

Covid-19 World Order and Global Solidarity: The African Continents Pains and Gains

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Abstract

The paper investigates how paradigm shifts caused by varying interests, actions, or inactions of global actors and nationals during the COVID-19 Pandemic undermine the international community's ability to band together to mitigate the devastating effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic. The study maintained that the world is gradually transiting into the epoch of multiplex world order where the paramount major powers lack the capacity to shape the world order to favour their own interests, among other competing great powers, regional giants, and emerging powers. In light of this, Africa was regarded as one of the most vulnerable continents adversely affected by the pandemic. Therefore, the study seeks to ascertain the extent to which it affects the African continent by weighing the cost and the benefit of the pandemic. In conclusion, the study recommended a homegrown solution against future reoccurrence.

Keywords: Covid-19, global governance, global solidarity, and paradigm shift, world order

Introduction

The aftermath of the cold war has ushered the international system into the Unipolar order, especially with America's preeminence in commercial power, military spending, domination in international institutions, and the influence of its currency (the Dollar), as the world's primary reserve currency (Norrlöf, 2010; Brooks & Wohlforth, 2016; Ikenberry, 1998). While the United States tries to sustain the unipolar world, the emergence of global powers and other events has wiggled and confronted its historical position as a major worldwide superpower.

Prominent among these are the 9/11 attack, China's ascension to superpower status, Iran's nuclear ambitions and how they were managed by Obama's Administration, North Korea's nuclear ambitions, retreat and unending war in the Middle East despite U.S. attempts to curtail them, among others (Ofer, 2019). However, pundits have also linked this to the disposition and manifestation of various agendas such as western Islamophobia, radical nationalism, white supremacy, restrictive immigration executive orders, neo-isolationism, racist rhetoric, and policies that contradict the Obama administration's liberal internationalist approach (Foreign Policy Contributors, 2021; Soleimanzadeh, Omid, & Barati, 201).

While this lingers, the world was greeted with the displeasing outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is important to note that the world between 1852 and 2022 has witnessed seven (7) pandemics, namely; Cholera (1852-1860), Bubonic plague (1855-1960), Spanish Flu (1918), Asian Flu (1956-1958), Hong-Kong Flu (1968), HIV/AIDS (1981 till present day), SARS-

COVID-19. Five out of the aforementioned pandemics broke out at a time when the United Nation Organization (UNO) oversees global governance as the legitimate and supreme international institution, while two out of these five (HIV/AIDS and SARS-COVID-19) fell within the post-cold war era (Mph-Online, n.d; Jarus, 2021). With the benefit of hindsight, HIV/AIDS, unlike COVID-19, was more prominent due to its swift spate of transmission, mortality rate, movement restrictions, devastating effect on domestic and international economies, dynamics of pandemic politics, and global world order. As of 2020, HIV/AIDS has claimed about Seven Hundred and Seventy Thousand lives (770, 000) and Thirty-Eight (38) million people worldwide are living with it. On the other hand, fifteen (15) million people were reported to have been killed by the COVID-19 Pandemic in the span of two years (Aljazerra, May 5, 2022; Stasha, 202).

Therefore, it could be said that the outbreak of the pandemic could be described as a litmus test for the efficacy of solidarity in the context of global governance under the stewardship of the United Nation Organisation (UNO) in the post-cold war era. Global governance denotes coordinating the conduct of transnational actors; facilitating cooperation; resolving conflicts; and addressing collective action issues. Barnett, Pevehouse & Raustiala (2021). Similarly, the United Nations Organization was established on the principles of unity, harmony, and collaboration in the face of economic, social, cultural, and humanitarian crises that could occur anywhere in the world (United Nation Organization, n.d.). In order to assess the viability of this credibility in the COVID-19 era and beyond, the study tries to provide answers to some of the key arguable posers that have trailed the COVID-19 discourse. Did changes in the world order have an impact on global governance? What has been the impact of this on collective action against COVID-19? What are the costs and benefits for Africa?

World Order: Antique to Till Date

The term "world orders" is tailored around the dominant global ideologies, international political economy, and various occurrences that have accompanied the international system from antiquity to the present day. Each of these perspectives clearly illustrates the meaning and linkage between different epochs in the international system. Ideologically, realists see world order as a system of states in which the distribution of military and economic power produces a variety of orders, including unipolar, bipolar, and multipolar (Thornton, 2021).

