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## GEOPOLITICS OF THE PANDEMIC: THE CASE OF CORONAVIRUS, THE VIRUS THAT DEFEATED STATES

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper examines the geopolitical implications of the coronavirus pandemic, exploring how a viral outbreak can impact the power dynamics among states and challenge traditional notions of state sovereignty. By analyzing the global response to the COVID-19 pandemic, this paper investigates how the virus has exposed vulnerabilities in state governance, disrupted international relations, and reshaped the geopolitical landscape. The subject of the study is conducted using a qualitative approach. The paper argues that the pandemic has revealed the limitations of state-centric approaches and highlights the need for international cooperation and multilateralism to effectively address global health crises.*

**Keywords:** Geopolitics of the pandemic, geopolitical challenges, population vulnerabilities, global health crisis, vaccine diplomacy, international cooperation.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, caused by the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2, has had an unprecedented impact on a global scale. The virus, which originated in Wuhan, China, quickly spread across borders, infecting millions of people and causing significant loss of life. Beyond the health consequences, the pandemic has had profound geopolitical implications, challenging the traditional power dynamics among states and revealing vulnerabilities in governance systems worldwide.

The coronavirus pandemic emerged in late 2019 and rapidly escalated into a global health crisis. The highly contagious nature of the virus, combined with its severe respiratory effects, posed a significant challenge to public health systems and led to overwhelming healthcare infrastructures in various countries. Governments implemented strict measures such as lockdowns, travel restrictions, and social distancing to contain the spread, causing profound economic disruptions and social upheaval.

Understanding the geopolitical dimensions of the pandemic is crucial for comprehending the broader implications of global politics, international relations, and state sovereignty. The crisis has shown how a microscopic pathogen can disrupt established power structures, reshape alliances, and influence the behavior of nations. By exploring the geopolitical aspects, we can acquire insights into how states respond, collaborate, or compete during times of crisis and how the pandemic might reshape the global order.

This paper aims to analyze the geopolitical dimensions of the coronavirus pandemic and its impact on the global stage. It also

aims to examine how the virus has challenged conventional notions of state sovereignty, altered power dynamics, and affected international relations.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEWS**

Literature reviews on the geopolitics of the COVID-19 pandemic provide a comprehensive analysis of the global political and international relations implications of the pandemic. These reviews examine the pandemic's impact on global power dynamics, international cooperation, and underlying vulnerabilities and tensions in the international system. They help to advance our understanding of the topic and provide a foundation for further research and analysis.

Davies and Hobson (2023) argue that the pandemic has exposed the fragility of the global system and highlighted the need for a more coordinated and cooperative approach to international relations. They note the pandemic has led to significant changes in the global order, with countries turning inward and prioritizing their interests over global cooperation (Davies & Hobson, 2023). However, they also suggest that this crisis presents an opportunity for countries to work together to address global challenges and build a more resilient and fairer world. The authors provide a thought-provoking analysis of the impact of the pandemic on international relations and the potential for positive change in the future.

Simon Dalby (2022) argues that the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the fragility of global systems and highlighted the need for a new approach to global governance. He suggests that the current geopolitical landscape, characterized by competition and conflict, is ill-equipped to address global challenges like

pandemics and climate change. Instead, he advocates for a "planetary politics" approach that emphasizes cooperation and collective action, and that recognizes the interconnectedness of all life on Earth (Dalby, 2022). This literature review examines the way the COVID-19 pandemic has affected global geopolitics, including issues related to national security, economic globalization, and international cooperation.

Fidler (2020) discusses the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on geopolitics and international law. The author argues that the pandemic has exposed the weaknesses in the global governance system and highlighted the need for greater cooperation and coordination among nations. The article also examines the role of international law in addressing the pandemic, including the use of emergency powers and the potential for legal liability for states that fail to adequately respond to the crisis (Fidler, 2020). The article provides a thoughtful analysis of the complex challenges posed by the pandemic and its broader implications for global governance and international law.

Agartan, Cook and Lin (2020) explore the role of the World Health Organization (WHO) in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and the changing dynamics of global institutions. The authors argue that the pandemic has highlighted the importance of multilateral cooperation and the need for global institutions like the WHO to play a leading role in responding to global health crises (Agartan, Cook, & Lin, 2020). However, they also note that the pandemic has exposed weaknesses in the current global governance system and raised questions about the effectiveness of multilateral institutions in the face of shifting regional dynamics.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2020) explores the geopolitical implications of the COVID-19 pandemic, arguing that it has exposed and exacerbated existing power imbalances between the Global North and South. Drawing on decolonial theory, the author highlights how Western knowledge systems have been prioritized and imposed on the rest of the world, leading to a lack of recognition and validation of alternative knowledge systems and approaches to addressing the pandemic (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020).

Francois Heisbourg (2020) discusses the impact of COVID-19 on the global political landscape. He argues that the pandemic has exposed weaknesses in the international system, particularly in terms of global cooperation and leadership. Heisbourg suggests that the pandemic has accelerated existing trends, such as the rise of China and the decline of the United States, and has led to an increase in nationalism and protectionism (Heisbourg, 2020). He concludes that the pandemic will have long-lasting effects on the global order and that countries must work together to address the challenges posed by the virus.

