

Corona Pandemic: Analyzing the Response of US, China, Russia, India and Pakistan

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Abstract

This article is an effort to examine socio-political and economic impact of COVID-19 to state system global politics. Further, this study analyzes the response of US, China, Russia, India and Pakistan to Covid-19. Starting in December of 2019, first suspected as a mild cold in a seafood merchant of Hua’nan market was proved to be a fine example of “Butterfly” or you may call it “Domino” effect. At first it was taken by the world community an epidemic later regarded as a global pandemic engulfing over million of earthlings in matter of days, responsible for seizing its originating country and crippling the world’s economy. As of 26 March 2020, the number of confirmed cases in the country is 1,179, with 21 recoveries and 9 deaths. World Health Organization has appreciated Pakistan for taking meaningful and timely steps deal with Corona Virus. The efforts to deal with Covid-19 by states with the help of World Health organization (WHO) are admirable. WHO is urging all countries to prepare for the potential arrival of COVID-19 by readying emergency response systems; increasing capacity to detect and care for patients; ensuring hospitals have the space, supplies and necessary personnel; and developing life-saving medical interventions. States in their own operational capacity are working around; Preparedness & Response, Containment and Mitigation.

Key Words: Corona, COVID-19, Pandemic, Pakistan, US, China, Russia, India

Introduction

Starting in December of 2019, first suspected as a mild cold in a seafood merchant of Hua’nan market was proved to be a fine example of “Butterfly” or you may call it “Domino” effect. At first it was taken by the world community an epidemic later regarded as a global pandemic engulfing over million of earthlings in matter of days, responsible for seizing its originating country and crippling the world’s economy. As this viral pandemic started to grow people around the world began to speculate its causes, its immense socio-political effects and daily increase in number of patients by many folds. But there is something else that spread earlier than virus, COVID-19, itself and that is the “panic” caused by it. And there is the reason for this panic, COVID-19 single-handedly became a cause of decease for nearly 30,000 people in just three months, while hospitalizing half a million (ABCnews). States, that were not yet recorded any case or effect, began to formulate emergency responses, markets around the world saw momentous outrun of sanitizing products and some started to fabricate it as a biological war that would be limited to a certain region or country. While some states that didn’t consider it as deadly or longed for epidemic to enter their borders to drive any action, COVID-19 proved to be very harsh on them.

Analyzing the Response of US, China, Russia, India AND Pakistan

In China, Initially the response of Chinese government was measured; the authorities suppressed the voices of citizens as well as doctors regarding this deadly disease in Wuhan. Authorities turned deaf years toward the

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warnings of doctors by saying labeling their warnings as “lies”. This outbreak is not recent, but since December, Ophthalmologist Li Wenliang signaled that a group of doctors as well as the seven whistleblower scolded by the Chinese authorities for the sake of spreading illegal and misinformation vis-à-vis a virus on social media, that’s shows there was something that has been occurring internally in Wuhan that was not spread publicly.

When the disease declared publicly, at central level under the chairmanship of Chinese Premier Li Keqiang a meeting organized on January 25, 2020. After that meeting two days later Chinese Vice Premier Sun Chunlan visited Wuhan in order to guide the work to eradicate epidemic in Hubei province, in the fight against this pandemic the model that was adopted after 2008 Wenchuan earthquake again implemented. Under this model, the 16 provinces will provide support to the cities that are outside Wuhan which means that one province will be united with one city. In the response of such epidemic Government established two hospitals Houshenshan (Fire God Mountain) Hospital and Leishenshan (Thunder God Mountain) Hospital within 10 days. These two hospitals were established only to treat coronavirus patients. Cities also made strict control over the exchange of personal travel and exchanges. (TheDiplomat, 2020/02)

In the hours of dire need, Indian government was the first on which provided 15 tons of medical assistance that was consist of masks, gloves, and other equipment to China on 26 February 2020. (CNBC, 2020/03).

