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**ASSIGNMENT; From late December 2019 to January 2020, the world was struck unawares by a new corona-virus with rapid spread and devastating consequences. Attempt a critical assessment of the impacts of the pandemic. Part of the issues you need to address include the epicenter of virus outbreak; the conspiracy theories; was occurrence natural or man-made? what are the impacts on global health and global economy and state relations? How have the Great Powers handled the pandemic? Do at least a two-page write-up and digest. Goodluck.**

**INTRODUCTION**

A novel coronavirus outbreak was first documented in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China in December 2019, which was given the name ‘covid-19’. There are several coronaviruses known to be circulating in different animal populations that have not yet infected humans. COVID-19 is the most recent to make the jump to human infection.

Common signs of COVID-19 infection are similar to the common cold and include respiratory symptoms such as dry cough, fever, shortness of breath, and breathing difficulties. In more severe cases, infection can cause pneumonia, severe acute respiratory syndrome, kidney failure, and death.

The COVID-19 infection is spread from one person to others via droplets produced from the respiratory system of infected people, often during coughing or sneezing. According to current data, time from exposure to onset of symptoms is usually between two and 14 days, with an average of five days. (Mcleod, 2020)

**BACKGROUND**

**“**In the public mind, the origin story of coronavirus seems well fixed: in late 2019 someone at the now world-famous Huanan seafood market in Wuhan was infected with a virus from an animal. The rest is part of an awful history still in the making, with Covid-19 spreading from that first cluster in the capital of China’s Hubei province to a pandemic that has killed about 80,000 people so far.

Stock footage of pangolins – a scaly mammal that looks like an anteater – have made it on to news bulletins, suggesting this animal was the staging post for the virus before it spread to humans.

But there is uncertainty about several aspects of the Covid-19 origin story that scientists are trying hard to unravel, including which species passed it to a human. They’re trying hard because knowing how a pandemic start is a key to stopping the next one.” (Readfearn, 2020)

**WAS THE OCCURRENCE MAN-MADE OR NATURAL?**

The mystery of how and where the virus started may take longer to discover than the cure. Various lab scientists and researchers, as well as individuals have released information and made arguments and debates on the origin of the pandemic occurrence. But a conclusive result has not yet been reached.

**THE IMPACTS OF COVID-19 ON GLOBAL HEALTH AND GLOBAL ECONOMY**

The impacts of COVID 19 are both short- and long-lived. They range from losing jobs due to lay-offs, to reduced incomes, loss of human capital due to death, and infrastructural deterioration, among others.

The world has been hit hard by coronavirus. Starting from China in December 2019, the virus has spread to more than 200 countries. It is estimated that more than 1.3 million people are infected and, as per WHO data, 7,671 cases had been confirmed in Africa as of 9 April 2020.

The number of lives lost to COVID-19 was 79,385 globally, with the biggest percentage occurring in Europe and the USA. The latter has been hit hardest while other giant economies, like Italy, France and Spain, are significantly affected, with thousands of deaths.

With developed economies suffering such repercussions, developing countries, especially in Africa, have started to feel the impacts of the disease. These are manifested directly in the health sector and indirectly in other sectors as a result of supply and demand shocks. Besides the deaths, the economic impacts have had dramatic effects on the wellbeing of families and communities.

Many families have lost their source of income and this has translated into spikes in poverty, missed meals for children, and reduced access to healthcare, effects that will continue to be felt long after COVID-19 has passed.

International travel restrictions and the full or partial closure of businesses and industries in Asia, Europe, North America and Africa have led to the collapse of global travel and are expected to reduce the flow of remittances. Tourism and remittances, which are important sources of foreign exchange, employment and income for the poor in many developing countries, have been affected. For instance, the tourism sector contributes about 7.7 % to Uganda’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and $1.6 billion (about sh6 trillion) to Uganda’s export earnings.

With the current shutdown, firms or organizations that cannot figure out how to conduct online transactions/business will suffer huge losses. It is now the time for entrepreneurs to leverage information technology (IT) to be able to compete favorably. This also speaks to the government’s need to invest more in IT, science and innovation.

The COVID-19 pandemic has portrayed the interlinkages between health and economic activities. Countries ought not to prioritize economic drivers alone in their national budgetary allocations but should also consider other social sectors, like health.

