ASSIGNMENT

IRD 402: Foreign Policies of the Great Powers

*Topic:*

The Great Powers and the War Against COVID-19

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**INTRODUCTION**

An invisible enemy is fighting the globe and has plunged the world into a sudden disaster, catching the world by surprise and has forcefully changed the modus operandi of things across the globe. This invisible enemy called COVID-19, a family of coronavirus, with rapid spread and devastating consequences has affected, almost every country, global politics and economy and many more. Global Economic experts have said that the world you brace for a global economic depression worse than the 2008 global recession. This novel virus was first confirmed in Wuhan, China in December 2019 and therefore in other countries in the early months of 2020. In this study, a critical assessment of the impacts of this pandemic, the epicentre of the virus outbreak; the conspiracy theories on whether its occurrence is natural or man-made, the impacts on global health and global economy and state relations and how the Great Powers handled the pandemic.

**BRIEF HISTORY**

In 1960 the first case of coronavirus was identified as cold. Roughly 500 patients have been classified as flu-like structures, according to the 2001 Canadian report. 17-18 cases of these were reported as polymerase chain reaction infected with coronavirus strain. Until 2002 Corona was treated as a common non-fatal virus. In 2003, numerous studies were released with proofs of spreading the corona to several countries such as USA, Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam and Taiwan. Some cases of an extreme acute respiratory syndrome caused by corona were recorded in 2003, and their mortally over 1000 patient. To a microbiologist, this has been the black year. When the research was initiated for microbiologists to understand these problems. We conclude and grasp the pathogenesis of the disease after an in-depth exercise and discovered it as a coronavirus. (Kumar, Malviya, & Kumar Sharma, 2020)

But up to the total of 8096 patients were confirmed as having coronavirus infection. Therefore, in 2004, the World Health Organization and disease control and prevention centres declared a "state emergency". Another Hong Kong research report reported 50 patients with extreme acute respiratory syndrome and 30 of them were believed to be infected with the coronavirus. In 2012, multiple contaminated patients and deaths were reported in Saudi Arabian studies. COVID-19 belongs to Wuhan, China, and was first described and isolated from pneumonia patents.

Coronavirus disease 19 (COVID-19) is a highly transmittable and pathogenic viral infection caused by extreme acute respiratory coronavirus syndrome 2 (SARS-CoV-2), which has arisen in Wuhan, China and is spread around the world. Genomic research has shown that SARS-CoV-2 is phylogenetically linked to extreme bat-like acute respiratory syndrome (SARS-like) viruses, so bats may be the future primary reservoir. (Shereen, Khan, Kazmi, Bashir, & Siddique, 2020) The intermediate source of origin and transition to humans is not known but the rapid human transition to humans has been widely established.

No clinically approved antiviral drug or vaccine for use against COVID-19 is available. Nevertheless, in clinical trials, few broad-spectrum antiviral drugs were assessed against COVID-19 which resulted in clinical recovery. In the present study, the emergence and pathogenicity of COVID-19 infection and previous human coronaviruses with severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus (SARS-CoV) and middle east respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) are summarized and comparatively analysed.

**ECONOMIC IMPACT OF CORONAVIRUS**

When the coronavirus pandemic rips through nations, everything in the global economy is climbing from junk bonds to orange juice prices. Governments are closing down entire trade sectors to avoid COVID-19 from spreading, putting a huge crimp in gross domestic product for months to come. Stocks plunged and oil plummeted but orange juice emerged as the commodities' biggest winner. Orange Juice futures that require traders to hedge or gamble on prices for a later date have soared as consumers stay home amid social distancing.

To China, it had been a bruising year. A trade war with the U.S. left its economy rising at the slowest rate in 30 years (AL JAZEERA, 2020). The fall in oil demand during the 2007-08 recession is expected to surpass the loss of nearly 1 million barrels per day, also it comes at a period when the decision to curb supply is being taken by two major actors in the global oil industry. Meanwhile, Russia and the OPEC cartel are at loggerheads. The unambiguous oil price war begun between these two giants of the global oil market could have more serious effects on the oil price that has begun to dive. For now, a free fall in global stock markets seems to have been halted as governments prepare massive packages of assistance to boost their economies.