In this context, Varisco (2013) posits that power capabilities determine the number of great powers and, consequently, the polarity of the international system. To him, if the great powers are more than two and have a similar degree of strength, the system is considered multi-polar; bipolar when they are two; and unipolar with only one great power. On the other hand, liberals, constructivists, and globalists perceive it as a process in which states or dominant classes are not the only actors but also transnational institutions, norms, and values that transcend national boundaries (Thornton, 2021). Manifestly, the role played by the United Nations in preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons, which could have increased competition among great powers and consequently enhanced a multi-polar order, corroborates the idealist perspective (Moeini & Slobodov, 2020).

Putting global occurrences in retrospect, the world has spanned through the multipolar, to bipolar, and unipolar world orders respectively. The tripartite division between the Liao dynasty

(9161125), Song dynasty (9601279), Jin dynasty (11151234), and Yuan dynasty (1271 to 1368); Three Kingdoms of the Traditional Chinese (220 to 280 AD), Warring State Period in Traditional Chinese (Around 481 BC to 403 BC), Thirty Years of War (1618–1648), World War I (1914-1918), and World War II the end of World II marked the degenerate into the Cold War Era (1945–1981), and this also represents the Bipolar epoch.

To put it another way, international political economists and Marxist scholars associated world order with a capitalist global economy and the configuration of actors such as great powers or economic classes (Thornton, 2021). Equally, Marxist theorists and historians have illustrated the six economic phases through which human society spans. Transiting from primitive communism, slavery, feudalism, capitalism, socialism, and lastly to global, stateless communism (International Encyclopedia of Social Science, 2022). Historically, the United States has been the only great power that has created a world order in which capitalist democracy and its promotion have played a central role (Thornton, 2021). This was made possible as a result of the cold war between the East led by the USSR and the Western Bloc led by the United State of America, which led to the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), most especially with the breakaway fifteen (15) sovereign states, namely; Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan (Burke, 2014). This weakened the influence of the USSR as one of the major bi-polar great powers and consequently led to the evolution of a unipolar world order. Above all, it could be deduced that economic adventurism and political expansionism have been the two major underlying facts that have influenced the global order, while colonialism, the propagation of ideology, financial aid, and other neo-colonial leanings have been the major tools used for the realization of these objectives.

Governance in the Global Context

The conceptualisation of global governance, like any other concept in the social sciences, is knotted with arguable ideological denotation. The idealist is of the view that global governance through the formation of international institutions will foster cooperation and orderliness among nations of the world. The realist sees it as a tool used to maintain the divide between the least and most powerful states, whereas the Marxist sees it as a means for richer states and multinational corporations to exploit poorer states (Ozkan & Cetin, 2016). It's easy to see why Ramkisson (2017; Ramkisson, 2017) believes that global governance is neither anarchy nor world government, but rather exists at the crossroads of these opposing systems. For that reason, it is important to preclude the ambiguity associated with the conceptualization of the term and conceive it within the purview of the study. Global governance is basically referred to as a system of institutions, processes, norms, formal agreements, and formal systems that govern worldwide activities for the common good (Benedict, 2001). This involves coordinating the actions and inactions of transnational actors; facilitating cooperation; managing crises; conflict resolution; and attending to trans-border issues through joint action and support (Barnett, Pevehouse & Raustiala, 2021; Jang & Rashchupkina, 2016).

Today, the United Nations is the most recognized and supreme institution saddled with the responsibility of coordinating world governance. However, its evolution could be linked to the negative experiences of the first and second worlds, and the prevention and management of any form of crisis that could threaten the existence and wellbeing of the global populace (Global

Challenge Foundation, n.d; United Nation Organization, n.d.). The formation of UNO was spearheaded by political heads of the foremost nations of the world, namely President Roosevelt of the U.S.A., Prime Minister Churchill of the United Kingdom, Maxim Litvinov of the USSR, and T.V. Soong of China, with the signing of a short document on the 1st of January, 1942 (United Nation Organization, n.d.). The signing of the UN Charter by 51 countries on the 26th of June 1945, authenticated the formation, while the charter consequently took effect on the 24th of October, 1945, and this marked the beginning of global governance (United Nation Organization, n.d; The World National Museum, 2021).

Thus, the organization's four core mandates were to: maintain global peace; facilitate cordial relations among nations; improve the social-economic well-being of the global populace; ensure its freedom; and coordinate member states toward achieving the aforementioned goals (Briney, 2019; United Nations Organization, n.d.). It could be deduced from these objectives that facilitating global solidarity falls within the horizon of the United Nations' mandate, and without global solidarity, which the United Nations (n.d.) described as one of the essential tenets of international relations in the twenty-first century, which enables people or nations who are underprivileged or least privileged to deserve assistance from the most privileged. Consequently, it will be difficult for the four core objectives of the organization to manifest.

