

## HOW THE WORLD WILL LOOK LIKE IN THE TIME OF POST-COVID-19

**Bilawal Abbas**, Department of International Relations, University of Karachi, Pakistan,

**Tafazal Kumail**, Department of Tourism and Service Management, Nankai University, Tainjin, China, [tafazalkumail@yahoo.com](mailto:tafazalkumail@yahoo.com)

**Farah Sadiq**, Department of Tourism Management, Guangxi University Nanning, China

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**Abstract.** *Covid-19 is providing a landmark scenario for the global order and system. The rule-based global order, which got developed during the Cold war and triumphed right after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, is now facing the first-ever jolt from the uncooperative and inflexible role of the nation-states across the globe. Hurting all the major economies, Covid-19 is also bringing an era that will be more authoritarian, and less liberal, including more open geostrategic competition and rivalry across the globe. The geostrategic rivalry and competition have already begun in the second decade of this century between the existing superpower America and the rising power China. The initial point of this competition is Washington's policy of Pivot to Asia and Beijing's ambitious initiative of Belt & Road Initiative, and then subsequent trade war and other making and breaking of alliances across the world. However, the post-pandemic era will make all these strategies explicit and open. However, the current study concluded that these strategic great games, technology, big data, cloud computing, Artificial Intelligence will be playing the dominant role, and these phenomena will be the ultimate deciding factors in determining the future of the world.*

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**Keywords:** COVID-19, Globalization, geostrategic competition, liberal world order

## **Introduction**

Globalization means to everyone. It is the phenomenon which has made the world interconnected and interdependent. The current environment of globalization and liberal democratic setup is the outcome of about forty-six year's indirect war (Cold War) between two global hegemon – the USA and the Soviet Union – in the post-World War II time. That bipolar system is important to understand because it was the period when the world had to choose liberal world order, authoritarian regimes or the communist world. The United States of America (USA) in that attempted to support the liberal democratic system as it was the best suitable form of government for the world to embrace and make the world livable and peaceful for the future generation (Kornhauser, 2013). From this perspective, it can be extracted that the generation for which the USA was trying to provide a liberal world order is today's generation. After forty-six years of intense debate on different global order and system, the liberal world order emerged as the only possible global system that can deliver and is appropriate for the wellbeing of the humanity (Ikenberry, 2011). Furthermore, the world saw a massive turnaround with explicit connectivity projects and the rise of internationalism across the globe. From the United Nations Framework for Climate Change (UNFCCC) to the emergence of World Trade Organisation (WTO), from Millennium Development Goals to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), from worldwide collaboration on non-proliferation of nuclear weapons to the war on terror, all are the significant initiatives of the liberal world order. What was more important in all of these was following and implementing global order unanimously to benefits the humankind. This global liberal thought was so powerful due to which no challenge or disease has shaken it or displaces it, not even by the so-called mindset of terrorism nor the global pandemics i.e. EBOLA, SARS, and MERS. However, what happened recently when the question is being raised on the globalization and liberal world order amid the widespread expansion of the COVID-19. Based on the recent debates and discussions, this study analyses and examine the post-COVID-19 world order.

There are different views and opinion exists in this regard. Majority of the experts and theorists have of the view that globalization is responsible for the expansion of the recent pandemic. In his one of the most recent studies related to globalization and COVID-19, Ruiz Estrada (2020) has found that

there some shortcomings in the pillars of globalization due to which the pandemic like COVID-19 expanded. Similarly, in another latest study conducted by Niewiadomski (2020), the author argued that Covid-19 has utterly undermined the neoliberal global agenda, and, thus, leading to ‘temporary’ de-globalization. Here the author used a word ‘temporary’ for de-globalization, by which the authors demonstrate that there are there travel restrictions in almost every part of the world, and people have started remote working priorities, which is ultimately altering the way human being live, work and learn. However, the author did not conclude any specific direction that the world will look like in future when the Covid-19 pandemic is no more. Similarly, Patrick (2020) has of the view that post-COVID-19 era will be based on the US election of 2020, in which the American will decide whether the current trend of nationalism is to be further extended under President Trump, or the American will oppose this wave of nationalism and elect Joe Biden which might embrace or reverse the global trend towards constructive internationalism. In other words, as per the view of the author, the global world order in Post-COVID-19 times is solely dependent upon the people of America.

