

Post-COVID-19 World Order

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Abstract

The COVID-19 Pandemic is the largest humanitarian crisis since World War Two and the second greatest disease since the 1918 Spanish Flu. Since its rise, the pandemic has caused profound political, social, and economic changes in the world and is proving to be a game changer for the world as it still has challenged the so-called liberal international order and its core foundations: globalization, cooperation, multilateralism and most important the supremacy of US as the founder of the current order. The fundamental question that this article seeks to answer is what will be the post-COVID-19 world order? In this regard, the author's hypothesis is as follow: The post-COVID-19 world order would not be absolutely Western and unipolar, rather Western-Eastern and bipolar. Thereupon, a dual bipolarity system between the democratic Trans-Atlantic pole, made up of the United States and the European Union and the Authoritarian Eurasian pole, made up of China and Russia, supported by the Eurasian partnership will be arisen and their intense rivalry and competition would be for power, influence and security. This article examines the subject with the descriptive analytical method and the required data was collected through librarian and internet research.

Key Words: COVID-19, World Order, USA, China, Globalization, Multilateralism, Democracy.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The novel coronavirus, also known as COVID-19, is one of the most dangerous disasters to the humankind in the 21st century that is reordering the world in dramatic ways and firmly established itself as the biggest disease outbreak since the 1918 Spanish flu. Looking back to the past pandemics, we find that in 1918 there was similar to today's pandemic popularly known as the Spanish Flu killed over 50 million people worldwide. The impact of this pandemic was deeper and global. It altered the boundaries of imperial powers, strengthened independence movements in the former colonies and forced countries to make policies for universal healthcare. It also led to advancements in epidemiology, virology and development of vaccines. Fast forward a century, the Covid-19 pandemic has been running its devastating course in different parts of the world (Sharfuddin, 2020: 246).

Since its rise, the pandemic has impacted the world in many ways. For instance, According to WHO Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Dashboard globally, as of 12:44pm, 15 February 2021, there have been there have been 108,484,802 confirmed cases of COVID-19, including 2,394,323 deaths. Likewise its impact on global economy has been disastrous so much so that to get the economy back on track will be an arduous task. Additionally, the global politics have also been shaken up by the outbreak of the disease and has raised concerns about the future of the contemporary world order (Samant, 2020: 24). However, countries are firefighting the Covid-19 and several vaccines have invented and authorized by WHO there were no indications if the pandemic would reach its end like its smaller predecessors SARS (2002) and MERS (2012) or would make resurgence in the winter of 2021(Sharfuddin, 2020: 247). But one thing is coming clear that when it is finally eliminated, we are not going back to the world we lived in 2019. The post-coronavirus world will be different in many ways – economically, socially and health wise. Due to the global nature of the corona crisis, this article is designed to explain what is COVID-19 and how quickly did it spread?, how was the world order before the pandemic? And finally, how will be the world order when the coronavirus finally eliminated?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Since the pandemic has affected the world in various fields and is known as one of the biggest human crises of the 21st century, many articles have been published by scientists. Some of them are reviewed as follow:

Reshaping the Global Order in the Post COVID-19 Era is written by Md. Saifullah Akon and Mahfujur Rahman that published in Chinese Journal of International Review, number 1, volume 2, July 2020. The Papers' main objective is to find out the role of the current global leaders amid COVID19 and the future of global leadership and therefore critically analyzes the active global role of China to fight against this pandemic by providing necessary assistance to the affected countries.

There is another article named "*The world after Covid-19*" has been written by Syed Sharfuddin and is published in The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs, volume 109, number 3, 17 Jun 2020. The article has mainly studied the consequences of the pandemic on various fields include of global order and multilateralism.

Similarly, Stephen M. Walt has also written a relevant research named "*The Global Order After COVID-19*" which is pulshed by Institute for Security Policy (ISP) on 2020. The author believes that the post-COVID-19 world will be less open, less free, less prosperous, and more competitive than the world many people expected to emerge only a few years ago.

Another research paper "*Post COVID-19 World Order: An Overview*" is written by Heena Samant and has published in Vivekananada International Foundation on 2020. This paper focuses on some of the major geopolitical factors which are likely to shape the order of the world post the crisis and also on the role which India is most likely expected to play.