In Us, on state level, many bills as well as legislatures has been passed at central level in the fight against this epidemic. State or Public health emergence declared in each and every territory of state in response to such virus. Almost 32 states introduced legislature including resolutions and bills which consists of funding, disease surveillance, medical coverage, isolation and quarantine all are part of the actions taken by governors in state of emergency. The approach that has been used at state level is whole-of-America Approach, an economic package formulated for the infectious persons (TheDiplomat,2020/02).

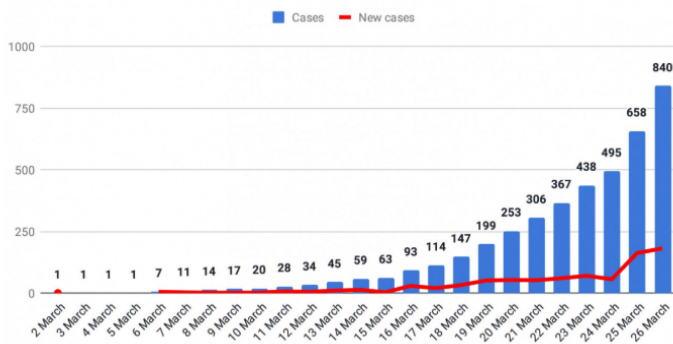
At national level, new guidelines were introduced, which included the ban over traveling, shut down bars, closing schools as well as food courts etc. for 15 days. It was also allowed the no permission is required in order to fulfill the growing demand of respirators from federal. Trump signed a coronavirus relief package that contains free test of the patients of COVID-19 In a speech Trump said that “Gatherings Should Be Limited to 10 People”

The economy of US affected drastically by this virus as the oil prices slid below \$30 a barrel, large business groups and local groups are begging the federal government to pay trillion of dollars in order to pay the salaries of workers that are stayed at home. Workers who are affecting by Coronavirus and staying at home would get 2-3 of their pay. (CNN, 2020/03/18). The Kentucky Derby first time in history postponed that was supposed to held in first Saturday of March but now it will take place in September, this race was suspended firstly in 1901 and then in 1945 due to WWII. (NYTimes, 2020/03/16). US administration is actually using the Defence Production Act under which the center would request to pharmaceutical companies to boost the supply of Coronavirus supplies to treat COVID-19 patients. In a tweet Trump said:

“I only signed the Defense Production Act to combat the Chinese Virus should we need to invoke it in a worst case scenario in the future. Hopefully there will be no need, but we are all in this together” (TheVox, 2020/03/18).

In Russia, since the spread of corona virus not limited to China but its blowout globally, Russian was also affected as 840 cases of Corona virus confirmed in Russia. On national level government shut down all the flights to other countries since March 27, all the shops have been closed on the direction of government only pharmaceutical and grocery stores will be open. All the cultural festivals and large gatherings were strictly banned by the government. The health sector is urging the patients of those mild infections to recover at home rather than admitting in hospitals. The Republic of Chechnya is the first region under the Russian control where complete lockdown has been observed because the first case of corona virus identified at this region. (TheMoscowTimes, 2020/03/26).

Numbers of Coronavirus Cases in Russia



(Source: The Moscow Times)

According to economist Luis Garicano, the epicenter of this virus is being shifted towards Europe, that's why lockdown is being practicing in almost every state. With this shift the supply chain is also being stagnate, no one is sure when it will completely be eliminated but its consequence are so deep in the term of economy, it is expected that its aftermath would be much more severe than the financial crisis of 2008.

President of European Union Ursula von der Leyen also formulated a comprehensive response in fight against this deadly virus, that response composed of measures such as, ensure the supply of medical equipment across the Europe, on the fiscal rule complete flexibility was given to all the European Union nations, for the support of health sector as well as small businesses EUR 37 billion Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative introduced, for the protection of borders a comprehensive guideline granted to all state in the form of suggestions such as ban on exchange of citizens over borders, it make a strictly prohibited non-essential flow of travelers to EU. The mechanism for the Crisis coordination of Commission has been activated and the meeting of the members made mandatory in the context of this outbreak. (Europa, 2020).