According to the Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov, the US and its allies are attempting to impose their own vision and point of view on the globe to develop a new global order. However, the foreign minister demonstrated that the US has itself created this rule-based global order and now it is walking away. Such a demonstration he made under the auspices of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) virtual meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2020.

Furthermore, in a more vigorous opinion, the former US Secretary of State, National Security advisor and author of the numerous books like ‘Diplomacy’ and ‘World Order’, Henry Kissinger opined that the pandemic will alter global order completely (Kissinger, 2020). In addition to it, Harari (2020) puts it in a bit more technological advancement sphere where new technologies are the ultimate weapons for people to be subjected to drastic surveillance 24 hours a day. He used the special term ‘under the skin’ security measures which are embraced by the powerful countries in order keep check on the people, their movement and their personal likeness and disliking. However, what is more, crucial over here is that it is still not clear

that either world would embrace multipolarity, Bipolarity or Unipolarity or what type of world order there would be when the Covid-19 pandemic comes to end.

The study aims to understand the future of world order in the post-COVID-19 time. This study examines the impact of COVID-19 on the global world order. Furthermore, this study analyses to the future of unipolar world order and identify existing loopholes in the current global system. On the basis of above research objective this paper has some research question.

- Is it the Virus which is too powerful or the liberal world order which is too weak due to which eyebrows have been raised over the global system?
- Does the responsibility lie upon the globalization?
- What will be the future of technology in major economies especially global tourism amid widespread antipathy and nationalistic sentiments?

### **Motivation of the study:**

The COVID-19 pandemic has shaken the whole world. It is expanding with unprecedented speed, closing everything down, and impacting the global economics markets with undesirable repercussions. The woes of 2008 global recession were about to mend and the global economy was in shaky mode due to oil prices and trade wars, the recent pandemic pressed the shaky wall of the economy built on sands further. In this regards, different theorists, experts and political analysts demonstrate different views. Some argue that the recent pandemic is going to transform the global world order by installing more and more authoritarian regimes across the globe, while some present a bit different view. Therefore, this study is an attempt to examine all these approaches and perspectives in order to provide a practical, viable and realistic approach for the futuristic post-COVID-19 global world order.

### **Discussion:**

International experts and renowned scholars have demonstrated regarding the post-pandemic era in different terms and words. There is no doubt that Covid-19 has altered the normal routines of our daily life, however, sooner

or later the situation will be normalized once the Covid-19 vaccines are developed. However, it is to be seen whether such normality will create peace or create a disturbance. In other words, significant from getting normalized situation is that how the world will look like because different prediction from different authors and experts have been made, however, all those are comparatively related to technological, cultural, and health revolutions and transformations. This study is precisely based on discussing the global world order. According to Stephen Walt (2020), the Covid-19 pandemic is going to strengthen the nationalist sentiments. In other words, Stephen Walt argued that there would be a decline in the phenomena of globalism, internationalism, and multilateralism. On the other hand, it is also evident that the rise of China is also palpable. According to Mahbubani (2019), the US-centric globalization is turning into Asian (Chinese) centric globalization. This means that China is on the rise and Mahbubani has predicted it profoundly.