Question of US Hegemony and COVID-19 Pandemic is another article has been written by Shabana Fayyaz and Salma Malik which is published in Global Political Review, volume V, number I, winter 2020. This paper critically evaluates the role of American power, its central position in the international political economy and global governance to highlight how deeply it is embedded in the international order, and suited to mount a global response to an international challenge.

Furthermore, "*The End of World Order and American Foreign Policy*" is written by Robert D. Blackwill and Thomas Wright which has published in Council on Foreign Relations, No. 86, May 2020. The article argues that the pandemic has undermined order by straining governments, dividing societies, exacerbating societal inequalities, heightening tensions between the United States and China, and demonstrating the vast gap between global problems and the world's ability to address them through existing international institutions.

Uncharted Territory: Emerging World Order Post COVID-19 is another article edited by Aarshi Turkey that has published in Observer Research Foundation and Global Policy Journal ON 2020. The article shed lights on geopolitics, multilateralism, geo-economics and geo technology in details.

Henry A. Kissinger in an article named "*The coronavirus Pandemic Will Forever Alter the World Order*" which has released in *The Wall Street Journal on April 2020*. The author argues that however the Leaders of the world are dealing with the crisis on a largely national basis, but the virus's society-dissolving effects do not recognize borders and it may alter the world globally.

Another article named "*The Future of Globalization under the Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic* is written by Fu Mengzi and has published in China Institute of Contemporary International Relations, volume 30, number 4, August 2020.

The author argues that in the post-pandemic period China will speed up its domestic circulation and prioritize regional circulation of neighboring countries and thus will continue to be an active participants and promoter of globalization. Likewise, Globalization's pace will not halt over the long run. Rather, its renewal after the pandemic will trend in ways that meet expectations.

III. WHAT IS COVID-19?

The novel coronavirus has been one of the main struggles for the world since December 2019. According to Melda Belkıs Küpeli (2020) the name corona comes from Latin language meaning crown since the shape of the virus reminds spikes. COVID-19 stands for CO corona, VI virus, and D disease, and 19 the year it came out 2019. COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by a virus named 'severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2' (SARSCoV-2).

Initially, the COVID-19 was first originated in the city of Wuhan, capital of China's Hubei Province in December 2019. About the origin of the virus, so far, the most concrete possibility is that the virus was spread from a seafood market in Wuhan. The reason for this claim comes from the fact that the consumption of wild animals has been there in most Chinese communities. The virus was said to be spread from a bat even though it has never been confirmed. What was confirmed is that the virus circulates within animals certain animals and can get transmitted to humans from these animals. Two previous examples for these transmissions are SARS-COV in 2003 from a civet cat and MERS-COV in 2012 from a camel. The World Health Organization (WHO), the highest body of health-related international organizations, confirmed that this virus started spreading from human to human on 22 January 2020. Later, WHO declared the COVID-19 as a global pandemic on 11 March 2020 (WHO Timeline — COVID-19, 2020). But it was too late and the virus spread all over the world due to

lack of protective measures and preparation by most of the countries of the world. Connectivity among the states played a vital role in this case to spread the virus. Most of the affected countries went for nationwide lockdown so that the spread of the virus can be contained to the minimum level. Situations developed gradually at the birthplace of COVID-19 in China due to the effective role of the Government of China, but it worsened in most other places in the world. Europe became the worst affected continent where countries like Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom (UK), France, Germany, etc. had the most number of confirmed cases and deaths. As a single country, the USA is having the worst scenario in the whole world with the most number of confirmed cases and deaths. At present, the whole world is fighting with this global pandemic. The search for an effective vaccine is going on in different countries of the world right now (Akon & Rahman, 2020:4).

One of the most discussed subject matter in the present time has been the impact of the COVID crisis on the existing world order. It is being argued that the crisis has exacerbated the underlying issues that had been building up for some years now as far as the order of the world is concerned. Experts are also apprehensive about the future of the world order and are debating that the pandemic may alter the order of the world once the crisis is over (Samant, 2020:5).

