon. It’s often claimed that rich, powerful people want to depopulate Earth by killing billions of people. Many have pointed to China as the manufacturer of the bio-weapon meant to target the world. There are also speculations of the U.S. being the one to blame for the coronavirus outbreak. According to this conspiracy theory, the United States engineered coronavirus as part of its bio warfare against China.

But there has been professional assurance from scientists that the virus has a natural origin. A group of 27 prominent public health scientists from outside China is pushing back against a steady stream of stories and even a scientific paper suggesting a laboratory in Wuhan, China, may be the origin of the outbreak of COVID-19. “The rapid, open, and transparent sharing of data on this outbreak is now being threatened by rumors and misinformation around its origins,” the scientists, from nine countries, write in a statement published online by The Lancet yesterday. The letter does not criticize any specific assertions about the origin of the outbreak, but many posts on social media have singled out the Wuhan Institute of Virology for intense scrutiny because it has a laboratory at the highest security level—biosafety level 4—and its researchers study coronaviruses from bats, including the one that is closest to SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. Speculations have included the possibility that the virus was bioengineered in the lab or that a lab worker was infected while handling a bat and then transmitted the disease to others outside the lab. Researchers from the institute have insisted there is no link between the outbreak and their laboratory. “We stand together to strongly condemn conspiracy theories suggesting that COVID-19 does not have a natural origin,” says The Lancet statement, which praises the work of Chinese health professionals as “remarkable” and encourages others to sign on as well.

The outbreak of COVID-19 has become major devastating threat to the global economy. Agathe Demarais of the Economist Intelligence Unit has forecast that markets will remain volatile until a clearer image emerges on potential outcomes. The economic damage of the COVID-19 pandemic on global growth has surpassed that of the 2002–2004 SARS outbreak. One estimate from an expert at Washington University in St. Louis gave a $300+ billion impact on the world's supply chain that could last up to two years. Global stock markets fell on 24 February due to a significant rise in the number of COVID-19 cases outside mainland China. On 27 February, due to mounting worries about the coronavirus outbreak, various U.S. stock indexes posted their sharpest falls since 2008, with the Dow falling 1,191 points (the largest one-day drop since the financial crisis of 2007–08) and all three major indexes ending the week down more than 10 per cent. On 28 February, Scope Ratings GmbH affirmed China's sovereign credit rating, but maintained a Negative Outlook. Stocks plunged again due to coronavirus fears, the largest fall being on 16 March. Many consider an economic recession likely.

Tourism is one of the worst affected sectors due to travel bans, closing of public places including travel attractions, and advice of governments against travel. Numerous airlines have cancelled flights due to lower demand, and British regional airline Flybe collapsed. The cruise line industry was hard hit, and several train stations and ferry ports have also been closed. The retail sector has been impacted globally, with reductions in store hours or temporary closures. Visits to retailers in Europe and Latin America declined by 40 per cent. North America and Middle East retailers saw a 50–60 per cent drop. This also resulted in a 33–43 per cent drop in foot traffic to shopping centers in March compared to February. Shopping mall operators around the world imposed additional measures, such as increased sanitation, installation of thermal scanners to check the temperature of shoppers, and cancellation of events. According to a United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America estimate, the pandemic-induced recession could leave 14–22 million more people in extreme poverty in Latin America than would have been in that situation without the pandemic. The pandemic has disrupted global food supplies and threatens to trigger a new food crisis. David Beasley, head of the World Food Programme (WFP), said that "We could be facing multiple famines of biblical proportions within a short few months”.