India is largest state after China in the term of population, it a union consists of 28 states and 7 territories, the Seventh Schedule of Indian constitution empowered both the union as well as states to formulate policies on the affairs of public health independently. The Union law deals only with the port quarantine means all the affairs that are related to seaman's and marine hospitals are fall under the jurisdiction of Union, on the flip side, all the affairs such as hospitals, dispensaries, sanitation and public health came under the control of state government but it is the mutual responsibility of state and union to prevent transmission of disease from one state to another.

On national level, on the direction of Prime Minister Modi, a group of ministers (GOM) established in order to supervise and review all the measures taken by Indian government in the wake of this coronavirus outbreak. Government made restrictions over traveling, visas suspended; only the diplomats and the government officials can travel abroad. For Overseas citizenship of India card holders' visas also suspended till April 15, 2020. For 21 days nationwide lockdown imposed in the state on the direction of Prime Minister. He said that "Every state, every district, every lane, every village will be under lockdown," (NYTimes, 2020/03/24).

Due to the proximity of Pakistan with the epicenter of this deadly virus i.e China, and with the state that is second largest in coronavirus cases after China i.e Iran, the treat for Pakistan is very visible as Pakistan shared its border with these two states. Initially no case was reported in Pakistan, but after the influx of passengers from abroad, this virus started penetrating in Pakistani society and more than 1,000 cases has been reported since last three weeks, this ration is reaching its peak with each passing day. In this state of emergency, Pakistani government formulated a National Action Plan for Corona virus disease (COVID-19) Pakistan, this 136 pages documents consists of all the measures as well as guidelines for citizens. The response of Pakistani government is considered to be the "timely" best national response" in the overall world. Dr Palitha Gunarathna Mahipala, the country head of WHO said that "at a time when other countries were reporting cases, Pakistan was keeping the virus at bay, which is something quite praiseworthy."

“At the moment, Pakistan has seven diagnostic labs which are capable of conducting 15,000 tests, but there is a need for more diagnostic facilities in case the number of suspected patients go up,” (TheGulfNews, 2020/03)

In the case of Iran, initially the situation was alarming because government did not take it seriously, no particular actions in the context of coronavirus has been taken by Tehran. The below picture that has been taken on March 18, 2020 depicts, the irresponsible behavior of government, this heavily crowded highway between Tehran & Qom that are epicenter of this deadly virus is raising serious questions regarding government efforts, in its fight against coronavirus. (Source: BBC News)



Since the increase in the death toll and reported case, a seriousness has been observed in the behavior of state, all the educational institutions, and public gathering spots have been closed by the government, all the religious and cultural practices have been suspended in the state for 15 days. (BBCNews, 2020). One of the reasons for fragile state towards this deadly disease is US imposed sanctions on Iran, that's why state is unable to facilitate the bulk of patients.

There are many reasons that why creating a vaccine for virus would take billions of dollars and unexpected time. COVID-19 is new, how it behaves, reproduces and spreads is still ambiguous to scientists around the world. The most common way of making vaccines is called “attenuated vaccines” (WeForumOrganization, 2020/03). This way includes injection of tiny dosages into body, prepared outside by a weaker strains of actual pathogens. The trials of vaccinations need a lots of test, vaccines must be meticulously tested to assure their working and see if there is any side-effects.

States around the world, joining hands with various welfare organizations and qualified teams of scientists are working to create experimental vaccines. Total number of research groups, industries and pharmaceutical companies working to cultivate vaccine, listed by WHO, are currently 41. Here let us see an overview of some of such exertions:

Professors at London school of Hygiene and Tropical medicine are working with Moderna, a biotech agency working in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Moderna is currently funded by USNIH. Scientists and professors working there consider themselves in a race and working to include all possible options and platforms for development of vaccine.

Organizations like Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation funded spin-out companies like: DIOSynVax. DIOSynVax was also funded by UK innovation agency (UKIA) to develop new and better vaccinations for influenza and Ebola virus. Now, with again funding of UKIA, DIOSynVax has sharpened its focus on developing of vaccine to counter COVID-19 only.

Another effort by UK is from researchers at Oxford University. They are planning to start first trails on human in start of May. The essence of virus they are using is created artificially, unable to replicate in human body. This is rumored to be the top dog vaccine produced in UK.