Officials expect to invest and lend more than $4 trillion to assist jobs and sustain hibernating industries. Joblessness has spiced up like companies like restaurants and shutter hotels, with weekly unemployment claims setting a high in the US. What separates the coronavirus-led recession from the ones that came before the disruption is the tempo. During the crisis in 2008, more than 10 times as many unemployment claims were filed in the US but this time it's happening even faster. (Detrixhe, 2020)

On 7 April, the International Labor Organization announced that, in the second quarter of 2020, it expected a 6.7% reduction of working hours worldwide, equivalent to 195 million full-time workers. They also reported that in the first quarter alone 30 million jobs were lost, compared to 25 million in the financial crisis of 2008. (Times, 2020)

Economists surveyed by Reuters expect the growth rate in China to fall from 6 per cent in the previous quarter to 4.5 per cent in the first quarter of this year. This would be the slowest rate of the financial crisis ever. Chinese airlines are forced to land planes and are predicted to lose sales of $12.8bn. According to the International Air Transportation Association (IATA), the airline industry is expected to lose $29 trillion globally. And the COVID-19 effect is felt regionally. (AL JAZEERA, 2020)

The chances of slipping into a downturn are slowly anticipated for most developed economies, as the global coronavirus epidemic puts significant pressure on the economy. To Nigeria, the nation is still struggling gradually with recovery from the 2016 economic recession that was a collapse from the global crash in oil prices and inadequate foreign exchange earnings to meet imports. The Nigerian federal budget for the 2020 fiscal year was prepared in the spirit of economic recovery and sustainability of growth, with substantial revenue projections but with contestable realizations. The approved budget had estimated revenue collections at N8.24 Trillion, a 20 per cent improvement from 2019 figure. (Akanni & Gabriel, 2020)

COVID-19 has a significant effect on manufacturing production in developing countries because high-income countries demand for manufacturing products and raw materials are declining, distribution chains are disrupted due to delays in importing the required components and supplies from more technologically advanced countries, other factors, including policies (e.g. restriction of movement). UN economists have projected a USD 50 billion decreases in industrial production in February 2020 and the IMF warns that the negative economic effects in developed countries that export raw materials will be felt "very strongly." Both those negative outlets will eventually impact developing-country exports. The export volume losses would be further compounded by the fall in energy and product prices. UNCTAD estimates that developing countries as a whole (excluding China) will lose up to USD 800 billion in export revenues by 2020. (UNIDO, 2020)

**POLITICAL IMPACT OF CORONAVIRUS & HOW HAVE THE GREAT POWERS HANDLED THE PANDEMIC?**

Combined with a global recession, a public health emergency has the power to transform policies around the world. The most visible threats at this point are China, the US presidential election, a rise in international tensions and the threat to the world's poorest countries and refugees. Not only is the latest coronavirus pandemic wreaking havoc on public health and the global economy, but it is also undermining democracy and governance worldwide. It has struck at a time when, in many ways, democracy was already under pressure and it risks exacerbating political backwardness and repression by the authority. Many governments have already used the pandemic to extend the executive authority and restrict human freedoms. These acts are just the tip of the iceberg, however.

As many analysts have started reporting, the pandemic is leading to a rapid expansion of executive authority across the globe, with potentially drastic consequences for democracy. Many countries have limited public assemblies and freedom of movement for people during the last month, and more than fifty countries have declared emergency states. Of course, extreme public health emergency demands urgent action. There are already indications that some governments are using the crisis to grant themselves more sweeping powers than was required by the health crisis, with inadequate accountability mechanisms and using their increased authority to clamp down on dissent and increase their hold on power. Thus, the pandemic could end up hardening repression, which is already in closed political structures, accelerating democratic retrogression in weak democracies, and further increasing executive power in democratic nations.

Illiberal leaders are leveraging the crisis to further undermine checks and balances and erode accountability structures, thus enshrining their positions of power. For example, in Hungary a new law allows Prime Minister Viktor Orbán to rule indefinitely by decree, without any parliamentary oversight (Rohac, 2020). Some officials are now using the crisis and its emergency powers to abridge the basic rights of people. In the cover of battling "misinformation" about the virus, one especially strong phenomenon is increased control over free speech and the media. The Chinese government censored its response information and arrested journalists who reported on the outbreak. Citizens and journalists in Thailand who criticize the government's handling of the crisis face litigation and threats by authorities.

The pandemic threatens to turn democratic systems around the world upside down. Several primary presidential votes at the state level have already been postponed by the US, and candidates have curtailed rallies and lobbying in retail form. Several European countries have postponed national or local elections, including Italy, North Macedonia, Serbia, Spain and the UK (Sloat, 2020). Ethiopia too has. Elections are scheduled in Burundi, the Dominican Republic, the Ivory Coast, Malawi, Mongolia and elsewhere in the coming months. Many of those elections may be delayed as well. (International IDEA, 2020)

**IMPACT ON GLOBAL HEALTH**

As a result, the World Health Organization (WHO) has identified the Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC), with strategic public health priorities to curb its effects on global health and economy.

