

COVID-19 and global order: dilemma, challenges, opportunities and scenarios

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When this virus appeared first time in Wuhan city of Hubei Province of China in December 2019, none of people anticipated it will turn such serious pandemic within 4 months. At first it was treated simply as a problem faced by Wuhan city. Once China started taking stringent measures to control it, it started taking public attention from Europe and America. But many political decision makers were not taking seriously. Worst example was the responses of American President, who had even termed it as “Chinese Virus”. Now it is moved from Chinese problem to everybody’s problem, once it spread to South Korea, Japan and entered to Europe. Then people realize the gravity of the problem but it was almost late. By now (in 12 April 2020) the situation presented by World health Organization² is: a) the confirmed cases are 1699595, b) confirmed death: 106138, c) countries, areas or territories affected: 213.

This pandemic will have direct effects on the existing global order. Many philosophers, strategists and global affairs analysts are predicting that the world order will drastically change or possible collapse after this pandemic. Emergence of China as most influential global power and erosion of US influence is evident.

In this context some dilemma, challenges and opportunities synthesised from different sources as well as my own reflection are presented below:

Dilemma:

- Individual liberty v/s right to life (human rights dilemma)
- Investment/allocation to basic services v/s strategic interests by powerful countries (in other word, more investment in health services or in military affairs)
- Focusing to poor, marginalized and powerless or continue business as well
- Continue the existing highly nature-insensitive consumeristic behavior or change behavior and be more sensitive to ecology and environment, respect nature
- Continue current model of globalization or rethink to make more self-sufficient, independent
- Continue current behavioral practices or move towards more spiritual, co-existence and mutual respect patters of relation and apply the traditional practices in the eastern value

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² <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

systems (e.g., *namaskar* instead hand shake, Yoga and meditation, more use of vegetarian food, etc.)

- Continue to open international border provisions existed in many countries or close (regulate them),
- Donald Trump approach of America first³ or usual international relations,
- Continue the existing practice of ‘sanctions and financial and economic pressure’ used by powerful countries or relax them to humanitarian ground.
- “West-centric” v/s ‘East-centric’ development paradigms
- Continuity of existing unbalanced market configuration v/s finding for ‘new equilibrium’

Challenges:

- Addressing effects of the COVID19 in economy, society, politics,
- Restoring psychological welling of people that is eroded by COVID19
- Restoring trust of people to their governments and political leaders
- Providing employment opportunities for the people
- Ensuring food security especially to poor and marginal people
- Restoring tourism sector
- Possible use of restrictive measures
- Existential problem of influential international organizations promoting globalization, capitalistic and power centric forces like World Trade Organization
- Possibility of emergence of autocratic, oligarchic forces and threat to liberal democracies
- Challenges brought by global shocks and stresses are excellent time for searching for and finding of new opportunities

Opportunities:

- Evaluate the quality of leadership based on their work at the time of COVID19 Crisis
- Review, refine and or bring new policies, laws and regulations, new structures and procedures for more socially responsive, environmentally friendly and people-centered actions
- New research and innovation
- Restoration of indigenous good practices that were displaced by the process of globalization
- Returning back to own culture, tradition and good practices (e.g. naturopathy, use of medical herbs, etc.), which were replaced together with expansion of globalization effects at local levels (e.g., people drink Coca-Cola by selling milk to others)

³ America first means largely nationalism, unilateralism, protectionism and isolationism.

- Revival and or strengthen health care system at local level
- Realization of limit of globalization by the bare advocate of globalization as the only solution of every economic problems.
- Developing self-sufficient food system, supply mechanism, emphasis of agriculture
- Realization of limit of wealth, power and prestige and change behavior by those who always feel proud of their wealth hand power.
- Regulating borders
- Reviewing the performance of development cooperation models, works of INGOs and other international institutions
- Promote and expand domestic production in selected strategic sectors such as food and pharmaceutical industries.

Scenarios

1. Normal: Global order as usual with some minor modifications and existing power dynamics remains intact. This is less likely though.
2. Change in power dynamics: Major change, new power players emerges and old power players struggle to keep t heir zone of influence. This is likely case.
3. Fundamental change in power dynamics and emergence of China as most powerful nation in the world and leading role in shaping global order. This is more likely scenario.