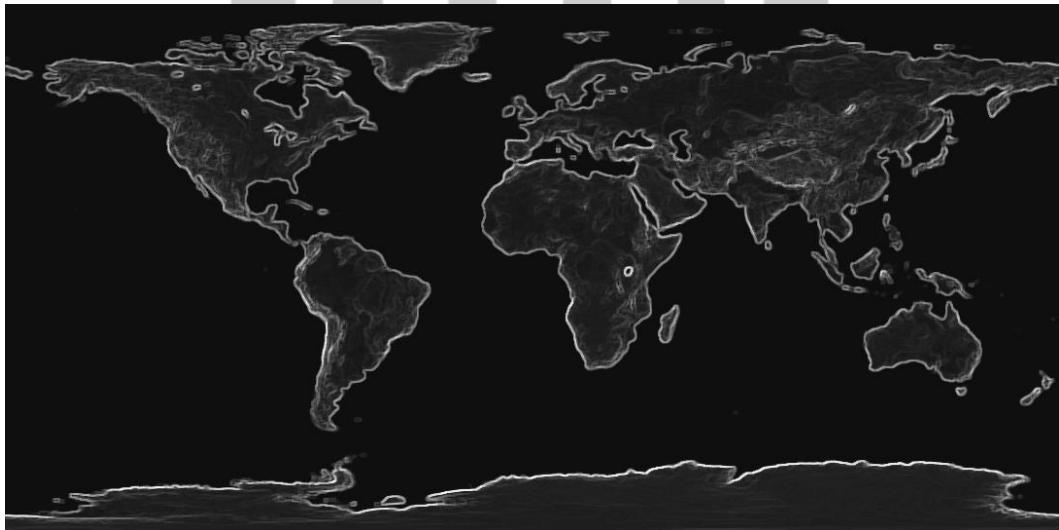




THE POST-PANDEMIC WORLD ORDER

A continuation of previous power dynamics or the formation of something new?

Veritas et Aeuqtias



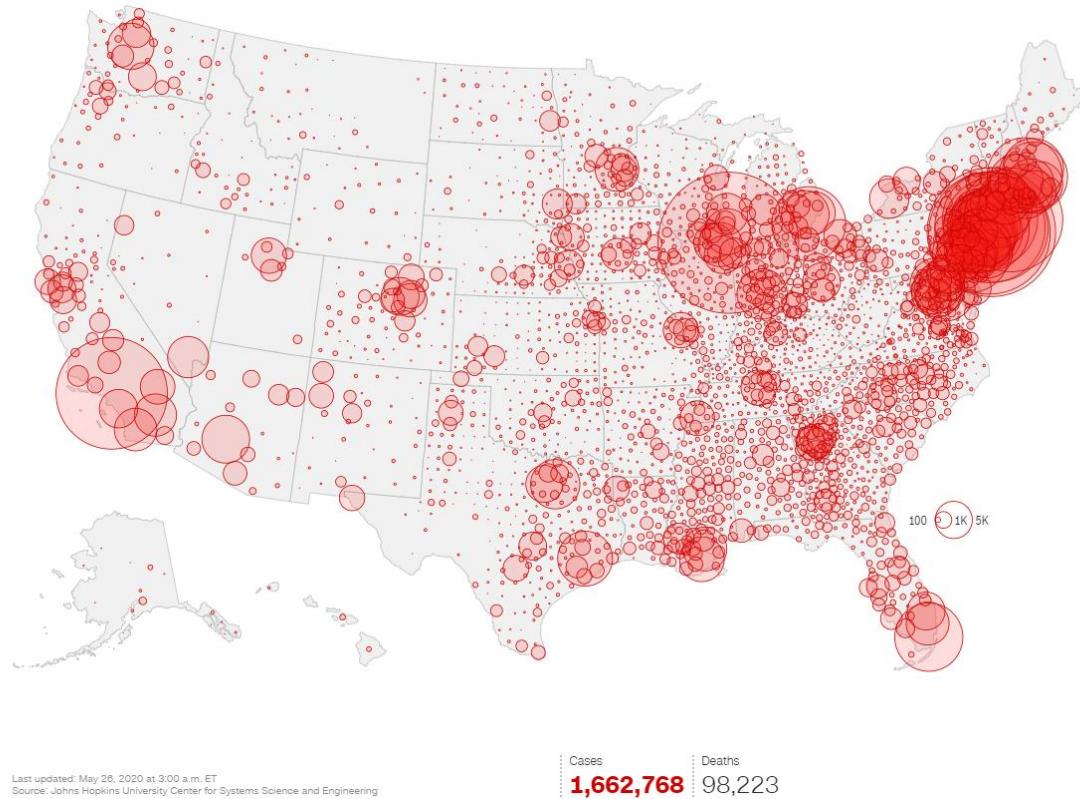
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The Post-Pandemic World Order