Cole and Dodds (2021) argue that the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need for global cooperation in addressing crises, including climate change. They suggest that the lessons learned from the pandemic response, such as the importance of scientific expertise and the need for coordinated action, can be applied to climate change policy (Cole & Dodds, 2021). However, they also caution that geopolitical tensions and economic pressures may hinder progress toward a more sustainable future.

Grinin and Korotayev (2020) discuss the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on geopolitics and the global economy. The authors argue that the pandemic has accelerated existing trends towards deglobalization and increased geopolitical tensions, particularly between the US and China. They also suggest that the pandemic has exacerbated existing economic inequalities and could lead to a global recession (Grinin & Korotayev, 2020).

Ilyas (2020) discusses the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on global geopolitics. The author argues that the pandemic has shifted the balance of power among nations, with some countries managing the crisis better than others. The article also highlights the role of technology in responding to the pandemic and the potential for a digital divide to emerge. Additionally, the author discusses the impact of the pandemic on global trade and the potential for countries to become more self-sufficient in the future (Ilyas, 2020).

Bahi (2021) discusses the geopolitical implications of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly the ongoing rivalry between the US and China. The author argues that this rivalry has the potential to lead to a Kindleberger trap, where the dominant power (in this case, the US) fails to provide sufficient global leadership and cooperation, leading to instability and conflict. The article also explores the role of international organizations and the need for a coordinated global response to the pandemic (Bahi, 2021).

This study aims to contribute to the literature on the geopolitics of the COVID-19 pandemic by providing a more nuanced understanding of the impact of the pandemic on states' sovereignty, global power dynamics, and international

cooperation. It seeks to bridge the gap in existing literature reviews and offer a comprehensive analysis of the geopolitical implications of the pandemic, to advance our understanding of the topic and provide a foundation for further research and analysis. The existing literature on the COVID-19 pandemic's geopolitical implications lacks a comprehensive analysis, which presents an opportunity to contribute to the current body of knowledge.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

The paper is based on a qualitative approach, conducting a systematic literature review drawing on a range of sources including journal articles, organization documents, and academic literature. Aiming at analyzing and synthesizing the information to identify how the pandemic has impacted global geopolitics, with a focus on issues related to national sovereignty security, economic globalization, and international cooperation.

### **4. ANALYSIS**

The analysis explores the geopolitical implications of the COVID-19 pandemic, including its impact on international relations, global governance, and regional power dynamics. It examines how countries have responded to the crisis and the effect this has had on their relationships with other nations. The goal is to gain a better understanding and a comprehensive vision of how the pandemic has reshaped the geopolitical landscape and what this means for the future.

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## 4.1 The State and Sovereignty in Crisis

The outbreak of COVID-19 has brought up important inquiries about the extent and reasoning behind the authority of governments, as they employ significant levels of control over their citizens in their efforts to combat the virus (Lehtinen & Brunila, 2021). The first search result is an article from the University of Helsinki that discusses the questions surrounding the limits and justifications of sovereign power during the COVID-19 pandemic (Lehtinen & Brunila, 2021). The article highlights how nation-states have used high degrees of power over populations in their strategies to counter the virus. This raises important questions about the boundaries of state power and the ethical justifications for implementing certain measures. The analysis presented in the article focuses on a particular facet of the strategy employed during the pandemic.

The second search result appears to be unrelated to the topic, as it discusses sovereignty from a broader perspective rather than specifically addressing the crisis. It discusses the meaning of sovereignty, emphasizing that states are the sole subjects of international law and possess the right to self-determination and independence (Volk, 2022). While the information provided in this search result does not directly address the crisis, it contributes to the understanding of the general concept of state sovereignty.

### ***4.1.1 Traditional Notions of State Sovereignty and their Implications***

Traditional notions of state sovereignty have long played a crucial role in shaping international relations and political theory. The emergence of state sovereignty introduced new



legal and moral principles that guided the interactions between states. One of the notable philosophers who delved into the concept of state sovereignty was Thomas Hobbes, whose influential work, *Leviathan*, explored the nature and functioning of sovereignty (Ramos, 2013). The notion of traditional sovereignty, often regarded as foundational and timeless, has faced criticism. Scholars argue that this traditional understanding is not as universally accepted as previously assumed. Alternative ideas, such as conditional and responsible sovereignty, have acquired traction (Glanville, 2013; Ramos, 2013).

Traditional notions of state sovereignty refer to the authority and control that a state exercises within its territory, including the ability to govern, decide, and enforce laws without external interference. This concept has been the foundation of the modern international system, with states being the primary actors in global affairs. State sovereignty implies exclusive control over borders, the ability to assert authority over citizens, and the power to engage in diplomatic relations with other states. The concept of state sovereignty also presents challenges and limitations. In an interconnected world, states must navigate the complexities of globalization, international law, and the expectations of the international community. Traditional notions of sovereignty have faced criticism in recent years, leading to discussions about conditional and responsible sovereignty (Besson, April 2011).

The implications of state sovereignty include the preservation of national identity, protection of territorial integrity, and the promotion of national interests. States have historically been responsible for ensuring the security, welfare, and well-being of

their citizens. However, the coronavirus pandemic has posed significant challenges to these traditional notions of state sovereignty.

