

A Theoretical Perspective of COVID-19: States and Globalization

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The world and its relationship with globalization have been more liberal than realist. After World War II, the states soon learned the importance of maintaining a cordial relationship with others to sustain in an anarchic international system as the world adapted to the new political reality. As the 21st century welcomed new possibilities of globalization, both economic and scientific, political behavior of states had also changed drastically early on due to various political and economic problems, such as the 9/11 terror attack, 2008's global recession, European refugee crisis, etc. Even though, states had different views on how to deal with their relationship with other states for historic and the then conflictual ideologies – most states resonated with the liberal theory of globalization. There were suitable legal and institutional arrangements within states to enable a global market to everyone's benefit (mostly). States were building infrastructure to support more interconnectedness, free trade, harmonized administration, etc. These globalization efforts stemmed from a fear to avoid major conflicts and develop one's economy at a quicker pace but tend to overlook historical culture. However, the situation changed drastically when the COVID-19 case was reported in Wuhan, China. Many states were aggravating towards protecting their citizens and containing the virus.

When the virus had reached the Western hemisphere, states quickly announced travel restrictions and many had also announced country-wide lockdown. Many international trades and projects halted due to the stern rise of infected cases. This is a textbook example of the theory of political realism of globalization. Advocates of this theory question power of states, national interest, and conflict. The relationship between COVID-19 and the political realism theory can be better explained through the response of states after the pandemic was announced. There were three major responses of the governments that can be generalized across states. The first response of the state was typical and well-predicted. States were closing off borders, closing off foreign trade, and locking down cities. The overwhelming number of patients was tiring their healthcare

system. The second response was to blame another state for the pandemic. The United States had hopped on the bandwagon of the blame game within such tiring times. Apart from President Trump's already ongoing trade war with China, COVID-19 had posed a bigger opportunity to question Chinese involvement in an alleged bio-terrorism. These two responses are essentially the image of the theory of political realism as both the responses are desperate to survive and prioritize their national interests.

The third response is a response that is expected in the foreseeable future, such as a hegemonic behavior to dictate the narration of the pandemic. Countries that have already started the early efforts of their narration are the United Kingdom, the United States, and China. The three considerable political giants have started to build their narration for the post-COVID 19 world. The United Kingdom started its research in collaboration to build a vaccine (inevitably the narration of 'saving the world'). The United States started to investigate the reason and the culprit behind the pandemic (the narration of 'finding the villain') and China had successfully managed to pass the first wave of COVID-19 and agreed to help its neighboring states (the narration of 'surviving, yet helping others'). All these responses are similar to the Theory of Constructivism of Globalization. It is creating a social world based on particular symbols, languages, images, and interpretations. This will help them build their relations after the pandemic with other states better as well as create a strong image domestically. For example, the United Kingdom had passed its Brexit deal before the pandemic and the next major crisis for Prime Minister Boris Johnson is tackling the pandemic (the prime minister had a drastic fall in the poll of his Conservative Party against Labor Party) and resettle UK's relationship with its European neighbors; United States' President Donald Trump had just gotten acquitted from the impeachment case and as the primary votes started with Iowa, President Trump needs to handle COVID-19 properly (amidst the 'Black Lives Matter' movement) to win his favor in the second term and also sustain the 'global' hegemony image after the decision of pulling out from WHO funds; and post COVID-19 is China's major opportunity to rise as both a regional hegemony and a longstanding political oligopoly. This may predict the future of how these states may sustain in a globalized world.

Political economic behavior of states should also be anticipated after COVID-19 is contained to a level where lives can go back to its former self. Globalization may be used overwhelmingly to make up for all the losses that the economies around the world have faced. This trend could be explained through the theory of post modernism which explains transcending into newer modernity which surpasses tradition. Apart from its cultural and philosophical implications, inheriting new ideas within states will be a necessity and the most probable response to resisting any economic downfalls. States will try to use globalization in its originality – the use of network and connectivity. It has been seen that online businesses have boosted significantly around the world, most, for example, US-based Amazon has boosted its sales by 26% since last year during April 2020. Digital giants of various states might be the new economic boosters and states may choose to frame sustaining and feasible healthcare agreements (and system) to tackle pandemics better in the future, maybe a revision of International Health Regulations (IHR) could be anticipated.

The world is still far from getting back to its normality and many new factors may create a different political response from what has been explained above. COVID-19 could be a major turning point for globalization. However, globalization is not the culprit, rather we find ourselves in a peculiar situation that raises questions against the existing world order and global governance. In my opinion, this pandemic should be a reminder of how international organizations need to reconsider their existing framework with the states and that collaboration and cooperation is the only way to battle any pandemic or crises in the future.

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