Above all, this pandemic is a strong reminder of the interconnectedness of the world and the importance of global cooperation in addressing health challenges. This is because it greatly affects sectors other than health as well. (Ssempala, 2020)

**HOW HAVE THE GREAT POWERS HANDLED THE PANDEMIC?**

Almost everyone agrees that the key to managing the current crisis lies in substantive cooperation between the world's two most important powers, the United States and China. Instead of bringing them together or narrowing their differences, the war against the virus is pushing them apart. Washington and Beijing are arguing about everything - from the origins of the virus to the accountability over its spread and the potential pathways to defeating it. (Mohan, 2020)

The U.S. has for some time entered into a new nationalist foreign policy line with the Trump administration, with the motto “sharing costs” assigning responsibility to its allies in the face of international problems. The first consequence of this new form of governance is that the cost of being allied with the U.S. has increased. Until the recent crisis, the U.S. allies had not yet been able to test what gains they had in return from sharing costs. The first serious test took place in the face of the COVID-19 outbreak, and the U.S. preferred to close its borders to them rather than supporting its allies (for example, in the face of Italy's dramatic calls for help). The “normality” of the American order, seeking a solution in greater isolation, has now vanished in the eyes of its allies. Moreover, the enormous incompetence and the indifferent approach to solving the COVID-19 crisis in his home country has greatly undermined the U.S.'s ability and legitimacy to be a superpower. How sustainable is the costly alliance of the U.S., which, despite its advanced technology and kits to test for COVID-19 disease, is incapable of supplying itself and its allies?

The experience of the COVID-19 pandemic also signals a new hardening in China-U.S. global competition. In response to China’s deporting of U.S. journalists one by one, Trump’s America persistently describes the virus as a “Chinese virus,” preferring to take positions both inside and outside. However, even during the Cold War, the U.S. and the Soviet Union were able to set aside global competition and develop a common policy against problems such as smallpox. The experience of a new type of coronavirus outbreak therefore shows that in this new era, the competition between the great powers can be brutal and without exception. The rivalry of these two great powers, who are expected to carry out cooperation with global responsibility consciousness firsthand in times of crisis, is damaging to the whole world.

The European Union is one of the regional blocs that suffer the most from the epidemic. It continues to display an inability to use the “common good” and “public benefit” in crises, one of its most fundamental claims since the Cold War. Recently, with the rise of the radical right in Europe, identity politics has gained a considerable momentum and far-right parties have become the partners in power, either directly or by likening mainstream parties to themselves.

In addition to breaking down the identity of the Union, it can be said that the first political trend that COVID-19 will displace is the far-right identity politics. However, the disruption of identity politics, in addition to the U.K. example and other examples we have mentioned, does not mean that the union will save the future. Because techno-politics, which replaces identity politics, also prefers the closure of territorial and social borders. The fact that each country makes its own health issue a priority eliminates the political-economic integrity and solidarity that are the most important engine of the EU. In short, the EU, which has been destroyed by the identity politics, continues to be destroyed by the new isolationist dynamics of techno-politics, even if identity politics loses its position.

Some countries’ experiences give significant clues about the direction of the world politics. Especially, the COVID-19 experience in Iran has characteristics worthy of note. China, just like Iran, has an authoritative regime type. On the other hand, remarkable differences between Iran and China have occurred during the crisis. In the COVID-19 epidemic, Iran, which has a theocratic form of government, engaged in identity politics and lied to its people, paving the way for a major disaster. As a result of this religious-identity politics, Iran has not interfered for long, for example, with people from Qom, nor has it delayed in taking the necessary measures to combat the new type of coronavirus outbreak. China, on the other hand, used its authoritarianism as a means of settlement politics at the time of crisis and prevented the spread of the virus with rapid, on-the-spot measures.

Therefore, it turned out that authoritarian governments, which operate through technical devices instead of authoritarian governments built through identity, intervene in crises much more effectively.

Another fact demonstrated by the Iranian experience is that the U.S. does not ease Iranian embargoes despite all the calls from the world, and may even consider military intervention in Iran in the process. This shows more clearly how the new politics of hegemony imposed by the U.S. President Donald Trump would take shape at a time of crisis. The new image of the U.S., which relentlessly maintains its embargo policy on Iran, which is experiencing a major health crisis as a country, gives no confidence to anyone. There is an image of an opportunistic hegemon who does not accept any humanitarian perspective as a reference, using even a deep health crisis as a leverage against opponents. With this approach, the image of the U.S., which does not trust even its allies, has been strengthened. It should not be forgotten that in this global health crisis, the U.S. failed not only its rivals like Iran but also an ally like Italy by ignoring their calls for help. Ironically, China rushed to Italy's aid, which gives some details about China's new hegemony politics. (Kardas, 2020)

**CONCLUSION**

The covid-19 is a pandemic that has affected the entire world, sparing no territory or country, including the Great Powers in the international system. The political institutions, the news media, the offices, businesses, economies are busy with this “unseen enemy”. But what is very important to note is that countries all over the world as well as the Great Powers have come together in some form to effectively deal with the pandemic.

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