#### ***4.1.2 Challenges Posed by the Pandemic to State Governance and Control***

The pandemic has presented unprecedented challenges to state governance and control. The highly contagious nature of the virus, combined with its rapid spread across borders, has exposed the limitations of state capacities in effectively managing a global health crisis. Some of the challenges are as follows:

**a) Healthcare Infrastructure:** The sudden surge in COVID-19 cases has overwhelmed healthcare systems, highlighting deficiencies in infrastructure, resources, and preparedness. States have struggled to provide adequate healthcare services, leading to a strain on medical facilities, shortages of essential supplies, and difficulties in managing the crisis (Kaye et al., 2021).

The stream of COVID-19 cases has overpowered healthcare systems worldwide. The sudden increase in patients requiring medical attention has placed immense pressure on hospitals, clinics, and other healthcare facilities. Insufficient resources, including beds, medical equipment, and essential supplies, have been a common challenge. The shortage of critical items like personal protective equipment (PPE), ventilators, and testing kits has exacerbated the difficulties faced by healthcare providers and authorities in delivering adequate care (OECD, 2021).

**b) Economic Impact:** The pandemic has resulted in severe economic disruptions, including lockdowns, business closures, and supply chain disruptions. States have faced challenges in ensuring economic stability, managing unemployment, and addressing the needs of businesses and vulnerable populations (Davila et al., 2021). Generally, the pandemic has caused unprecedented economic disruption in many countries (Drosos, Theodoroulakis, Antoniou & Rajter, 2021).

**c) Information Management:** Rapid and accurate dissemination of information is crucial during a health crisis. However, misinformation, disinformation, and lack of coordination have posed challenges to state efforts in managing public health communication and ensuring compliance with preventive measures (Czerniak et al., 2023). Misinformation and disinformation: The proliferation of inaccurate, misleading, or false information during a health crisis can have detrimental effects on public health. Misinformation and disinformation can spread rapidly through various channels, including social media platforms. These sources of misinformation undermine public trust, contribute to confusion, and may lead to non-compliance with preventive measures. Governments and health authorities face the challenge of combating misinformation while ensuring accurate information reaches the public (Borges do Nascimento et al., 2022; Czerniak et al., 2023; Johnson, Wallace, & Lee, 2022).

**d) Coordination and Collaboration:** The global nature of the pandemic has highlighted the need for international cooperation and coordination. However, states have faced challenges in effectively collaborating, sharing information, and coordinating response efforts due to political tensions, national interests, and divergent approaches (Haruna, Ngwafu, &

Muzata, 2023). The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the need for international cooperation and coordination in managing global health crises.

The interconnectedness of our world has made it evident that a collective and collaborative approach is essential to effectively address and mitigate the impact of such a widespread and transnational crisis. However, several challenges have hindered the coordination and collaboration efforts among states (Haruna et al., 2023). These challenges include political tensions, national interests, and divergent approaches to handling the pandemic. One of the primary obstacles to international cooperation and coordination has been political tensions. The pandemic has unfolded against a backdrop of geopolitical rivalries and strained international relations. In some cases, political disagreements and conflicts have hindered the smooth exchange of information, hindered joint response efforts, and impeded the sharing of resources and expertise.

Moreover, national interests have also played a role in complicating collaboration. Countries have had to prioritize their populations and allocate resources accordingly, which has at times led to competition for essential supplies, such as personal protective equipment and vaccines.

#### ***4.1.3 Erosion of State Authority and the Emergence of non-state Actors***

The COVID-19 pandemic has indeed had significant implications for crisis management and governance, including the erosion of state authority and the emergence of non-state actors in the crisis management process.

The pandemic has challenged the authority of states in various ways. One key aspect is the strain it has put on healthcare systems and their capacity to effectively respond to the crisis. Many governments have struggled to manage the overwhelming demands for healthcare services, leading to a loss of public confidence in state institutions (OECD, 2020). This erosion of trust and confidence in state authority has opened opportunities for non-state actors to play a role in crisis management. Some notable aspects include:

a) **Supranational Organizations:** Global health organizations, such as the World Health Organization (WHO), have played a prominent role in coordinating the international response to the pandemic (Jones & Hameiri, 2022). Their involvement has challenged the exclusivity of state authority, as they have assumed a central role in guiding global health policies and providing technical guidance.

b) **Regional Cooperation:** Regional organizations and alliances have also played a significant role in the pandemic response, often bypassing traditional state-centric approaches. Examples include the European Union's coordination efforts and joint initiatives among neighboring countries to address common challenges.

c) Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations have indeed played an active role in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, challenging the monopoly of state authority and contributing to crisis management efforts, they have assisted, mobilized resources, and advocating for the rights and needs of vulnerable populations. They have amplified the voices of marginalized communities, including women, children, the elderly, refugees,

and other displaced individuals. By highlighting their specific challenges and vulnerabilities during the pandemic, NGOs have pushed for policy changes and ensured that their rights and well-being are not overlooked (Duclos & Palmer, 2020; Maple, Walker, & Vearey, 2022). While the provided search result highlights the contrasting narratives surrounding non-state actors, it emphasizes the role of NGOs as vanguards of a global civil society (Carayannis & Weiss, 2021). The active participation of NGOs has helped address gaps in the crisis response and provided support where state institutions have faced challenges.

**d) Public-Private Partnerships:** Collaborations between governments and private sector entities have been instrumental in addressing various aspects of the pandemic, including vaccine development, production, and distribution. These partnerships have blurred the lines between state and non-state actors, creating new dynamics in crisis management.

The erosion of state authority and the emergence of non-state actors in the pandemic response have raised questions about the future of state sovereignty and the need for a more collaborative and multilateral approach to address global challenges.