There are two assumptions to be made. First, it needs to clarify that whether China is truly on the rise and it is ultimately will overtake the US, then the global order of Chinese economic and political system will ultimately emerge. Second, if the US remains a dominant power then it might be analyzed that what type of global order the US wants to embrace; it is for sure that nationalism under Trump has no more inclined towards embracing globalization and multilateralism. Which means that if there is a rise of China, then the global economy may remain the same, however, with a bit reformed and refined version. However, if the US remains powerful and there is very little chance for China or other Asian countries to rise at the global stage, then change might be expected in global order because the US to be no more comfortable with this liberal democratic global system. Retreating from the global institutions such as Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), Paris Climate Accord of 2015, raising transnational trade barriers, halting funds of the World Health Organization (WHO) at this very critical moment of COVID-19, and alienating allies are some of the prominent endeavors of the recent past provide a clear direction that the rule-based global order created by the US is currently looming under the dark clouds of the American first narrative.

On the other hand, China has been proving to be a staunch supporter of multilateralism and pluralism. According to the former Indian ambassador to China, Mr Gokhale argued that China is the biggest beneficiary of globalization. Gokhale further demonstrated that China has effectively used Western-led multilateral institutions and organizations like the World Trade Organization (WTO) in order to advance its influence and interests. Most of the theorists and scholars would support this view because the sudden rise of China especially in the last three decades has shocked many observers and thinkers. In this regard, China might have benefitted from those external factors like WTO, yet, internal factors like an opening to market economy and reforms in its domestic structure could not be discarded altogether. According to IMF (2020), China had an annual growth of around 6 per cent with some painful ups and downs in the early 1970s, however, this average boomed to 9 per cent annually with relatively fewer ups and downs recorded in the post-1978 era. Several years later, the annual GDP growth rose at 13 per cent and its per capita income got quadrupled by 1994. And Since then China has never looked backwards. Within around four decades, China rises from nowhere to the second powerful country, especially in economic terms. It shows that the journey of moving upwards was initiated before the emergence of WTO in 1995, which China joined in 2001. For instance, if it is assumed what China has got today is simply because of WTO, there might some questions arise why other nations especially those created WTO did not benefited from it? Why Western liberal democracies that suit WTO mostly are left behind even the global system was based on their values and economic structure. Therefore, one can say that it's the manifestation of deep economic and social reforms in domestic structure has paved the way for China to boom with such a rapid pace.

In such a situation, it seems to be more of a failure of western nations or western liberal democracies that got involved in regional conflicts rather than taking care of their economies. Another major problem of the downfall of western liberal democracies is the unjust system of capitalism which has created inequality. According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP, 2011), the economic growth in the capitalist society in the Western world was enormous between 1945 and 1970s, since then economic growth got declined. Besides, the growth income in the US in the last a few decades have been in the hands of upper-income household, whereas, middle- and lower-income households have been reduced. In other words, the greater

share of aggregate's income is now going into the hand of upper-income class (See fig. 1).