In consonance with this position, the United Nations General Assembly also declared December 20 each year as International Human Solidarity Day, by resolution 60/209, after identifying solidarity as one of the essential and universal values that should underpin ties between peoples in the twenty-first century (United Nation Organization, n.d.). Therefore, the extent to which member states collaborate in achieving issues affecting any member state as a whole is not just a means to an end, it is the end of a means. This implies that cooperation within a member is a potent tool for achieving its goal and, concurrently, an achievement on its own..

Theoretical Framework

New World Order Conspiracy Theory

The New World Order conspiracy theory draws its roots from anti-Semitism, anti-government radicals who believe that socialist tyranny is dominating the world and perceive the need to eliminate the one world conspiracy and the Christian fundamentalists opposed to the one world religion conspiracy with the emergence of the anti-Christ (Anti-Defamation League, 2017; Byford, 2011; American Jewish Committee, n.d.). However, the publication of *The Profound Revolution* by Marry Davidson in 1966, Christin Fierce anti-communist paranoia championed by the John Birch Society in 1971, and President George H.W. Bush's speech on the post-Cold War world of global cooperation and internationalism, among other publications and claims related to the term, gave prominence to the theory (Hsu, 2013).

The theory assumes that the emergence of a new order is associated with the ambitious or hidden agenda of the powerful class, who desire to disrupt the sovereign nation state arrangement and control the world through an authoritarian one-world government (Hsu, 2013; Barkun, 2003; Valori, 2021). These powerful cabals could be any or all of the following global key players: developed nations, their allies, notable influential personalities and international non-governmental organizations such as intelligence agencies, organized crime groups, terrorist

groups, secret groups, religious or political groups, or advocacy groups who work together or independently towards the realization of this agenda. Proponents of the theory maintain that powerful cabals of elites orchestrate political, financial, systemic crises, or other global events that will initiate a dystopian international governing structure in order to subjugate the world's population (Flores, 2022; Fenster, 2008; Berley & Lyons 2000; Barkun, 2003; Goldberg, 2001; Camp, 1997).

In consonance with the assumption of the theory, several conspiracies have been linked with the outbreak of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Prominent among them is the notion that it is a furtherance of the United States of America and China's quest for global dominance. While America blames the outbreak and spread of the virus on China, the latter portrays it as a potent avenue to gain more allies through humanitarian aid, which consequently aggravates tensions that could impede global solidarity and management of the crisis (International Crisis Group, 2020). Although there is no consensus affirmation about the originating source of the outbreak, there are arguments as to whether the pandemic changed the unipolar world order spearheaded by America. Nevertheless, the USA, among its contemporaries, remains the greatest casualty of the pandemic. For instance, it recorded the highest global mortality rate, with about one million, two thousand, and twenty-eight (1,002, 208) dead people, amounting to a 305.3 death rate. This is significantly higher than China, which is ranked fifty-sixth (56th) with approximately Fourteen Thousand, Six Hundred and Four (14,604) dead people, amounting to a 1.0 death rate out of the global death casualties of Six Million, Two Hundred and Ninety-Two Thousand, Seven Hundred and Forty (6, 292,740) (Johns Hopkins University, cited in British Broadcasting Corporation, June 1, 2022).

Despite the fact that China was affected by the pandemic, it was one of the 48 countries with a higher second-quarter GDP than at the end of 2019, with Taiwan, Vietnam, South Korea, and Hong Kong coming close (McCormick, 2020). In the same vein, the spate in which countries of the world recovered from the economic downturn caused by COVID-19 also favored China, just as it has predicted that it may surpass its major arch rival, the United States, to become the world's biggest economy in 2028, five years earlier than previous estimation (Reuters, 2020). Prior to the outbreak of COVID-19, myriads of occurrences such as the 9/11 attack, loss of US Pro-US Arab allies in Egypt, Yemen, and Tunisia; strong ties between Iran and Syria; Russia's support for the Assad regime and Iran; Assad's war crimes and the failure of the U.N. to prosecute him; containment of Iran nuclear deal with financial commitment by the Obama Administration; Apartheid regime in South Africa and Ghana; annexation of Crimea by Russia, among others, have earlier reduced the and serve as an indicator of the erosion of the unipolar world order (Oezel, 2015; Hindu, 2021).