#### **4.2 Global Health Governance and Pandemic Response**

Global health governance refers to the system of institutions, policies, and processes that are in place to address global health issues and coordinate responses to health emergencies, such as pandemics. It involves international cooperation and collaboration among governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and other

stakeholders to promote and protect public health on a global scale.

The pandemic response is a critical component of global health governance. When a pandemic occurs, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, it requires a coordinated and collaborative effort at the global level to effectively respond and mitigate its impact. Here are some aspects of the global pandemic response:

#### ***4.2.1 Role of International Organizations (WHO, UN) in Global Health Governance***

International organizations, such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations (UN), have a big part to play in global health governance. The WHO is the leading specialized agency responsible for coordinating international health efforts, providing technical guidance, and promoting global health security (Lee & Piper, 2020). Its functions include monitoring global health trends, responding to health emergencies, and supporting countries in strengthening their healthcare systems. The UN, through its various bodies and agencies, also be a major factor in global health governance (Lee & Piper, 2020). It facilitates cooperation among member states, coordinates efforts to address health challenges, and advocates for health as a fundamental human right.

These international organizations provide a platform for countries to collaborate, exchange information, and harmonize policies in response to the pandemic. They serve as repositories of expertise, disseminate best practices, and coordinate international efforts to ensure a coherent global response.

#### ***4.2.2 Critiques of the Global Health Architecture and its Effectiveness***

The global health architecture has faced significant criticism regarding its effectiveness in responding to the pandemic. Some critiques contain:

**a) Resource Constraints:** International organizations, including the WHO, have faced financial and resource constraints, limiting their capacity to respond effectively. Insufficient funding and over-reliance on voluntary contributions have hampered their ability to perform critical functions (Gwenzi & Rzymiski, 2021).

**b) Political Interference:** Global health governance has been subjected to political pressures and influences, which can undermine the impartiality and independence of the decision-making processes (Fuleihan, 2022). Criticisms have been raised about the politicization of health emergencies, resulting in delays or inadequate responses.

**c) Coordination and Preparedness:** The pandemic has highlighted the need for improved coordination and preparedness at the global level. Some argue that the global health architecture lacks a robust mechanism for timely information sharing, coordinated response planning, and resource allocation (Saxena et al., 2023).

**d) Representation and Equity:** The representation of countries and their voices in global health governance has been a matter of contention. The power imbalances and unequal access to decision-making processes perpetuate inequities in resource allocation and pandemic response.



These critiques have prompted calls for reforming the global health architecture to enhance its effectiveness, strengthen its funding mechanisms, improve coordination, and ensure fair representation.

#### ***4.2.3 National Responses and their Implications for International Relations***

National responses to the pandemic have varied significantly, leading to implications for international relations. Some countries have adopted a cooperative approach, actively sharing information, resources, and expertise to support global efforts. This cooperative response has fostered solidarity, strengthened diplomatic ties, and facilitated collaborations in areas such as research, vaccine development, and humanitarian aid.

However, there have also been instances of nationalistic responses, where countries prioritize their interests over international cooperation. This approach has led to tensions, strained relations, and competition for resources. Vaccine nationalism, for example, has raised concerns about equity in vaccine distribution and has highlighted the potential for vaccine-related diplomatic tensions (Kelly & McGlasson, 2022; Kickbusch & Liu, 2022). National responses to the pandemic have also influenced perceptions of leadership and governance. Countries that have effectively managed the crisis and demonstrated strong leadership have gained recognition and influence on the global stage. Conversely, inadequate or ineffective responses have raised questions about governance capabilities and may impact a country's standing in international relations (Kelly & McGlasson, 2022). Besides the question of

Solidarity has been overshadowed by nationalism, leading to avoidable fatalities and unequal distribution of vaccines and treatments. The current systems of intellectual property, trade secrets, and data rights that govern pharmaceutical companies have further hindered the expansion of production capabilities and the provision of affordable and fair access to COVID-19 vaccines and other medical supplies in low- and middle-income nations (Saxena et al., 2023).

International organizations such as the WHO and the UN have a bearing on global health governance and pandemic response. However, resource constraints, political interference, coordination, and equity have prompted calls for reform. National responses to the pandemic have varied, impacting international relations either through cooperative efforts or nationalistic approaches. Enhancing global health governance and fostering international cooperation is essential for addressing current and future health crises effectively.

### **4.3 Impact on International Relations**

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on international relations in various ways. Here are some of the key impacts:

#### ***4.3.1 Shifts in Power Dynamics and Influence Among States***

The pandemic has potentially reshaped the global power dynamics. Some countries, like China, used the crisis as an opportunity to expand their influence through medical diplomacy, providing aid and resources to other nations. The handling of the pandemic by certain countries has led to

questions about their leadership and credibility on the international stage (Bahi, 2021; Gauttam, Singh, & Kaur, 2020).

The coronavirus pandemic has led to significant shifts in power dynamics and influence among states as follows:

**a) Emerging Powers:** The crisis has provided an opportunity for emerging powers to showcase their capabilities and influence on the global stage. Countries like China and Russia have engaged in vaccine diplomacy, providing COVID-19 vaccines to other nations and positioning themselves as global players in the pandemic response (Kelly & McGlasson, 2022; Kickbusch & Liu, 2022; Manfredi-Sánchez, 2022). This has challenged the traditional dominance of Western powers and reshaped perceptions of influence.