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Except for the AIDS scare in the late 1970s and the relatively minor damage caused by the H1N1 swine flu epidemic of 2009-2010, the majority of “first-world countries” haven’t had to face the brunt of a major epidemic since the days of the Spanish flu and the American polio epidemic of the early 20th century. What this did was give these nations the ability to focus on growth without having to deal with problems like the Asian Flu, Ebola or even more recently Zika beyond minor aid efforts and temporary closing of borders. With COVID-19, however, with vivid images of empty monuments and medical tents in central park and in the Westminster mortuary, the Prime Minister of Britain in an Intensive Care Unit and the highest mortality rates in the USA, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom, the rich and the powerful, the self-proclaimed leaders of the free world have been the hardest hit, with the number of deaths in the USA just about hitting a 100,000 as of the 26th of May. For context, the Vietnam war, which by many is considered their greatest loss of human life post the World Wars, had 47,434 recorded battle casualties over a nine-year-long conflict, that death toll is less than half of what Corona has achieved in little more than three months.



Europe and the West

One of the key changes is that the European powers no longer look to the United States as a viable long term partner for aid in crisis, this has stemmed from the rampant changes to what many considered a monolithic American foreign policy by Donald Trump. Withdrawals from long-held accords, and constant isolationist rhetoric has worn the relationships thin. An absolute refusal to take the virus seriously with Trump was suggesting that the virus "could maybe go away" and not make a large impact on the US and suggesting that the stock market dip was due, in part, to the recent Democratic debate rather than any of the onus falling on a lack of preparedness and actual change in policies, this followed by constant anti-china rhetoric like calling the COVID-19 the China Virus to drum up patriotic popular support has determined the path to be one of assuaging people and shifting



blame rather than actual efforts. Transatlantic relations, the linchpin of the Western-led global order, have never been worse off. This reflects both internal crises in the United States and in many European nations and a loss of faith in broader visions of supranational alliances and multilateralism. The corona virus pandemic has not triggered a reinvestment in multilateral actions. It has instead added to existing ideologies of the conservative or nativist political elite and revealed conclusively how unprepared the west was for crisis management.



It has also reinforced fears of the frailty of the paragon of multilateralism, the European Union or the ‘European Project’ as it has been termed by many and has increased anxiety on its future. Disaffection with the European Union is not recent. It appeared already, albeit diffusely, during the Maastricht Treaty referendums in 1992. The rejection at that time came from Denmark, but Great Britain had already acted preventively by refusing to follow its partners on the path of monetary union and demanding significant exemptions, whereas France narrowly escaped a negative vote.

The warning was clear, but it was not truly grasped by European leaders, who would pursue their course without truly determining the extent of this still-nascent anger.

Disenchantment has grown since then. It corresponds to a rising sense that European leaders are no longer listening to the people and that European integration continues to advance without heeding criticism nor making a minimal effort at self-examination. The reproach might be exaggerated, for efforts have been made to reduce the sphere of EU interventions and improve the functioning of the European administration. But Euro scepticism remains a popular narrative for people to hold, especially in the face of what they see as a continuation of non-essential policies over a focus on improvement for one’s own country.