As the number of coronavirus infections in Europe and North America rose exponentially in March, stringent public health measures were placed in place to stave off a worsening pandemic. They included stay-at-home orders, first given in Italy and then in quick succession in most other world countries. With entire communities ordered to stay at home, schools, offices and factories limited their movements, there was a decrease in road traffic to a minimum and airlines cut scheduled flights by 60% to 95%.

Yet the environmental effects of the crisis have not been entirely positive. Non-recyclable waste volumes have risen; drastic declines in agricultural and fishery exports have resulted in significant amounts of organic waste being generated; the conservation and monitoring of natural habitats have been temporarily halted, and tourism activity in natural areas has ceased. (Hamwey, 2020)

During the coronavirus crisis, natural habitats and endangered species are at risk. Environmental protection employees in many countries are forced to remain at home in lockdown at national parks and land and marine conservation zones, leaving those areas unmonitored. Their absence has meant an increase in illegal deforestation, fishing and hunting for wildlife.

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak which causes novel coronavirus-infected pneumonia (NCIP) has affected the lives of 71,429 people worldwide. The disease originates in China and has rapidly spread to other countries. Work indicates a surprising genetic link between 2019-nCoV and Extreme Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), which had a history of a 2002 pandemic. A variety of vigilant steps are being employed to limit its dissemination with proof of nosocomial spread.

**CONSPIRACY THEORIES**

Questions about the sources of the latest coronavirus behind the COVID-19 pandemic have focused attention on its possible links to a research laboratory in Wuhan, the central Chinese city where the first infections were identified late last year. Experts say the virus accidentally leaked from the Wuhan Institute of Virology is highly unlikely but the US is seeking access to conduct its investigation into the allegations, fuelled by the proximity of the laboratory to the marine and wildlife industry associated with many of the earliest cases.

Conspiracy theorists have indicated that the novel coronavirus causing COVID-19 is manmade, leaked from the Wuhan National Biosafety Laboratory in the region of origin of the pandemic. Researchers with Scripps Research and other institutions across the globe have published a report in the journal Nature Medicine that debunks the hypothesis after a review of the SARS-CoV-2 genome sequence. (Terry, 2020)

As groups within the orbit of President Donald Trump have raised hypotheses about the novel coronavirus emerging in a Chinese bio-science laboratory, U.S. scientists harden their conviction that the virus has originated spontaneously, citing expanded work as evidence.

"There is no reason to think this was conducted in a laboratory," Dr. Robert Shafer, Stanford Medical School's Professor of Infectious Diseases, told ABC News. "There are many strains in nature that may cause this sort of outbreak." Dr. Robert Garry, a professor at the Tulane School of Medicine, wrote one of the first major studies refuting claims that COVID-19 had been developed as a biological weapon. The main subject of this study, he told ABC News, was a special mutation that is thought to be what makes this coronavirus so infectious. (Holland, 2020)

Where did SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, come from in the first place, remains a more historical but still important question in all these critical forward-looking questions. Experts tend to accept that this was not the result of human engineering. Most work centred on the hypothesis that bats transmitted a virus to some intermediate host, maybe pangolins, scaly ant-eating mammals that later passed it on to humans.

Except for SARS-CoV and MERS-CoV, two deadly viruses which have triggered outbreaks in the past, coronaviruses have been studied in laboratories classified as functioning at a moderate level of biosafety known as BSL-2, says Ebright. And, he states, bat coronaviruses have been researched at such labs in and around Wuhan, China, where the current coronavirus first appeared. “As a result,” Ebright says, “bat coronaviruses at Wuhan [Center for Disease Control] and Wuhan Institute of Virology routinely were collected and studied at BSL-2, which provides only minimal protection against infection of lab workers.” (Field, 2020)

**IN CONCLUSION**

The novel virus has left the world traumatised and has put the global community on lockdown. COVID-19 hit the world as a shock, which has had several impacts on the world like the global economy, global politics, global health, the earth itself. In this work, justice has been done on the question on Great Powers and the War Against COVID-19, examining the epicentre of the virus outbreak; the conspiracy theories; was occurrence natural or man-made, the impacts on global health and global economy and state relations and how the Great Powers handled the pandemic.

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