Furthermore, COVID-19 and post-COVID-19 occurrences such as unanimous inquiry and affirmative consensus as to the cause of COVID-19 and its solution, the take-over of Afghanistan by the Taliban, and the Russian invasion of Ukraine, among others, symbolize the manifestation of a multiplex world order. The multiplex world order advocated by Hindu (2021) acknowledged the existence of major powers that lack the ultimate capability to influence world affairs and order in their interests due to the existence of various other great powers, emerging powers, and regional powers competing to influence the world order. Consequently, this may lead to anarchic situations that may hinder global solidarity towards confronting a collective challenge such as the COVID-19 pandemic

SARS-COVID-19: Pandemic Politics and a Paradigm Shift in World Order

COVID-19 has been the most devastating pandemic that the world has witnessed in the 21st century. In light of this, it has changed the conventional or usual trend that has globalized the world since the end of the cold war. To summarize, the pandemic reignites radical nationalism and institutionalizes neo-isolationism; resuscitate global alignment and realignment; discordant bureaucracy and policy changes; and other factors such as changing the political nomenclature and processes across various nationalities of the world; reordering global economic stance and national social security system, among others.

First, the pandemic created an avenue for different nationalities to exhibit their respective primordial sentiments, relaunch their hatred and long-aged rivalry against other nationalities. The manifestation of this was the anti-Chinese utterances, physical attacks, and discriminatory disposition towards Asians, majorly by Americans, Europeans, Africans, and South Americans as well as the Middle Eastern region (Human Right Watch, 2020; Chiu, 2020; United Nations Human Rights, 2020). Even South Korea, Japan, and Indonesia were caught in this discrimination against the Chinese, just as India, Sri Lanka, and Myanmar revamped their anti-Muslim discrimination, while China itself treated foreigners unfairly. In the same vein, Human Right Watch (2020) maintained that political parties and groups in the United States, the United Kingdom, Italy, Spain, Greece, France, and Germany have used COVID-19 to promote anti-immigrant, white supremacist, ultra-nationalist, anti-Semitic, and xenophobic conspiracy theories that blame refugees, aliens, global influential personalities, and political leaders for the outbreak of the virus.

Second, the pandemic was another avenue for the great and emerging powers of the world to revive the political expansionist mission and the quest for new allies. For instance, Cuba was able to use its medical proficiency to strengthen its diplomatic ties with about 22 countries, among which African countries like Madagascar were major recipients of 200 Cuban doctors, who lent them helping hands during the pandemic, while Madagascar witnessed an encouraging reaction from Tanzania, Guinea-Bissau, Congo-Brazzaville, and South Africa (Mngomezulu, 2020). In an attempt to expand its political horizons, China seeks to extend its horizons to Western Europe by signing an MOU with Italy; and accelerate its influence through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a global infrastructure development approach started by the Chinese government in 2013 to invest in about 70 countries and international institutions (World Bank, 2018; Akon & Rahman, 2020). Also, the Indo-Pacific was able to solidify the Quad relations involving India, the US, Japan, and Australia (Bagchi, 2020).

Third, the pandemic rejigged the foundational basis of globalization, as countries of the world were forced to choose between the safety of their nations and the need to sustain free flow or movement of people, goods, and technocrats, alluding to the cause of most transmissible diseases (Shrestha, Shad, Ulvi, Khan, Karamelic-Muratovic, Nguyen, Baghbanzadeh, Wardrup, Agahmohammadi, Crevantes, Nahiduzzaman, Zaki, Haque, 2020). Altman (2020) succinctly argued that leaders struggle to steer their firms through COVID-19, with expectations about the future of globalization influencing everything from where to market to how to manage supply.

Fourth, the world was divided along the cleavages of discordant bureaucracy and policy variations all in the name of mitigating the devastating effect of COVID-19. In what could have

been regarded as an absence of unified regulatory standards and selective global approach, especially when it has to do with red listing countries and placing countries on travel ban despite their triumph over the COVID-19 surge. For instance, the placing of Nigeria 11th and most African nations on the U.K watch list was regarded as travel apartheid (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2021). Another reflection of this is the decision of the UK to place Pakistan in the list of the red zone as well as subjecting it to compulsory quarantine, exempting India whose infection rate was severe enough to typify the aforementioned position (Shahid, 2021).