Brexit added a certain degree of urgency to improve the cohesiveness of the EU, but with some of the weakest members of the Eurozone being the hardest hit and nativist sentiments at an all-time high, the future of the European Union looks bleak without significant external aid, which also seems unlikely in the current context of a global pandemic. For nativists, builders of walls and articulators of me-first, the pandemic allows them to pour scorn on globalization and point to the virtuousness of closed borders. For them, the helplessness of international bodies stands exposed. Far from doing good, they only cover up misdeeds. Didn’t that paragon of internationalism, the European Union, just disappear when needed most, and countries in Europe had to fend for themselves? Their way forward will be to pull out from multilateralism.

In this context, there are three primary groups that are anti-European Union, the sovereignists, who tend towards nationalism, develop a defensive, closed vision of National interests over internationalism or multilateralism and advocate the immediate and continued closure of the borders to immigration and the restriction of free movement; on the other, the anti-liberals deem that European integration is occurring according to a Neoliberal economic ideology, which is leading to the dismantling of national social systems and hence must be countered; Some others combine these two approaches in what might be termed “left-wing sovereignty” The





sovereignists and anti-liberals have the commonality of generally being members of the more affluent European Nations with a section of sovereignists also being anti-internationalism due to internal secessionist movements such as Catalonia in Spain. All of this has been exacerbated by the pandemic and lack of any “real” aid by the European Union in countering the same.

There is still some hope for the survival of multilateralism and the European Union with the



540 million Euro package changing some minds, in particular, Germany has coped well with the COVID-19 pandemic according to indicators in Europe. If this is how it finally turns out, this should boost Chancellor Angela Merkel and provide her with another shot at EU leadership. With French President Emmanuel Macron as an ally, they have the ability to counter the sovereignist’s lobby on the continent. And, no matter Brexit, the UK is unlikely to resist better global cooperation, with Boris Johnson’s desire to create ‘Singapore on the Thames in London.

Multilateralism for all intents and purposes has been a venture that the United States has been at the core of and it is increasingly apparent that without significant policy changes or a miracle, the current administration is incapable of ever fulfilling the role that the United States took up post the World War. A thing that has become increasingly clear as the crisis has progressed is the helplessness of International organisations such as the United Nations and the World Health Organisation in the face of the pandemic and without the change that non-veto countries have been pushing for, the idea of the primacy of the United Nations and its edicts might well be a thing of the past with more and more nations pushing for unitary solutions or direct aid rather than go through these bodies.

Some positives from the entire episode that might reflect well into the future are the actions taken by some nations like India who have pushed for increased multilateralism under Prime Minister Narendra Modi with them also pushing for increased reforms at the WHO and the international community via the G20, New Zealand with its prompt response to the pandemic and then aid efforts in Oceania.

Africa

Africa has been relatively forgotten since the beginning of the crisis, with most International media choosing to focus on the figures in the West. Their response, however by and large has been exemplary with the limited resources and little to no external aid until China’s reemergence from its own battle with the virus and subsequent aid efforts. The death toll might soon rise however due to a number of preventable diseases that have vaccines spreading due to a lull in vaccination efforts post-March.



Illnesses from other vaccine-preventable diseases like measles and cholera are also expected to rise in the coming weeks as corona virus restrictions derail immunisation campaigns. International flight shortages, “exorbitant” shipping costs, and corona virus lockdowns are also fueling “a massive backlog” in vaccine shipments, UNICEF has warned. More than 117 million children will miss out on measles vaccinations as dozens of countries are forced to cancel immunisation campaigns, a global health



coalition said on 14 April. Guinea is already seeing a measles outbreak, with more than 600 cases reported this year as of 24 April and this is likely to continue into the immediate future with no relaxations imminent.

The Middle-East

The Middle East has also largely escaped scrutiny, but recent events regarding yet another controversy that the Trump administration has been involved in is the unverified reports of planning an Israeli invasion of the west bank. Palestine has declared a complete withdrawal from “any and all” security arrangements between them, the USA and Israel, this has been echoed by several leaders of the Arab world including the King of Jordan, while their respective responses to the pandemic were satisfactory with the Arab population in Israel, especially showcasing their following of guidelines, thereby preventing further etherisation against the community as seen in several other instances in the past, this new hurdle has the ability to cause the Middle East to devolve back into war after many peaceful years.