**b) Diminished Influence of Global Powers:** The pandemic has revealed vulnerabilities and weaknesses in some of the traditionally powerful countries. Inadequate pandemic response, strained healthcare systems, and economic challenges have led to a loss of influence for certain global powers (Suzuki & Yang, 2022). This has created space for other actors to assert themselves and influence global narratives.

**c) Shift in Regional Influence:** The crisis has also witnessed shifts in regional influence. Countries that have effectively managed the pandemic and showed leadership have gained influence and enhanced their regional standing (Bailey et al., 2020). Regional powers with strong healthcare systems and robust response mechanisms have become key players in shaping regional dynamics.

#### ***4.3.2 Geopolitical Implications of Vaccine Diplomacy and Global Health Aid***

Vaccine diplomacy and global health aid have significant geopolitical implications:

**a) Soft Power Projection:** Countries that have successfully developed and distributed vaccines have used them as tools of soft power projection. By providing vaccines to other nations, they aim to enhance their image, strengthen diplomatic ties, and gain influence (Manfredi-Sánchez, 2022). This vaccine diplomacy has the potential to reshape alliances, forge new partnerships, and impact geopolitical dynamics.

**b) Influence in Developing Countries:** Vaccine access and distribution have become critical factors in influencing relationships with developing countries. Providing vaccines and health aid allows countries to gain goodwill, influence policy decisions, and secure economic and strategic partnerships. This competition for influence in developing countries has geopolitical ramifications in terms of economic cooperation, access to resources, and political alignment.

**c) Equity Concerns:** Vaccine diplomacy and global health aid have also raised concerns about equity and fairness (Manfredi-Sánchez, 2022). Unequal access to vaccines can exacerbate existing geopolitical divisions and contribute to global inequality (Bahi, 2021). The perception of certain countries using vaccines as tools of influence can strain international relations and impact trust among nations.

#### ***4.3.3 Regional and Global Cooperation or Competition in Pandemic Response***

The pandemic has witnessed both regional and global cooperation as well as competition in response efforts.

**a) Regional Cooperation:** Regional organizations and alliances have played a crucial role in coordinating pandemic response within their respective regions. Examples include the European Union's joint procurement of vaccines and coordination of travel restrictions, and the African Union's collective efforts in mobilizing resources and sharing information. Regional cooperation has facilitated the pooling of resources, sharing of best practices, and joint decision-making, fostering solidarity and regional resilience.

**b) Global Cooperation:** Global initiatives, such as COVAX, have aimed to ensure fair access to vaccines worldwide. These collaborative efforts to bring together governments, international organizations, and vaccine manufacturers to support fair distribution (Bahi, 2021; Suzuki & Yang, 2022). Multilateral platforms have provided opportunities for dialogue, resource sharing, and coordination of response efforts.

**c) Competition for Resources:** The pandemic has also fueled competition for resources, including medical supplies (Suzuki & Yang, 2022), personal protective equipment (PPE), and vaccines. This competition can strain international relations, create tensions, and lead to accusations of hoarding or unfair distribution practices. Vaccine nationalism and protectionist measures can hinder global cooperation and exacerbate geopolitical divisions.

The coronavirus pandemic has resulted in shifts in power dynamics among states, with emerging powers acquiring influence and some global powers experiencing diminished influence. Vaccine diplomacy and global health aid have significant geopolitical implications, including soft power projection and competition for influence in developing countries. Regional and global cooperation has been observed, but competition for resources.

#### 4.4 Economic and Trade Disruptions

##### *4.4.1 Effects of the Pandemic on Global Supply Chains and Trade Flows*

The coronavirus pandemic has had significant effects on global supply chains and trade flows:

**a) Disruptions to Supply Chains:** The pandemic has led to disruptions in global supply chains because of lockdowns, restrictions on movement, and closures of businesses. Manufacturing activities, transportation, and logistics have been severely affected, resulting in delays, shortages, and increased costs (Suzuki & Yang, 2022). Dependence on single-source suppliers and just-in-time production models has been exposed as a vulnerability.

**b) Shifts in Trade Patterns:** The pandemic has caused shifts in trade patterns as countries have implemented measures to protect domestic industries and secure essential supplies. Export restrictions, tariffs, and trade barriers have been imposed, impacting global trade flows (Bahi, 2021). Essential goods, such as medical supplies and food, have faced increased demand, while sectors such as tourism and aviation have suffered from reduced trade volumes.

**c) Regionalization of Supply Chains:** The disruptions have prompted discussions on the regionalization of supply chains as countries seek to reduce dependence on distant suppliers and ensure greater resilience. This may lead to the reconfiguration of supply chains, diversification of sourcing, and the relocation of manufacturing activities to achieve greater self-sufficiency and reduce vulnerabilities.

#### ***4.4.2 Shifts in Economic Power and Implications for Global Economic Order***

The pandemic has led to shifts in economic power, with implications for the global economic order:

**a) Impact on Major Economies:** Major economies have experienced significant economic contractions and disruptions. Traditional economic powerhouses, such as the United States, China, and European Union countries, have faced challenges in maintaining economic stability and growth. This has resulted in a potential reordering of economic power and influence (Bahi, 2021).