IV. WORLD ORDER BEFORE COVID-19

Prior to describe World Order before COVID-19, it seems necessary to know what World Order is and what changes have taken place in the text of time. World order is a fundamental concept of international relations describing the distribution of power among world powers. At its core, world order is a description and a measure of the world's condition at a particular moment or over a specified period of time. It tends to reflect the degree to which there are widely accepted rules as to how international relations ought to be carried out and the degree to which there is a balance of power to buttress those rules so that those who disagree with them are not tempted to violate them or are likely to fail if in fact they do. Specifically world order refers to a shared understanding among the major powers to limit the potential for serious confrontation, including among competitors and adversaries (Wright & Blackwill, 2014: 1-14).

According to Henry Kissinger (2014) world order as the concept held by a region or civilization about the nature of just arrangements and the distribution of power thought to be applicable to the entire world. World order bases, he writes, on two components: "a set of commonly accepted rules that define the limits of permissible action and a balance of power that enforces restraint where rules break down, preventing one political unit from subjugating all others". In *A World Restored*, he writes that order and stability result not from a desire to pursue peace or justice, but from a "generally accepted legitimacy" and are "based on an equilibrium of forces." Legitimacy, he says, "means no more than an international agreement about the nature of workable arrangements and about the permissible aims and methods of foreign policy." "It implies," he concludes, "the acceptance of the framework of the international order by all major powers, at least to the extent that no state is so dissatisfied that, like Germany after the Treaty of Versailles, it expresses its dissatisfaction in a revolutionary foreign policy"(Kissinger, 1957:1-2).

The New World Order term has been used frequently since the end of the Cold War. Cold War Era, which started in 1947 and lasted until 1991, had specific elements that shaped both the western and eastern world. The most significant components of the Cold War were, without a doubt, the ideological developments and their conflicts as well as the arms race between the U.S. and Soviet Union. The conflict between the west, which had capitalist and liberalist ideologies, against the Soviet World, which was closed and weakening, eventually resulted in the great victory of the west. The bipolar world immediately evolved into a unipolar one, changing more than the polarity of the world (Küveli, 2020:2). Following the Cold War's end and the Soviet Union's collapse some three decades ago, a U.S.-led world order so-called liberal order prevailed and expanded, underpinned by American absolute economic and military strengths and relative advantage over others. For example, the NATO was expanded, the G20 took center stage, and there was also an establishment of U.S. led security arrangements. Additionally, the United States took in its hands to spread democracy and other liberal values as far as possible. Therefore, this term has the meaning of the collapse of communism, globalization, and internationalization. New World Order signifies the open world economy, the multilateral diplomacy, and the unipolar world system where the balance of power is fundamental. Politically the New World Order was used mostly during and after the world wars. According to the author of *The United States of Paranoia*, Jesse Walker, after WW1, the term was originated in the League of Nations (Crocker, 2017). Later on, we have seen that the term was used by world leaders such as George W. Bush, Gorbachev, and even Hitler (Li Xing, 2014).

The fruits of the New World Order as stated by Melda Belkıs Küveli (2020) are mostly today's international relations, the founding of the United Nations, which had its root in the League of Nations. The U.S. hegemony and the creation of various international, intergovernmental, and even non-governmental organizations secured the desired post-cold war western values. After three decades now the world has moved away from a standard of world order and series of decisions were made by major powers to diverge from the shared understanding of limitation. There are numerous evidences that reinforced this claim. Following

examples give further clarification on how major powers have diverged from the shared understanding of limitations: Russia illegally annexed Crimea, the first such act in Europe since World War II and a flagrant violation of the norm against territorial conquest. China over the past decade engaged in a project of land reclamation in the South China Sea in violation of international law to advance its territorial claims and gain control of vital sea lanes. China also chose to operate outside the framework of the international economic order, largely ignoring World Bank and even Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank standards in its Belt and Road Initiative. Election of Donald Trump and his withdrawal policies from collective treaties, Brexit and arise of authoritarian governments in Easter Europe especially in Poland and Hungary are another concerning issues about the violation of the current new world order (liberal order). Along with these factors, the pandemic seems to have added to the chaos impacting the liberal order (Wright & Blackwill, 2014: 17-21).