The impact on other traditional Middle Eastern powers has been indirect in the form of economic collapse due to primarily oil and tourism-based industries being the primary facets of the economy. The gamble by Saudi Arabia to ramp up production and sale even in the face of the pandemic to counter US shale oil production has gone terribly wrong, with OPEC facing possibly the greatest catastrophe till date. While countries like the USA and Russia have offered some relief to producers of oil and have other industries in their countries to plug the slump by oil, Saudi Arabia has no such options, thus even with a relatively low COVID count, they might be one of the hardest-hit nations to pull back post the end of the pandemic.

In Lebanon, demonstrators left close to destitute by an economy that was in a state of collapse before the virus arrived, have besieged and burnt banks.

Bigger players in the Middle East will have to rethink ambitious, sometimes dangerous, always expensive foreign policies. The days of buying influence and fighting proxy wars may be over.

The Arab uprisings in 2011 were powered by the anger of young people who believed their future was being stolen. Their hopes for change were mostly squandered or crushed. But anger was smouldering again before the pandemic.

The damage the virus is causing could create another political eruption.



The New World Order

Certain other nations who were well on their way to positions of power in the International Community such as Brazil are now in woeful positions due to inadequate response to the situation and woeful policies forthwith implemented by the current government, with further devolvement of the situation looking likely. Russia was hard hit along with the OPEC nations with the absolute tailspin the oil prices went into due to a lack of demand during the pandemic, Russia's response to the crisis internally has been well crafted, yet they've suffered from a significant number of cases as well, although the government estimates beyond a significant dip due to their focus on the “Oil-Economy”, they still retain actionability and therefore their position as a significant actor on the World Stage.





Many are already claiming that the east has won this war of competing narratives. The South Korean philosopher Byung-Chul Han, in an influential essay in *El País*, has argued the victors are the “Asian states like Japan, Korea, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan or Singapore that have an authoritarian mentality which comes from their cultural tradition [of] Confucianism. The people are more content with governmental oversight and following of their dicta as compared to their western counterparts

The belief that this is consistent is that western voters will be swayed by this promise of safety and therefore transition away from their system of liberty based beliefs even if that is a relatively organic change which has been pushed to the forefront by the advent of the corona virus.

The Chinese are being sued under International Law. The Chinese liability, if established, is also fixed under International Health Regulations (IHRs) where WHO provides structures to bring suit under IHRs. The IHRs became more stringent after the SARS outbreak and require nations to monitor and share with other nations' information about the transmission of pathogens that are potentially transmissible internationally. The Chinese, having failed to do so by covering up the outbreak and by not providing accurate information about COVID-19 at an early stage and having done nothing to prevent the infection from leaving China. In fact, rather facilitating its spread have opened themselves up for worldwide litigation. The countries are also exploring to sue China at other forums such as the International Court of Justice, Permanent Court of Arbitration, WTO, under UN Convention on Law of Seas and Bilateral Treaties.

The planet is looking at a new world order after this pandemic and despite conflicting opinions across the globe, China looks to be cementing its position as a constructive actor and a possible leader in the face of a debilitated United States and a hard hit Russia. Their actions post dealing with the virus in terms of external aid have been reflective of the same. Any immediate contest that they cannot overcome in their bid would have to be a concerted effort by multiple powers to lay some measure of responsibility and therefore gain some degree of restitution from the recalcitrant dragon.

The Chinese veto in the UNSC makes the UN irrelevant and the WHO's role is under attack and, therefore, either the P5 is expanded to include some members of the G4 or the new world order that evolves new universal organisations that can effectively address the unique problems with countries like India at the forefront of this movement.

Indian efforts to counter the pandemic have yielded results, although it is still too early to claim that the pandemic has been contained, and their role as a leader pushing for reform in the WHO and the G20 as well as aid provided to various SAARC nations might finally see them change a long-held standard of relative non-involvement in International Organisations and fill in the void left behind by failing powers and isolationist policies by traditional actors to become real players as part of the “New World Order”.