**b) Rise of New Economic Players:** Emerging economies, particularly in Asia, have demonstrated resilience and recovery in the face of the pandemic. Countries like China, South Korea, and Vietnam have managed to control the virus and sustain economic activity (Liu, Lee, & Lee, 2020), potentially enhancing their economic power and influence on the global stage.

**c) Implications for Global Economic Governance:** The shifts in economic power can have implications for global economic governance (Kaye et al., 2021). Traditional institutions and frameworks may need to adapt to accommodate the changing dynamics. The role of existing

global economic organizations, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Trade Organization (WTO), may be challenged, while new mechanisms and alliances may emerge to reflect the evolving economic order.

#### ***4.4.3 Geoeconomic Considerations in Vaccine Distribution and Economic Recovery***

Geoeconomic considerations have played a significant role in vaccine distribution and economic recovery efforts:

a) **Vaccine Diplomacy and Economic Leverage:** Countries with the capacity to produce or procure vaccines have used them as tools of economic leverage (Manfredi-Sánchez, 2022). Providing vaccines to other nations can enhance diplomatic relationships, foster economic ties, and position countries as reliable partners. Vaccine distribution has become intertwined with economic and geopolitical interests, impacting international relations and alliances.

b) **Disparities in Vaccine Access and Economic Recovery:** Disparities in vaccine access and the pace of economic recovery can widen existing economic inequalities between countries. Unequal access to vaccines can hinder the recovery of certain economies, impacting trade, investment, and tourism (Suzuki & Yang, 2022). Countries with successful vaccination campaigns may experience a faster economic rebound, potentially leading to shifts in economic power and global economic order.

c) **Economic Interdependence and Cooperation:** The pandemic has highlighted the importance of economic interdependence and cooperation. Collaborative efforts to ensure fair vaccine distribution, support economic recovery, and coordinate fiscal and monetary policies are crucial for global



stability and sustainable growth (Suzuki & Yang, 2022). Goeconomic considerations must be balanced with the need for international cooperation to address shared challenges.

#### **4.5 Technological Dimensions and Digital Geopolitics**

Technological dimensions and digital geopolitics are interconnected concepts that have become increasingly relevant in the 21st century. Digital geopolitics refers to the use of technology and information to advance a country's strategic interests in the international arena. This struggle encompasses a wide range of technologies, from artificial intelligence and machine learning to blockchain and quantum computing. As countries seek to gain an edge in this new digital landscape, technology will play a critical role in shaping the future of international relations.

##### ***4.5.1 Acceleration of Digital Transformation and Surveillance Technologies***

The coronavirus pandemic has sped up the process of digital transformation and the adoption of surveillance technologies.

**a) Remote Work and Digitalization:** The pandemic has caused remote work arrangements, leading to the rapid adoption of digital technologies for communication, collaboration, and productivity (Allam & Jones, 2021). Organizations and individuals have increasingly relied on digital platforms, cloud computing, and online services to maintain operations and facilitate remote interactions.

**b) Surveillance Technologies and Contact Tracing:** To contain the spread of the virus, many countries have deployed surveillance technologies, such as contact tracing apps, facial

recognition systems, and location tracking measures. These technologies enable authorities to monitor population movements, identify potential infection clusters, and enforce quarantine measures (Allam & Jones, 2021). The pandemic has sparked debates about the balance between public health imperatives and privacy rights.

**c) Artificial Intelligence and Healthcare:** Artificial intelligence (AI) has played a crucial role in analyzing vast amounts of data, modeling virus transmission, and accelerating drug discovery. Machine learning algorithms have been employed for diagnosing, monitoring patient conditions, and predicting healthcare resource needs (Adly, Adly, & Adly, 2020). The pandemic has highlighted the potential of AI in healthcare but has also raised ethical considerations and concerns about algorithmic bias.

#### ***4.5.2 Privacy and Security Concerns in Pandemic Response***

The increased reliance on digital technologies and surveillance measures in the pandemic response has raised privacy and security concerns and includes:

**a) Data Privacy and Surveillance:** Contact tracing apps and surveillance technologies involve the collection and processing of personal data. Ensuring the privacy and security of this data, including its storage, access, and usage, has become a critical concern (Kitchin, 2020). Balancing public health objectives with individual privacy rights requires robust data protection frameworks, transparency, and accountability.

**b) Cybersecurity Risks:** The rapid digital transformation and increased online activities have heightened cybersecurity risks. Cybercriminals take advantage of social flaws, and they

have exploited vulnerabilities. in remote work environments, healthcare systems, and critical infrastructure. Protecting sensitive health data, securing digital communication channels (Alawida, Omolara, Abiodun, & Al-Rajab, 2022; Kitchin, 2020), and enhancing cybersecurity measures have become imperative to mitigate risks and maintain trust in digital technologies.

**c) Surveillance and Authoritarianism:** The pandemic has provided opportunities for governments to expand surveillance capabilities and control over populations. Sometimes, emergency measures introduced during the crisis have been sustained, raising concerns about the erosion of civil liberties, democratic norms, and the potential for authoritarianism. Balancing public health imperatives with individual rights and freedoms is crucial in ensuring the responsible use of surveillance technologies.

#### ***4.5.3 Digital Divides and Implications for Global Technological Competition***

The pandemic has exacerbated existing digital divides and has implications for global technological competition. Key considerations include:

**a) Access to Digital Technologies:** Disparities in access to digital technologies, such as internet connectivity, devices, and digital skills, have become more pronounced during the pandemic. Limited access to technology and connectivity exacerbates inequalities in education, healthcare, and economic opportunities. Bridging the digital divide is essential for ensuring inclusive and sustainable development.