Germany is also heading forward in this race. African based foundation CEPI or Coalition for Preparedness Innovation funded an enormous amount of about \$8 million to a German based CureVac. European Investment

Bank also offered CureVac a loan of about 80 million euros. This company came into spotlight as President Donald Trump tried to get his hands on the company because of its advance technology and high-end laboratories. The largest shareholders are billionaires Dietmar Hopp and Bill Gates.

Another German based company, BioNTech is testing its fortune for developing mRNA vaccine. Company was in agreements with Pfizer, a Shanghai based pharmaceutical company and recently tested on mice in lab in Mainz. They are scheduling to test on humans in April (ScienceBusinessMag, 2020).

China has established a six month trial program for testing of an experimental vaccine, with help of biotech CanSino Biologics based in epicenter of pandemic, Wuhan. Eight candidates were recently recruited in the program.

Funded by USA and government, Migal-Galilee institute in Israel is also working to provide with their version of vaccine. This institute already hailed a scientific breakthrough early this year by isolating COVID-19. Human trials are expected to start by end of April.

State and federal government in Australia provided University of Queensland with almost \$17 million to mark their flag in race. Other shareholders are CEPI and Paul Ramsay foundation. They claimed to produce vaccine in early of 2021 and six more months to start human trials.

Investment of Canadian government is over \$23 million over its vaccine manufacturer VIDO-Intervac. VIDO-Intervac previously produced successful vaccine for SARS and Zika Virus. This institute is working swiftly and claimed to produce testing vaccinations in less than 3 weeks.

With all these developed countries, contributing in development of vaccine the part of USA is comparatively more. It seems like the superpower is way ahead in this race with large investments not only in local companies but in firms abroad, including UK, Israel and Australia. Other USA-Based companies are Johnson & Johnson, Novavax, and Inovio Pharmaceuticals (ScienceBusinessMag, 2020).

With the spread of COVID-19, many conspiracy theories began to circulate. The prediction of spread mentioned in a novel written back in 80s to accusation on Chinese scientists in Canada working on some deadly viruses and pathogens, possibly making a bioweapon (TheDiplomat, 2020/03). These conspiracies have their effects on official arrangements of states as-well. Chinese administrators are blaming USA army for bringing the virus in mainland China and Tweets by USA president renaming COVID-19 as “China Virus”. Question arises that why people around the world find it comfortable to share an idea of conspiracy, blaming states and institutions for creating and spreading of COVID-19? Answer may not be difficult if we set sail to debunk such theories.

Particular outcome of such theories, when they began to circulate in society, is it tears down trust of people on their governments. Many revolutionaries sees it as an opportunity to get in control with valid arguments. For example recent data from PEW research institute in USA estimated that about 29% of public in USA considers COVID-19 as a bioweapon. This number may seem comparatively small but when it comes to the government institutions and the orders of staying isolated and avoid gathering, people show distrust and consider it as a suppression by government. Another report by ‘the Verge’ (TheVergeMagazine, 2020/03/20), shows the confusion complex in people. As the spread was rapid and decisions taken by states were aggressive and strict, general public felt vulnerable, they began to gravitate towards any idea that provides them with any logical explanation, so why not a conspiracy that grips their minds with valid arguments.

But then there are governments that are now pushing these conspiracies (TheBulletin, 2020/03), for example the USA politicians adding to the flames by blaming China as the mastermind behind virus and bioengineered it. This gives theories an escape point that these conspiracies are not fabricated by some random person with a laptop and internet connection but by governments to gain maximum public support.