V. POST-COVID-19 WORLD ORDER

At the moment, the world order seems to be in a transitional phase and COVID-19 is proving to be a game changer for the world. Post-cold war order architect, Henry Kissinger (2020) believes that “The coronavirus pandemic will forever alter the world order”. However, it is difficult to predict precisely as to what kind of order would emerge post the pandemic. Nonetheless, one thing is coming clear that when it is finally eliminated, we are not going back to the world we lived in 2019. The configuration of world order after COVID-19 would be very different from what we have had previously. Definitely, a new international order will be redrawn by the powerful countries taking into account the lessons learnt from the performance of totalitarian regimes and free democracies in dealing with the current pandemic (Sharfddun, 2020: 255). Thus, a unipolar world will not suit anymore the new international order, rather New Cold War between China and U.S will arise where their competition for power, influence and security will be intensified, multilateralism will be reviewed, national sovereignty will be a centerpiece of the new framework and finally the global order will be essentially “realist” with some regional cooperation in character. Therefore, as stated by Stephen M.Walt (2020) the post COVID-19 world will be less open, less prosperous, less free and most competitive. Some of the most important changes that will take place in the world post COVID-19 have been outlined as follow:

5-1 THE RISE OF CHINA

In this new order, Beijing has asserted itself as a global player. President Xi Jinping, who came to power in 2012, abandoned his predecessor Deng Xiaoping’s “24 Character”¹ grand strategy of developing the national economy and avoiding conflicts with other states and announced that his regime would instead pursue a “Chinese Dream” of reasserting China’s rightful place as a great power. Since this announcement, Xi has focused on turning China’s economic might into geopolitical muscle. He launched the \$1 trillion Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) infrastructure project in 2013 to influence the international economic order (Nie, 2016).

Currently, China — the second-largest economy in the world — has maintained a decent connection with other countries having played one of the supreme roles in the multipolar world and positioned itself as a life liner to many countries. Besides, BRI — the grand strategy of China — has now become the central tool of China’s landmark foreign policy (Moblely, 2019) which will strengthen the connectivity and cooperation between China and Eurasia. Under this branding strategy, China started to provide loans and investment in the infrastructure development of BRI signatories’ countries. As Harvard Business Review documents, “The Chinese state and its subsidiaries have lent about \$1.5 trillion in direct loans and trade credits to more than 150 countries around the globe. This has turned China into the world’s largest official creditor—surpassing traditional, official lenders such as the World Bank, the IMF, or all OECD creditor governments combined”². Based on its economic power, China has modernized its military and used it to pursue expansionist aims in the Asia-Pacific. Xi has built up the country’s navy, deployed ships, established militarized islands in the South and East China seas to control shipping lanes, claimed undersea oil and natural gas reserves, and asserted rights to fisheries. Finally, China has become much more assertive geopolitically in every arena, from climate change negotiations to deliberations in the UN Security Council (Lin & Smith, 2020). However, this gradually shifting strategy — from Den Xiaoping’s ’24 Character’ strategy to Xi Jinping’s ‘BRI’ diplomacy — ultimately boosts China or Asia to lead the future global order. The current COVID-19 pandemic has further helped China so far to accelerate its desire to create a Chinese influence of horizon through the BRI with a new ‘health silk road’ policy. China has started to offer medical supplies across the world to battle the pandemic collectively. China’s sphere of influence has reached most of the countries; from Asia to Africa; from Europe to America (Akon &

¹ A grand strategy of Den Xiaoping was emerged in 1990. It provides the basic principles of protecting China’s national interests and its way of increasing interactions with the world.

² Sebastien Horn, Carmen M. Reinhart, and Christoph Trebesch, “How Much Money Does the World Owe China,” *Harvard Business Review*, Feb. 26, 2020.

Rahman 2020, 5). Therefore, the COVID-19 pandemic helps China to get more engaged with most of the countries and to successfully implement the concept ‘it is China only who can help’ to the mindset of state leaders that promotes China to increase international reputation (Kawashima, 2020). According to Gurumurthy S. (2020) although Beijing has been criticized for its irresponsible behavior and expansionist policies, it will play an important role in shaping the post COVID-19 world order. So far, it has managed to bring the crisis under control and its industrial production is said to have increased even as that of every other country has been hit. Though, it is predicted that the pandemic may push the international system into a world with Chinese characteristics.