The 2019–20 coronavirus pandemic has affected international relations and caused diplomatic tensions. The diplomatic relations have been affected due to the tensions around trade and transport of medicines, diagnostic tests and hospital equipment for coronavirus disease 2019. Leaders of some countries have accused other countries for not containing the disease effectively and resulting in the uncontrolled spread of the virus. Developing nations in Latin America and Africa cannot find enough materials for testing for coronavirus disease, partly because other countries in Europe and the United States and outspending the resources. The Chinese government has been criticised by the United States for its handling of the pandemic, which began in the Chinese province of Hubei. In Brazil, the Congressman Eduardo Bolsonaro, son of President Jair Bolsonaro, caused a diplomatic dispute with China when he retweeted a message saying: "The blame for the global coronavirus pandemic has a name and surname: the Chinese Communist party." Yang Wanming, China's top diplomat in Brazil retweeted a message that said: "The Bolsonaro family is the great poison of this country."

Following the outrage against China, the largest tabloid newspaper of Germany put together a 130 billion euros damage that they would like for China to pay to Germany. China responded that this act stirs up xenophobia and racism. Spain, Turkey and the Netherlands announced that thousands of testing kits and medical masks exported from China are below standard or defective. The Dutch health ministry recalled 600,000 face masks, Spain encountered problems with 60,000 test kits and Turkey had problems with accuracy of some test kits. On 2 April 2020, President Trump invoked the Defense Production Act of 1950 to halt exports of masks produced by 3M to Canada and Latin America. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said that it would be a mistake for both their countries to limit trade of essential goods or services, including medical supplies and professionals, and remarked that this moves in both directions. The Canadian government has turned to China and other places for crucial medical supplies, while they seek a constructive discussion about the issue with the Trump administration. Donald Trump warned India for retaliation if the government does not release hydroxychloroquine medicine to the US. Following this, India lifted the temporary export ban on the drug paving the way for shipping it to the United States. Japan–South Korea relations worsened as a result of the pandemic. After Japan declared it would start quarantining all arrivals from South Korea, the South Korean government described the move as “unreasonable, excessive and extremely regrettable”, and that it couldn't "help but question whether Japan has other motives than containing the outbreak". Iran's regime spread a narrative that the coronavirus is a conspiracy orchestrated by the United States. Hossein Salami, commander of the guard, suggested that coronavirus may be an American biological invasion.

 As of 17 March, all countries within Europe had a confirmed case of COVID-19, with Montenegro being the last European country to report at least one case. At least one death has been reported in all European countries, apart from the Vatican City. As of 18 March, more than 250 million people are in lockdown in Europe.

European response to COVID-19



 After the outbreak entered its global phase in March, Chinese authorities took strict measures to prevent the virus re-entering China from other countries. For example, Beijing imposed a 14-day mandatory quarantine for all international travellers entering the city. At the same time, a strong anti-foreigner sentiment quickly took hold, and foreigners experienced harassment by the general public and forced evictions from apartments and hotels. On 23 March, mainland China had only one case transmitted domestically in the five days prior, in this instance via a traveller returning to Guangzhou from Istanbul. On 24 March 2020, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang reported that the spread of domestically transmitted cases has been basically blocked and the outbreak has been controlled in China. The same day travel restrictions were eased in Hubei, apart from Wuhan, two months after the lockdown was imposed.

 On 6 March 2020, the United States was advised of projections for the impact of the new coronavirus on the country by a group of epidemiologists at Imperial College London. On the same day, President Trump signed the Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act, which provided $8.3 billion in emergency funding for federal agencies to respond to the outbreak. Corporations imposed employee travel restrictions, cancelled conferences, and encouraged employees to work from home. Sports events and seasons were cancelled. On 11 March, Trump announced travel restrictions for most of Europe, excluding the United Kingdom, for 30 days, effective 13 March. The following day, he expanded the restrictions to include the United Kingdom and Ireland. On 13 March, he declared a national emergency, which made federal funds available to respond to the crisis. Beginning on 15 March, many businesses closed or reduced hours throughout the U.S. to try to reduce the spread of the virus. By 17 March, the epidemic had been confirmed in all fifty states and in the District of Columbia. More than 22 million Americans lost their jobs and applied for government aid, including 2.7 million people in California.