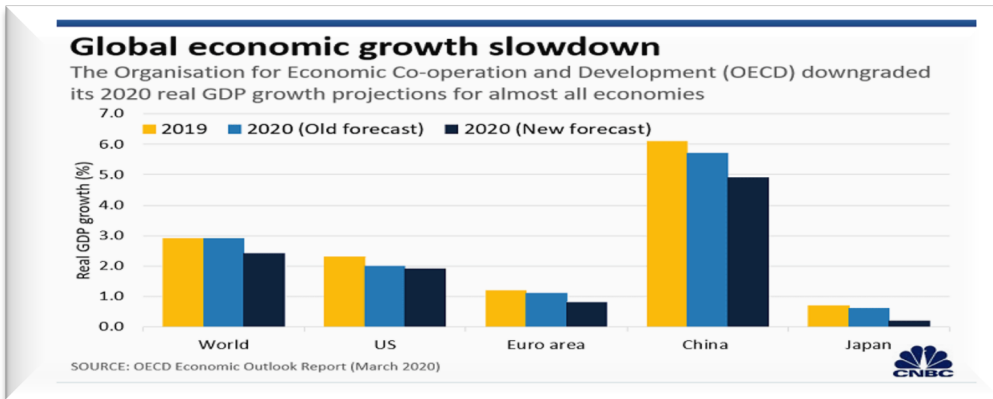
Now, if we talk about China and its response, we have to look before the spread of epidemic. Relations between USA and China were actually quite worse. Administrations on both sides found this epidemic as another opportunity to further deteriorate this relationship. One cannot easily comprehend that the government officials are so prone to discuss conspiracy and thus blame each other on international forums. For example the blame on American visitors in November of last year who came to China with lungs illness or the use of E-cigarettes is the cause of COVID-19. It was the USA policy makers and politicians who brought China into this nasty debate and blame-game first. For instance, Pompeo called COVID-19 as ‘Wuhan Virus’ (TheEconomicTimes, 2020/03) which provoked the people and government of China and in response Chinese ministry of Foreign Affairs

criticized USA and President Donald Trump through media channels i.e CGTN for talking racism and complimenting xenophobia during crisis with no action in terms of aid and assistance.

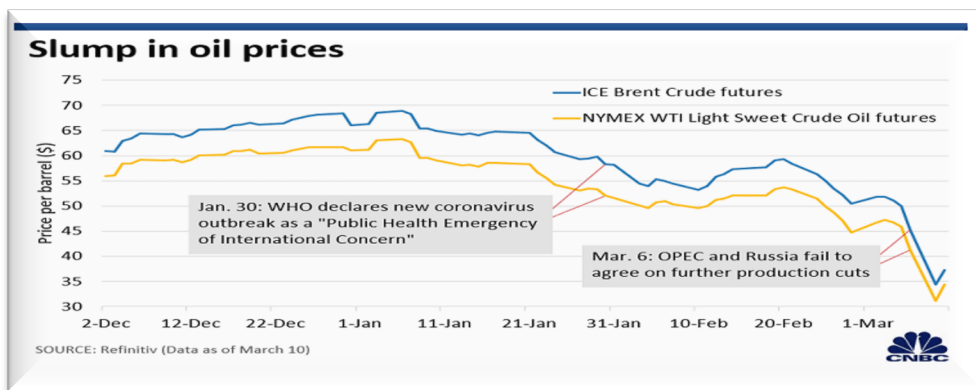
In amidst of crisis governments, policy-makers and politicians must not overlook the fact that these conspiracies can damage social support required to fight the virus. Aid and assistance to potentially poor states is imminent while there is always a chance for a new theory to venture. Head to head rivalry of USA and China can overturn to other states like UK and Italy and with the increase in this tussle can China blame Angela Merkel for bringing the virus to Wuhan in her visit last year?

Globally very deadly impact has been observed of this global pandemic, this virus became one of the largest threats to the economies of the world and financial markets. According to Ben May, head of global macro research at Oxford Economics: “from an economic perspective, the key issue is not just the number of cases of COVID-19, but the level of disruption to economies from containment measures,”

According to OECD economic outlook report of March 2020, a visible change has been observed on the overall economic growth, fig. 3 and 4 describe this case. (Lee, 2020)



(Source: OECD Report)



(Source: Refinitiv, Data as of March 10)

One thing we certainly know about COVID-19 is that it can be avoided, just like any other plague we are determined to find its cure someday soon but before getting our hands on vaccination we must externalize this issue and deal it for the betterment of whole humanity, not for a specific nation or for any particular interest. We must not give any space to conspiracy, particularly in these hours of panic and crisis. Great Powers must help incapable states in form of medical aid and assistance rather than treating this epidemic as a stage to perform political acts. A comprehensive and whole-of-globe approach is required in the fight against this virus. Whatever

the case is, it eventually comes down to us and how we deal it, we must listen to authorities and hope for a better future.