5-2 DECLINING OF US’S SUPREMACY

The COVID-19 pandemic presents a substantial shock to the postwar order, established by the United States and its allies. For the past 75 years, the United States and its partners have led a rules based system predicated on liberal democratic values, an open and thriving global economy, and formal institutional bodies backed by powerful democratic states (Engelke & Burrows, 2020, 6). Now the current outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has raised a firm challenge over the supremacy of the United States. Due to the inward policy and failure to provide support to the corona affected countries, the USA is now being considered as the fallen star of the old world. The USA is losing its supremacy so far as to lead the world in this pandemic crisis. On the contrary, as mentioned earlier China, a rising star in the contemporary world, has been able to provide support to the affected countries through either sending medical teams or medical assistance (Akon & Rahman, 2020: 9). However, the new dilemmas of this current pandemic to the USA’s position in the international arena are as follows:

First, the pandemic shows the lack of healthcare resources in the USA with high statistics of infected peoples throughout the globe.

Second, after observing some incidents of the COVID-19 pandemic, the western alliance between Europe and the USA is compromised which embittered the EU. When Italy asks for assistance through NATO, the USA remains silent which ultimately shows the inward foreign policy of the USA, followed by the ‘America-first’ policy of Trump administration. On the other hand, Russia sends vast medical assistance to Italy in response to fight the pandemic, thus leading to the birth of Pan Europeanism. Besides, China also sends the necessary assistance including a medical team to serve the Italian crisis. However, such a contradiction in the USA-EU alliance could bring negative results for the USA in the post-COVID-19 era, particularly in the field of business and commerce. Again, it could help both Russia and China to accelerate their business dealings with the EU countries.

Third, due to this current pandemic, the USA could face immense economic damage. The continuous quarantine and lockdown have frozen the economy of the USA. Already, a large number of people in the United States have lost their jobs and fall into uncertainty due to the struggling economy and shutdown of the small businesses. The Stock market has sunk and the industries are being forced to shut down. This economic downturn is sometimes compared with the Great Depression of the 1930’s. Trump’s administration should have given more importance to domestic financial issues.

Fourth, the USA has failed to maintain close relations with the vulnerable countries, not even with its close allies, where one of the features of the global leader is to respond quickly if any country faces any crisis, the USA has failed to make such responses. COVID-19 shows the clear hopelessness of the USA to provide any kind of assistance to the other countries. Even during the Ebola crisis in 2009 and 2014–2015, the then Obama administration was able to lead a coalition of countries to counter the disease (Singh, 2020).

5-3 THE U.S-CHINA RIVALRY (NEW COLD WAR)

Given what has been said so far about the rise and decline of Chinese and the US powers respectively the defining feature of the post-COVID-19 order will be an intense rivalry between the United States and China. Thus, the result as stated by Stephen M. Walt (2020) will also be an increasingly intense competition for power, influence and security which will place significant limits on the scope and depth of the global cooperation. As John Mearsheimer (2019) has explained in details that the global order will be essentially “realist” in character, defined primarily by a more-or-less constant competition for power and permitting only limited cooperation at the global level. Since the onset of the pandemic, the U.S. - China great power dynamics have taken a new shape and the relationship between the two is consequential for global order and governance. Therefore, it seems that their rivalries expected to continue even the crisis is over. It is already clear that if their relationship continues to deteriorate, without doubt, it will have a profound impact for the rest of the world. One of the regions where the rivalry will be most visible would be Asia and the continued straining relationship between the two super powers will put the region in danger (Samant, 2020: 19)

For instance, as Lee Hsien Loong (2020) illustrated that the United States will try to make sure that China does not become a ‘regional hegemon’ in Asia. Therefore, the United States will seek to maintain close

security ties with Japan, India, South Korea, Singapore, Australia, and a number of other Asian powers, so that China has to focus most of its attention closer to home. Accordingly, Beijing will try to undermine U.S. ties with its Asian partners and reduce its role in the region. It will also put Europe in a difficult spot to choose either side and although the European nations would prefer to remain neutral, they will not be able to do so and will continue to rely on U.S. protection. Otherwise, If Europe attempts to stay on the sidelines of the Sino-American rivalry, it will mean the end of NATO and Europe's nations will be forced to assume full responsibility for their own defense Hence, a continued deterioration of the relationship between U.S. and China will have far reaching consequences not only for them but also to the whole world of trade, business, and politics (Walt, 2020: 18).