Figure 1: Pew Research Center

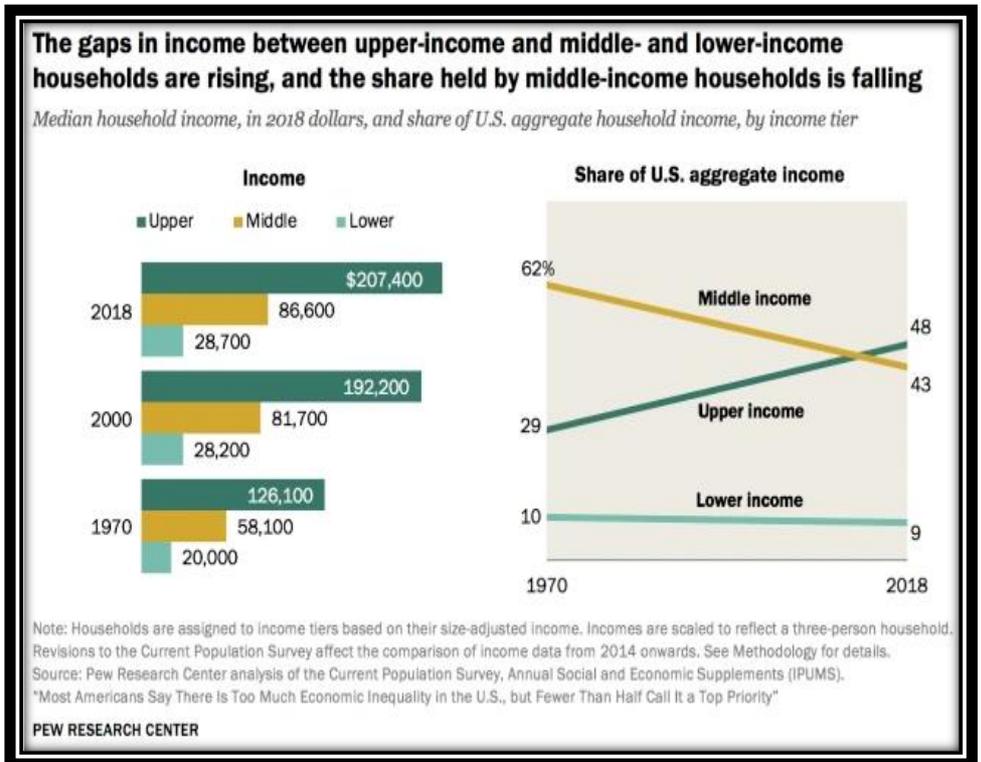
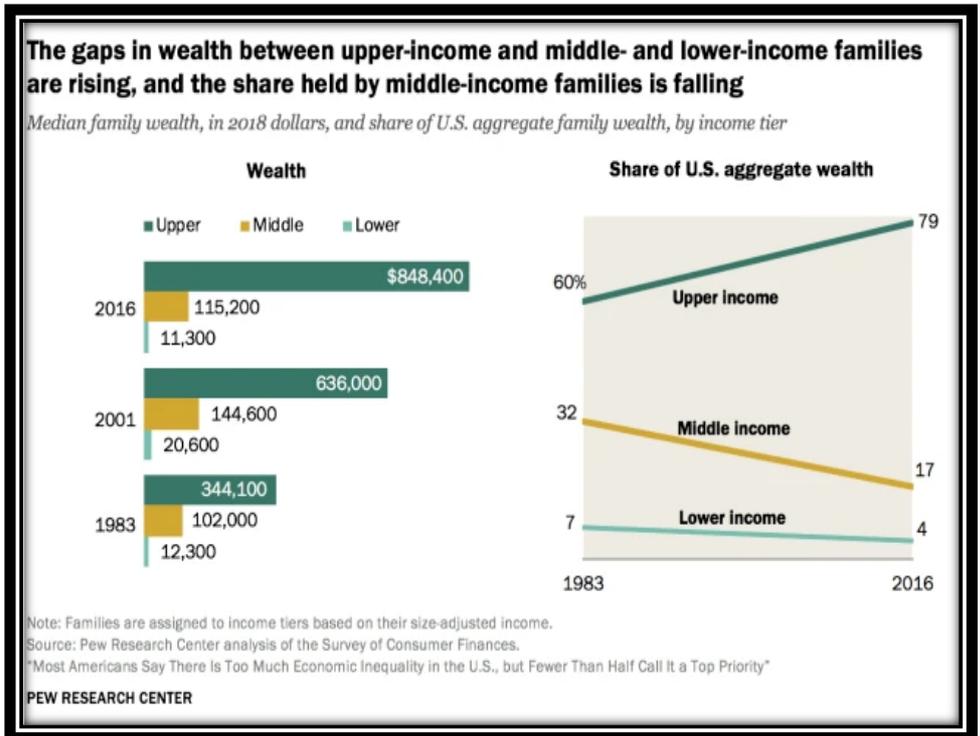


Figure 2: Pew Research Center



From fig.1 and fig.2, it clearly underscores that there has been a wider gap in the income and wealth among different class of society. Middle-income and lower-income segments are the most affected part, due to which the economy of the US has not much benefited from the WTO. Though the economy of the existing superpower is still dynamic far from other countries, yet the majority of the shares of income and wealth lies in the hand of the powerful 1% of the country. Therefore, the aforementioned surveys done by the Pew Research Center are the eyes opener for those who underestimate flaws in the capitalist economic system.