Pakistan Response to Corona Pandemics and its Impact on International Relations

As of 26 March 2020, the number of confirmed cases in the country is 1,179, with 21 recoveries and 9 deaths. World Health Organization has appreciated Pakistan for taking meaningful and timely steps to deal with Corona Virus. However the gradual but strict steps of Pakistan and economic vulnerability are border oriented thus impacted Pakistan's international connectivity and relations even with 'iron-friend' China and brotherly countries like Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia and Iran. Pakistan has requested for technical and equipment from other countries like Germany and Turkey as well. The Corona Pandemic has impacted Pakistan's economy therefore it is now looking towards International Financial Institutions like IMF, World Bank and Asian Development Bank.

Flight Operations

The Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) initially introduced screening measures at Islamabad, Karachi, Lahore and Peshawar airports for every passenger arriving from China. But as the Corona Pandemic situation gets worse internationally, the Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) decided to suspend the flight operation between Pakistan and China, Saudi Arabia, USA, Europe and other parts of the world.

Land Borders

Pakistan closed its borders to travelers from Afghanistan at the Chaman border. The border is only partially opened for transportation of food items while pedestrian movement remains suspended. The same strategy is also applied to the land border with Iran. Further, Pakistan-China, and Pak-India Borders have also been closed for two weeks.

Economic Relief Package and Medical Assistance

Lieutenant General Muhammad Afzal, the NDMA chairman, announced that the government is working on securing resources for healthcare workers. So the federal government requested to China and Germany for ventilators, medicines and other medical equipment to deal with Corona Pandemic effectively.

The Republic of China has declared to send 200 of its expert physicians to Pakistan amid the outbreak of the coronavirus. Economic Affairs Minister Hammad Azhar declared that China has provided aid worth \$4 million to Pakistan, alongside 14 metric tons of PPE, including face masks, thermometers, gloves and gowns and ventilators.

The federal government sought \$10 million from the non-development funds of the World Bank and offered financial assistance to Sindh.

The Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi raised the issue of external debt faced by Pakistan and how it should be relieved in repayment of loans on the phone with Heiko Maas, the German Foreign Minister. Qureshi reportedly told Maas that united efforts were required for dealing with the pandemic and that debt relief could help Pakistan in better handling of the outbreak in the country. In response, Maas assured him that the issues would be raised at the forthcoming G7 meeting and the European Union Foreign Ministers' Conference.

Role as Responsible Regional Player

On 24 March the Foreign Minister of Pakistan further communicated with French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian and the Spanish Foreign Minister Arancha Gonzalez that Iran neighbors Pakistan and people have cross borders traveling for religious activities therefore Iran's bad conditions can impact adversely therefore economic sanctions on Iran should be lifted immediately so it could utilize its own resources to fight the ongoing outbreak there. Mr. Mass also echoed the need to lift sanctions on Iran on calls with the

Conclusion

The efforts to deal with Covid-19 by states with the help of World Health organization (WHO) are admirable

WHO is urging all countries to prepare for the potential arrival of COVID-19 by readying emergency response systems; increasing capacity to detect and care for patients; ensuring hospitals have the space, supplies and necessary personnel; and developing life-saving medical interventions. States in their own operational capacity are working around; Preparedness & Response, Containment and Mitigation.

However, the states are recommended to work on the following areas to enhance capacity to deal with Covid-19:

1. Assessments of risks and capacities to determine priorities for emergency preparedness.
2. Enhancement of capacities at POE particularly effective screening protocols.
3. Surveillance and early warning, information management. • Access to diagnostic services during emergencies.
4. Basic, safe health and emergency services.
5. Risk communications.
6. Research development and evaluations to inform and accelerate emergency preparedness.

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