5-4 DECLINING OF LIBERAL DEMOCRACY

It is predicted that in the post COVID-19 world order, liberal democracy –as the current dominate order- will be declined, instead illiberal democracy or authoritarian regimes with the successful overcome on coronavirus will be strengthened. Twenty-five years ago, when the Berlin Wall fallen and the Soviet Union collapsed, liberal democracy was on the march and the only legitimate form of government with no alternative. Today it can be seen that the global scene is very different. Many of these liberal democracies have faced political, economic or social challenges such as immigration pressure, populism and problems following the economic crisis, which have posed a threat to the legitimacy of liberal democracy (Ziblatt & Levitsky, 2018: 227). In many such countries, public support for the government and traditional political institutions has declined. This has in turn increased the support for external and anti-establishment political forces. We can see that the United States, the United Kingdom, and the European Union all failed to deal with waves of immigration in ways that commanded public support. The Brexit vote, the 2016 U.S. election, the doubling of support for France's National Front, the rise of the antiestablishment Five Star Movement in Italy, the entrance of the far-right Alternative for Germany into the Bundestag, the outright victory of the populist ANO party in the Czech Republic's October 2017 parliamentary elections, and most troubling, the entrenchment in Hungary of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's self-styled are the other milestones of growing illiberal democracies (Galston, 2018, 7).

Moreover, there are numerous surveys indicate the declining of liberal democracies. For instance, in 2005 Abraham Diskin and his colleagues studied 62 democratic cases (30 cases of collapse and 32 cases of stability) and found that variables related to the end of democracy include social cleavages, unfavourable history, malfunctioning economies, and party system polarization (Diskin et al. 2005). Meanwhile, an investigation about democratic decline was done by Fao and Mounk in 2016 found that citizens in a number of supposedly consolidate democracies in North America and Western Europe have not only grown more critical of their political leaders. Rather, they have also become more cynical about the value of democracy as a political system, less hopeful that anything they do might influence public policy, and more willing to express support for authoritarian alternatives. According to the Freedom House report for 2018, democracy has been in recession in 71 countries and there were positive developments in only 35 countries³. This marks the 12th consecutive year in which Freedom House has documented the decline of global democracy. The Economist Intelligence Unit also reported the decline of democracy at the global level in 2017, with particularly worrisome trends for free speech and media freedom⁴. Based on World Values Survey data, decreasing support for democracy and increasing support for non-democratic forms of governance can be also seen in countries with developed democracies⁵. Pew Research Center in 2017 conducted a 38-nations survey that asked respondents about five different approaches to governing: representative democracy, direct democracy, rule by experts, military rule, and rule by a strong leader who “can make decision without interference from parliament or the courts”. The result show that a median of 78 percent of respondents vote for representative system, 66% for democratic system, 49% for a system rule by experts, 26% for autocracy or a system rule by strong leader and finally 24 percent across the countries surveyed believe that “a system in which the military rules the country” would be very or somewhat good to govern the country (Rechard Wike and Janell Fetterolf, 2018 37-39). In fact, the result suggests that even though democracy remains a broadly popular system, yet there is still a surprisingly high degree of openness to nondemocratic modes of governing.

³ Freedom House. “Freedom in the World 2018: Democracy in Crisis”. [freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/FH FITW Repor...](https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/FH_FITW_Report_2018.pdf)

⁴ The Economist Intelligence Unit. www.eiu.com

⁵ World Values Survey. www.worldvaluessurvey.org/wvs.jsp

Democracy Index 2020, by regime type

	No. of countries	% of countries	% of world population
Full democracies	23	13.8	8.4
Flawed democracies	52	31.1	41.0
Hybrid regimes	35	21.0	15.0
Authoritarian regimes	57	34.1	35.6

Note: "World" population refers to the total population of the 167 countries covered by the Index. Since this excludes only micro states, this is nearly equal to the entire estimated world population.

Source: The Economist Intelligence Unit.

Also according to the 2020 edition of The Economist Intelligence Unit's annual Democracy Index that has recently released of the 167 countries and territories covered by the model only 75 are considered to be democracies. The number of "full democracies" increased to 23 in 2020, up from 22 in 2019. The number of "flawed democracies" fell by two, to 52. Of the remaining 92 countries in the index, 57 are "authoritarian regimes", up from 54 in 2019, and 35 are classified as "hybrid regimes", down from 37 in 2019. The report provides a snapshot of the state of democracy worldwide; the average global score fell from 5.44 (on a scale of 0-10) to 5.37. This is the worst score since the index was first produced in 2006. A large majority of countries—116 of a total of 167 (almost 70%)—recorded a decline in their total score compared with 2019. Moreover, based on its annual democracy index, only about half (49.4%) of the world's population live in a democracy of some sort, and far fewer (8.4%) reside in a "full democracy", whereas, more than one-third of the world's population live under authoritarian rule (Democracy Index 2020: 3).