At the heart of the pandemic, most countries are thriving to adapt to the new realities, devise the best approach, and outwit other key players in the international system, in order to achieve the best result that will meet this citizen's yearning. Give prominence to maxims like vaccine nationalism during and after the pandemic. Vaccine nationalism is a business strategy that involves hoarding vaccines from producers and increasing supply in one's own country. The goal is to stock up on vaccines and vaccinate the country as quickly as possible, notwithstanding vaccine manufacturers' limited availability for the rest of the world (Riaz, Ahmad, Mohan, Costa, Khan, Babar, Hassan, Esar, and Zil-E-Ali, 2021). Consequently, the resultant effect of this individualistic approach, among others adopted by several countries, is that the development of various strategies weakens the converging power associated with international institutions like the United Nation Organization in putting up a collaborative effort in confronting the challenges posed by the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Pains and Gains of COVID-19 World Order for Africa

The African continent was one of the regions within the global sphere adversely affected by COVID-19. Apart from the fact that the continent's economy, education, politics, health, other strategic sectors, as well as socio-cultural relations, share bounds of fellowship among its citizens. The pandemic revealed that Africa is still vulnerable to reliance on industrialized nations, racial disorientation and profiling, loss of confidence in its leadership prowess, and homegrown technological and scientific innovation. Within the span of a year after the pandemic broke out, leading financial experts identified debt relief as one of the alternate solutions to push back from the effect of the pandemic (Iweala, Coulibaly, Thlam, Kaberuka, Songwe, Masiyiwa, Mushikiwabo, Duarte, 2020). Regardless of the 33 billion dollar comment made by the international monetary fund through the special drawing rights (SDRs) initiative, the G20's Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI), among other multilateral commitments, Obe, Butler, and Jie (2022), accentuate a genuine consensus between China and the Western countries on a common implementation framework, which happens to be the continent's lenders and development partners, which will go a long way in fast-tracking the continent's development amidst all odds.

This indicates that the continent's economic survival is entwined with the discordant relationship between the devil and the deep blue sea. Similarly, Africa has the slowest vaccination rate of any continent in the world. As of June 17, 2022, approximately 23% of the population had received at least one vaccine dose, compared to approximately 79% in Latin America, 79% in Asia-Pacific, 79% in the United States and Canada, 69% in Europe, and 57% in the Middle East (Holder, 2022). Signe (2021) alluded to the disparity as the continent's lack of capacity to adequately produce what its citizens need to survive. She maintained that there are only four vaccine manufacturers in the continent, two of which are in the development phase. The other two fill-and-finish operations rely on imported vaccine to produce doses.

Also, the reservations made against the Director General of the World Health Organization, Dr. Adhanom Ghebreyesus Tedros, by the United States of America, Japan, and Taiwan as regards to his competence and fairness in handling the COVID-19 outbreak. The United States of America accused WHO under Tedros of being China's puppet who allowed China to influence WHO decisions. The Japanese deputy minister ironically referred to WHO as the Chinese Health Organization (Aljazerra, 2020; Hernandez, 2020; Maizeland, 2022). Tedros, being an African whose emergence was also endorsed by the African Union, his pandemic management rating under his leadership could have served as a potent means of rebranding the continent's image amidst the agelong profiling and negative perception of the continent.

Regardless of the bi-lateral relationship between China and some other African countries, Africans residing in China were faced with humiliation. In early April 2020, the Chinese government in the southern city of Guangzhou, Guangdong province, which has China's largest African community, compulsorily tested Africans and other foreigners for the coronavirus and quarantined them in designated hotels, just as property-owners evicted African residents, pushing many to sleep on the street, and hotels, shops, and restaurants refused African customers (Human Right Watch, 2020).

Conclusion

The study concludes that several occurrences in the international system have recurrently challenged the unipolar world order spearheaded by the United State of America. However, the outbreak of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the stunted spate of adaptations to the outbreak, the expedient need to cushion its effect, as well as the expedient need to safeguard the social wellbeing of its citizens and also protect its national interest, spurred different countries of the world to come up with their own strategy to address the situation. Concurrently, several other countries perceived it as an ample opportunity to curry the favour of nations adversely affected by the pandemic and expand their political tentacles by gaining more allies, while others viewed it as the appropriate moment to exhibit their sentiments against rival nations and decimate their global influence, which consequently ushers the world into a multiplex world order.

In light of this, the study recommended the need to accelerate the operation of the Africa Disease Control (ADC), so as to encompass a directorate that will facilitate modern scientific exploration and discovery research, manufacture and sales of medical equipment, human capacity building, and produce medical experts that will be relevant within and outside the continent. Apart from rendering services, they will also generate funds for the commission before, during, or after the outbreak of an epidemic or pandemic. In lieu of this, there is a need to establish an African Medical University across various sub-regions of the continent. This will serve as a platform to bring different Africans together to cross breed and fertilize ideas that will enhance the realization of the aforementioned supposition.

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