**Findings:**

Based on the above discussion and analysis, China's rise is written in the wall. And it is also the fact that China's and Russia's inclined towards multilateralism will likely to preserve the multilateral system, especially through ambitious Belt and Road initiative. As far as Belt and Road Initiative is present on the ground, multilateralism, and cooperation are going nowhere.

America is behaving like the Soviet Union of the Cold War, rigid, inflexible and non-cooperative. Whereas, China has taken place of the US, and became cooperative, and plural. The 21<sup>st</sup> century totally relies upon the strength of the economic system and technological advancement, which China has wholeheartedly embraced. On the hand, the US is still relying on its conventional superiority and traditional weapons. In order to cope with China and Russia, the USA has to take U-turn not in terms of the reiterating from global leadership, but from the conventional mindset. Unless this happens, China is taking the grounds.

Unlike the previous Cold War, there is a very little chance of another Cold war immediately right after the COVID-19 pandemic, because China and the US are more intertwined in trade and economic relations. Currently, the US policy seems to be halting China from reaching its goals of 'Made in China' (MIC-2025). This means that the US policy of trade and maligning BRI projects are mainly because of China's expansion horizontally and vertically. Therefore, if there is an official announcement of the Cold War, most probably from the US side, it will be more of economic war, not ideological like the previous one.

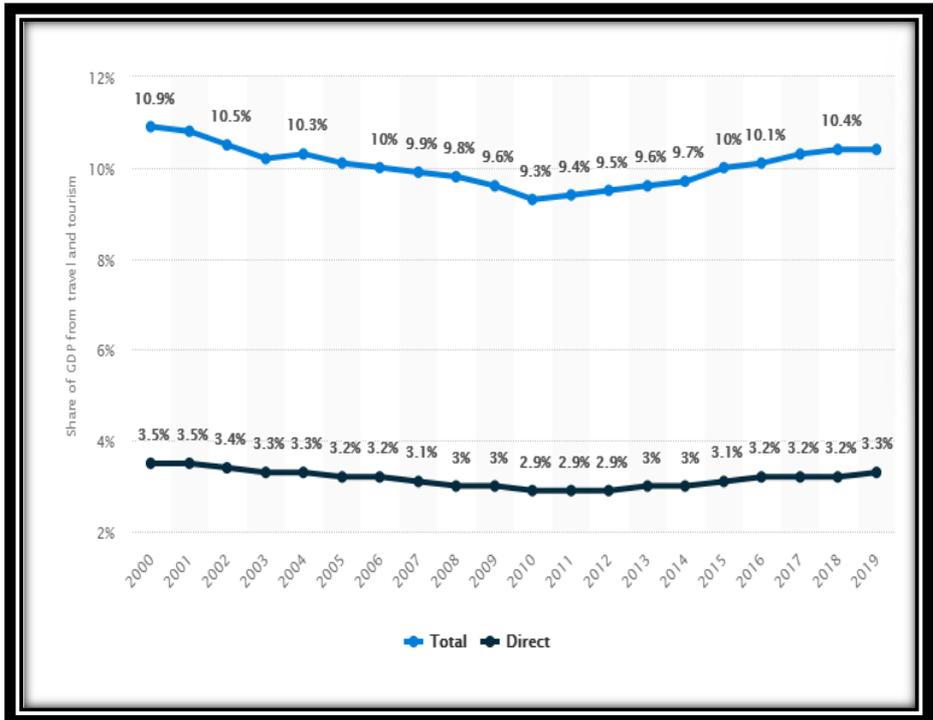
The footholds of Cold War or Bipolar world order will totally be based on two things. One, the US will be trying its best to stop China before MIC-2025 objectives and goals. If Washington feels that its policy is working, another policy will be to push back China further from 2035 goals and ultimately from 2049 destination which is envisioned by Xi Jinping. The Longer objectives of the US are not giving further room to China to expand its influence further, the shorter objectives of it are to dispatch the China 2025 dream, 2035 goals and objective and ultimately 2049 destination.