Moving to authoritarian type of governing has increased even years before spreading COVID-19. For example, Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS) as the potential rival of US liberal order have already regressed. Some observers believe that China has moved toward a totalitarian dictatorship, with President Xi Jinping in power for life as the regime perfects the tools of repression and control with new technologies. Russian President Vladimir Putin moved Russia in a similar direction, while India's and Brazil's democracies eroded through the decisions of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Jair Bolsonaro (Walt, 2020: 10). Regarding struggling COVID-19 authoritarian countries such as China, Russia, Singapore, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Taiwan and South Korea succeed completely or partially in controlling the pandemic with lower death rates compared to the liberal democracies in the US, UK & the EU, which were unable to prevent the spread of the disease in the initial stages, resulting in thousands of deaths, including those of their health professionals. Thus and without doubt, their success in combating COVID-19 would further raise the importance of a unified political system to public opinion once the pandemic came to the end (Sharfuddin, 2020: 255).

5-5 DECLINING OF MULTILATERALISM

In a post-COVID-19 world, the role of multilateral institutions will be critically reviewed. Countries will be reluctant to fund organisations, which are no longer relevant in the new world. Questions have been raised on the role of global multilateral institutions especially the United Nations and its agency the World Health Organization (WHO) for not playing its part and initially mishandling the COVID situation. The inability of the UN to prevent conflicts, control refugee flows and respond with successful disaster mitigation, and of the WHO to predict and prevent this pandemic and earlier epidemics have already come under strong scrutiny (Sharafuddin, 2020: 256). The pandemic proves how global institutions are weak dealing with a disaster as it has been very well described by Stewart M. Patrick who argues that "the pandemic has revealed both the limits of the multilateral system and the horrific costs of the system's failure"⁶. Part of the reason for their underperformance is that the rich and powerful countries have stopped taking global institutions seriously. For instance, the lack of concerted action by the multilateral groupings such as the G7, G20, and the UNSC has also raised questions about their relevance. A pandemic of such a large scale required strong global cooperation which has been missing since the initial days of the virus outbreak and the disease has also exposed the flaws of these multilateral arrangements in particular of the WHO. Global institutions like the United Nations are also weakening. To illustrate this further the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) has become a debating club without any significant outcomes and the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has also become ineffective (Gurumurthy, 2020).

However, as a matter of fact, the multilateral architecture was already under crisis even before the rise of the pandemic. Several factors can be attributed towards this development. Firstly, U.S. Ex-President Donald

⁶ Stewart M. Patrick, 'When the System Fails: COVID-19 and the Costs of Global Dysfunction', *Foreign Affairs*, 99 (4), July/August, 2020, pp. 40-50.

Trump who was not a huge fan of the multilateral arrangement had been openly contesting it since the time he came into power. He has withdrawn the United States from many such important arrangements like the Paris Climate Accord, Iran Nuclear Deal, Trans-Pacific Partnership, UN Human Rights Council, and the UNESCO. In addition, President Trump had repeatedly threatened to withdraw from the World Trade Organization (WTO) which is a key component of the liberal economic order (Sammat, 2020, 15). With the rise of the pandemic, nations across the world turned inward and abandoned opportunities for consultation, joint planning, and collaboration. Additionally, the initial response of the World Health Organization (WHO), towards the virus outbreak has not been satisfactory and has brought the organization under scrutiny so much so that the U.S. president decided to stop funding the UN agency on the grounds of alleged biases towards China (Tirkey, 2020, 31).

On the other hand, it is being argued that the pandemic has strengthened the desire amongst most nations for greater global cooperation (Akbaruddin, 2020). In the recent United Nations General Assembly's 75th session, the member states via pre-recorded video statements overwhelmingly stressed the need for collective action to tackle common threats and "vaccine multilateralism" to combat the coronavirus⁷. For example, President Xi Jinping in his speech spoke about enhancing solidarity and getting through this difficult time together. Member states have also stressed on the fact that the pandemic has clearly demonstrated the need to reform multilateral systems including the UN. Emphasizing this point, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in his speech put forth that reform in the responses, in the processes and in the character of the UN is the need of the hour.