**b) Technological Competitiveness:** The pandemic has underscored the importance of technological competitiveness for countries and regions. The ability to develop, adopt, and harness digital technologies has become a crucial factor in economic resilience and recovery (Thite, 2022). Countries with advanced technological capabilities are better positioned to adapt to remote work, digital business models, and emerging technologies.

**c) Geopolitical Implications:** The digital divide and global technological competition have geopolitical implications. Access to digital technologies and control over critical technological infrastructure can shape influence and power dynamics. The race for 5G networks, the development of advanced AI capabilities, and digital trade agreements are examples of areas where technological competition intersects with geopolitics (Khan, Su, Umar & Zhang, 2022).

The pandemic has accelerated digital transformation, leading to increased adoption of surveillance technologies, remote work arrangements, and AI in healthcare.

#### 4.6 Social and Humanitarian Consequences

The COVID-19 pandemic has had significant social and humanitarian consequences around the world. The virus has caused widespread illness, death, and economic disruption. Many countries have implemented strict measures such as lockdowns and social distancing to slow the spread of the virus, which has had significant impacts on people's mental health and social well-being. The pandemic has also highlighted existing inequalities and disparities in access to healthcare, education, and other essential services. The long-term consequences of

the pandemic are still uncertain, but it will have a lasting impact on society and the global economy.

#### ***4.6.1 Impact on Social Cohesion and Domestic Stability***

The coronavirus pandemic has had significant impacts on social cohesion and domestic stability. Key considerations include:

**a) Social Fragmentation:** The pandemic has exacerbated existing social divisions and inequalities. Disparities in access to healthcare, economic opportunities, and education have widened, leading to social fragmentation. The crisis has highlighted societal vulnerabilities, such as income inequality, racial and ethnic disparities, and the digital divide, which can strain social cohesion.

**b) Mental Health and Well-being:** The prolonged nature of the pandemic, with its associated lockdowns, restrictions, and fear of infection, has had adverse effects on mental health and well-being. Social isolation, anxiety, depression, and increased stress levels have become widespread (Wright, Williams & Veldhuijzen van Zanten, 2021). The impact on mental health can have long-term consequences for social cohesion and domestic stability.

**c) Political and Social Unrest:** The socio-economic disruptions caused by the pandemic have the potential to fuel political and social unrest. Unemployment, economic downturns, and grievances related to government responses can lead to protests, demonstrations, and social upheaval. The strain on social services, healthcare systems, and public infrastructure can contribute to public dissatisfaction and social unrest.

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#### ***4.6.2 Migration, Refugees and Humanitarian Crises***

The pandemic has had implications for migration, refugees, and humanitarian crises.

**a) Displacement and Vulnerable Populations:** The pandemic has affected migrants, refugees, and internally displaced persons (IDPs) who face additional challenges and vulnerabilities. Border closures, travel restrictions, and reduced humanitarian aid have limited access to protection, healthcare, and livelihood opportunities (Duclos & Palmer, 2020; González Arias & Araluce, 2021). Displaced populations are often at greater risk of infection, with limited access to healthcare and inadequate living conditions.

**b) Humanitarian Response and Help:** The pandemic has strained humanitarian response efforts. Humanitarian organizations face challenges in delivering aid, ensuring the safety of their staff, and accessing affected populations. Funding shortfalls, travel restrictions, and limitations on movement have hampered the provision of life-saving help, exacerbating existing humanitarian crises.

**c) Border Controls and Migration Policies:** The pandemic has led to the tightening of border controls and immigration policies in many countries (González Arias & Araluce, 2021). Travel restrictions, border closures, and stringent quarantine measures have limited mobility and access to asylum procedures. This has raised concerns about the protection of refugees and the right to seek asylum, particularly in regions with ongoing conflicts and humanitarian emergencies.

#### ***4.6.3 Geopolitical Implications of Disparities in Access to Healthcare and Resources***

Disparities in access to healthcare and resources during the pandemic have had geopolitical implications. This includes:

**a) Health Diplomacy and International Cooperation:** The pandemic has highlighted the importance of international cooperation in addressing global health challenges. Disparities in access to healthcare resources, including vaccines, can strain international relations and create geopolitical tensions (Manfredi-Sánchez, 2022). Collaboration and solidarity in sharing resources, expertise, and best practices are crucial for effective pandemic response and global health security.

**b) Inequalities and Global Governance:** The pandemic has revealed and amplified existing inequalities in access to healthcare, essential supplies, and resources (Bapuji, Patel, Ertug, & Allen, 2020). These inequalities have implications for global governance and the perception of fairness in international relations. Addressing disparities in access requires multilateral cooperation, fair distribution mechanisms, and a focus on strengthening health systems in vulnerable regions.

**c) Impact on Global Influence and Soft Power:** The ability of countries to effectively manage the pandemic and help others has implications for their global influence and soft power. Countries that have shown effective pandemic response, supported international collaborations and provided humanitarian aid can enhance their geopolitical influence and reputation. The pandemic has reshaped perceptions of leadership and influence in global affairs. The pandemic has had significant social and humanitarian consequences, including impacts on social cohesion, mental health, and political stability.