However, it will not work because stopping China from such an initiative will require global cooperation and allies, which the Trump administration has totally hammered away.

Some experts argue that globalization has failed to cope with COVID-19, therefore the world does not need it anymore or it should be replaced with nation-state world once again. Yet, the reality is that there was no global initiative for curbing Covid-19 altogether. Every state tried to control the pandemic in its own way, at a time when cooperation of the World Health Organization was much required; the US halted its funds on very crucial time. So, this study has found that it was not globalization; rather lack of cooperation is responsible for mayhem caused by the virus. Globalization, cooperation and consensus among major powerful countries and institutions might have provided different results. Therefore, global pandemics and issues need global solutions.

Furthermore, in this era of economic boom, the tourism industry is one the vibrant pillar which plays an enormous role not only in the economic revitalization but also in the propagating soft image of the countries. As per the latest finding of the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC, 2019), the total share of the Tourism Industry in the global GDP is about 10.3 per cent of the GDP (worth total around the US \$8.3 trillion). In this regard, the rising role of the tourism industry in economic up-gradation has been hit hard by the recent pandemic. Similarly, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has an estimated decline of around 60-80% in international tourism. What it shows that more economic downturns, unemployment and struggle of economic survival would become the prime cause of every nation.

Figure 3: Statista 2019



As per the question related to the future of the world, there are multifarious concepts and approaches. However, there seems to be no changing in the global world order, only global competition on different fronts will intensify like competition in space, technology, cloud computing, big data, surveillance. Furthermore, the use of mercenaries and its significance in the upcoming war and battlefields will be playing a dominant role. In a nutshell, COVID-19 will transform the way of life through technology and AI. In terms of global order, the dominant player of this competition will be China and Russia on one side and the US and its Indo-pacific allies on the other side, and behind the scenes, the hidden antipathy between China and the US may come out from hearts into the mouth. War of words and geostrategic competition will be increased. The plane of geostrategic competition has already taken off through the American pivot to East Asia policy a part of

the currently grand Indo-pacific strategy. In response to it, China has initiated its ambitious Belt & Road initiative. Therefore, Covid-19 will explicitly intensify this great game competition across the globe, including space.

### **Conclusion:**

Major pandemics bring major changes to the global system. World War I brought the concept of peace through cooperation and diplomacy. World War II brought the concept of the free world and global institutions. End of the Cold War brought the concept of multilateralism, liberal democratic system, cooperation, trade and interdependency. Besides, 9/11 brought the concept of terrorism and influential actors more than states that needed global cooperation yet again. The Great Depression of the 1930s and the global recession of 2008 have implied that economic survival is a must for every nation in order to be prosperous. Now, Covid-19 is not simply a disease, rather pandemic like 9/11 incident which is about to bring the concepts of omnipresent yet influential technological advancement, remote learning, remote working and geostrategic competition and decision-making through technology. And this technology will determine the future of everything. I used the word 'everything', it means that technology will be a deciding factor more than science that will determine the future of the world. Furthermore, this study also analyzed different aspects of the global economic and political system, based on this, it concluded that China is emerging so fast and its escape from 2008 global economic recession and now handling Covid-19 firmly, it underscores its ability to cope with global challenges. Therefore, China is a proponent of the multilateral and plural global world order, there might not any major implications on the global world order accept the intensification of global competition and rivalry between Washington and Beijing. And this rivalry and competition would primarily be seen in the Indo-pacific region and space through technology. [Cold] war, direct or any indirect war currently is not so imminent because China and the USA are more connected economically; however, competition has begun with Washington's Pivot to [East] Asia policy, now part of the grand Indo-Pacific strategy, and Beijing's Belt & Road initiative. Therefore, better sense must prevail, and cooperation must be the last resort to solve their differences because rivalry and competition can turn into a direct or indirect war at any time, not by calculation but by miscalculation.

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