5-6 SHIFTING GLOBALIZATION TO REGIONALISM

Before discussing whether the globalist world order is shifting or not, one has to first comprehend what exactly globalization means. Like many other terms, globalization has more than one definition; it usually refers to the system that serves the interdependence among states as well as cooperation on a higher level and a larger scale. From its conception, the idea of globalization was linked to the neoliberal economic model, first born in America and Britain. As with the neoliberal economy, the idea of globalization became popular after the West's victory in the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s. It was reinforced by the claims of the end of history and the resolution of the conflict in favour of Western liberalism, democracy and individual freedom (Nafi, 2020: 8).

According to Küpeli (2020) globalization usually starts when there is free international trade with no or less prominent international boundaries. Free trade allows countries to globalize; furthermore, it gives countries a chance to remove the artificial borders to some extent. Once the borders are more and more open, there are fewer factors that can hamper the improving cross-border collaboration. It also fastens the flow of goods, services, and people among states, which increase the interdependence between one another. With the spread of the pandemic, predictions about the end of globalization were made. Countries following more protectionist policies resulted in a decrease in internationalization between states and nations. Most countries have closed their borders, placed restrictions on the movement of people and goods, enacted relatively restrictive legislations, adopted different policies to cope with the pandemic, and implemented laws to contain the emergence and spread of the virus (Nafi, 2020: 9). The COVID-19 pandemic has brought some elements of globalization to a screeching halt: movement of people across national boundaries has been completely stopped, shipping goods contracted to a tenth of their volume, and global supply chains have been revealed and questioned as countries limit export of medications, holding onto them instead for national consumption (Schake, 2020: 333). Likewise, according to Fu Mengzi (2020) the global industrial chain will see a restructure, factories will move back to their country of origin, and regional cooperation will step up. Thus in a post COVID-19 world, where the USA and China will be the great players the rhythm and form of globalization will be different and may shift and decrease to regionalization. In that case, cooperation according to John Mearsheimer (2019) will be broader and deeper within each of the two main powers' spheres of influence, leading to a global order segmented along regional and/or ideological lines. Therefore, it is concluded that once the pandemic come to an end the world may see the demise of globalization where regional cooperation with focusing on national sovereignty and interests matters more than globalization.

VI. CONCLUSION

Given that what has been discussed so far, it can be concluded that the COVID-19 is the second greatest disease and human tragedy since the 1918 Spanish Flu. This pandemic is reshaping the liberal world order in dramatic ways and has caused profound political, social, and economic changes in the world since its outbreak. It has challenged the logic of globalization, cooperation, multilateralism and most specifically the

⁷ United Nations 2020. 'Meetings Coverage and Press Releases', [Online] Available at: <https://www.un.org/press/en/2020/ga12273.doc.htm>

supremacy of US as the founder of the current order. After the end of cold war the COVID-19 pandemic is the first global challenge that has witnessed the complete absence of American leadership, whereas, it has been enabled the China, a rising star to provides a new window to expand its influence.

However, the liberal world order whose existence was already at risk in the pre COVID-19 era has been further challenged by the crisis. The Brexit vote, the 2016 U.S. election, immigration pressure, problems following the economic crisis, populism, the rise of nationalist movements, protectionist sentiments, de-globalization forces and a lack of faith in multilateralism were indicative of a departure from the established norms of global order. The failure of international institutions to prevent the spread of the virus, the lack of cooperation of the great powers in the joint struggle against it, as well as the flawed structure of the world are some of the most important vulnerabilities of the current world order.

It is said that when the pandemic is finally eliminated the world order would be very different from what we had previously. It would not be absolutely western and unipolar, rather western-eastern and bipolar. Thereupon, a dual bipolarity system between the democratic Trans-Atlantic pole, made up of the United States and the European Union and the Authoritarian Eurasian pole, made up of China and Russia, supported by the Eurasian partnership will be arisen where an intense rivalry and competition between the two great powers will be for power, influence and security that in turn will place significant limits on the scope and depth of the global cooperation. Cooperation will be broader and deeper within each of the two main powers' spheres of influence and therefore globalization may shift and decrease to regionalization.

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