## 4.7 Lessons Learned and the Way Forward

Various lessons are learned from the main topic of the geopolitics of the pandemic.

### ***4.7.1 Reflection on the Geopolitical Challenges Revealed by the Pandemic***

The pandemic has revealed several geopolitical challenges that require reflection and consideration, including:

**a) Interconnectedness and Interdependence:** The crisis has highlighted the interconnectedness and interdependence of nations. Global challenges, such as pandemics, climate change, and economic crises, require collaborative solutions that transcend national boundaries. Geopolitical rivalries and isolationist approaches can hinder effective responses and exacerbate the impacts of such crises.

**b) Fragility of Global Systems:** The pandemic has exposed the fragility of global systems, including healthcare, supply chains, and governance structures. Weaknesses and vulnerabilities in these systems can have far-reaching consequences during a crisis. Building resilience, preparedness, and adaptability in global systems is crucial for managing future challenges.

**c) Disparities and Inequalities:** The pandemic has accentuated existing disparities and inequalities within and between countries. Access to healthcare, digital technologies, education, and resources has played a significant role in determining outcomes. Addressing these disparities is essential for sustainable and inclusive global development.



#### ***4.7.2 Importance of International Cooperation and Multilateralism***

The pandemic has underscored the importance of international cooperation and multilateralism in addressing global challenges:

a) **Global Health Security** Pandemics are global health security threats that require a collective response. Strengthening international cooperation mechanisms, such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and other regional organizations, is crucial for effective preparedness, surveillance, and response to future outbreaks.

b) **Collaborative Research and Knowledge Sharing:** The pandemic has highlighted the significance of collaborative research, data sharing, and knowledge exchange. Sharing scientific information, best practices and lessons learned can accelerate the development of diagnostics, treatments, and vaccines. Openness and cooperation among scientists, researchers, and institutions are vital for advancing global health and mitigating future crises.

c) **Multilateral Approaches to Global Challenges:** The pandemic has shown that addressing global challenges requires multilateral approaches. Collaborative efforts in areas such as climate change, economic recovery, and digital governance are necessary to build a more resilient and sustainable world. Multilateral institutions and frameworks need to be strengthened and reformed to effectively tackle future crises.

#### ***4.7.3 Recommendations for Strengthening Global Health Governance***

Strengthening global health governance is essential for better pandemic preparedness and response. Key recommendations include:

**a) Enhanced Funding and Support for Global Health Institutions:** Adequate and sustained funding for global health institutions, such as the WHO, is crucial for their effective functioning. Ensuring that these institutions have the resources, expertise, and authority to lead and coordinate global health efforts is vital.

**b) Strengthened Surveillance and Early Warning Systems:** Investing in robust global surveillance and early warning systems can facilitate early detection and response to outbreaks. Improving data sharing, transparency, and collaboration among countries can help identify and contain emerging health threats promptly.

**c) Fair Access to Healthcare and Essential Supplies:** Promoting fair access to healthcare, vaccines, and essential supplies is vital for global health security. International cooperation is necessary to ensure fair distribution mechanisms, strengthen health systems, and support countries with limited resources. This includes technology transfer, capacity building, and financial support for developing nations.

**d) Coordination of Research and Development Efforts:** Strengthening coordination and collaboration in research and development can accelerate the development of diagnostics, treatments, and vaccines. Sharing scientific knowledge, harmonizing regulatory processes, and facilitating technology

transfer can support global efforts to combat future health crises.

e) **Integration of Health into Foreign Policy and Geopolitical Considerations:** Health considerations should be integrated into foreign policy and geopolitical decision-making. Recognizing the geopolitical implications of health crises and the importance of international cooperation.

#### 4.8 Findings and Discussion

The discussion has revealed several key findings and arguments regarding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on geopolitics. The pandemic has resulted in significant shifts in power dynamics and international relations, it has affected the balance of power and global governance. The outbreak of the virus has affected the relationship between major powers, such as the United States and China, and has prompted a reevaluation of global power dynamics. Understanding the geopolitical aspects of the pandemic is crucial for comprehending the current global situation and for developing effective strategies to address future challenges.

It has prompted countries to reevaluate their strategic priorities, cooperation frameworks, and national security strategies considering the challenges posed by the virus. trade disruptions, and technology. It has also highlighted the importance of international cooperation, multilateralism, and global health governance in effectively responding to global challenges. The pandemic has accentuated geopolitical challenges, such as disparities in access to healthcare and resources, social cohesion, and domestic stability, necessitating reflection and action. The pandemic has significant implications for the future

of geopolitics, including potential geopolitical realignments and reconfigurations, the increasing importance of technology, digital governance, and cybersecurity in shaping the global geopolitical landscape, and the need to address disparities in access to healthcare, resources, and technology. The pandemic has demonstrated that an infectious disease can transcend borders and impact societies, economies, and political systems worldwide, thus necessitating a multilateral approach to effectively address global health crises, because the world is left in geopolitical uncertainty.

To address these challenges and build a more sustainable and inclusive world, it is essential to prioritize resilience, preparedness, and collaboration in managing future crises. This requires strengthening global health governance, supporting multilateral institutions and frameworks, investing in healthcare systems, research and development, and sustainable infrastructure, and addressing inequalities within and between countries. The post-pandemic world presents an opportunity to reshape global governance, strengthen cooperation, and address the challenges that have emerged from the crisis through international collaboration and resilience.

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