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Changing Dimensions of National Power in Post Covid-19 World Order

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Abstract:

COVID-19, began as a mere health concern has now become a major concern affecting the entire world at all levels and questions the applicability and relevance of traditional perspectives of national power. Against this backdrop, the study argues that, in the post COVID-19 world order, effective mechanism is set to become the most decisive element of power. The study reinstates that effective health mechanism goes beyond the traditional perspectives of health dealing with the possession of advanced health facilities and proposes the main aspects of an effective health mechanism.

Keywords: National power, health, COVID-19, spillover effect

1. Introduction

Power has always been a widely spoken yet highly controversial topic in the field of international politics. For realists, power is the decisive determinant in the relations among separate political communities and of crucial importance to understanding the dynamics of war and peace (Schmidt, 2007, p.43). While power lacks a commonly accepted definition, it means the ability to do things and control others, to get others to do what they otherwise would not (Nye, 1990a). In an anarchic world order, as rational actors, each and every state within the system strives to maximize its national power on one hand to ensure its own survival as well as to influence other states. As noted by Joseph Nye (1990b) power is conveyed through resources, whether tangible or intangible. In other words, the strength or ability to influence the other state of the system is determined by the possession of different sources of power ranging from geography to national character. When it comes to categorizing countries as super powers, major power or minor powers, it is often done their ability to influence other states and as mentioned earlier, this ability is determined by the possession of sources of power. When it comes to identifying the sources of national power, while there is certain degree of unanimity just like the power, there is no commonly accepted set of sources of national power. Moreover, looking at the history of world affairs, different sources of power had gained greater significance over the others due to various reasons. During the 19th century, the state which possessed the strongest navy had the upper hand its world affairs. However, for the most part of the 20th century, nuclear power became the most decisive source of national power. Looking at the 21st century, given the highly globalized and interdependent nature of the international system, economic power has come to the center stage of world affairs. However, with the outbreak of the new Coronavirus of COVID-19, the time has come to reassess the importance of traditional sources of power. Against this backdrop, this particular study examines these changing dimensions of national power in the post COVID-19 era and highlights the significance of an effective health mechanism as the most decisive source of power. This paper argues that the lack of prominence given to health as an element of power has in return led to outbreak of the coronavirus in this scale and outlines the importance of an effective health mechanism. This study examines what factors have made 'health' significant as an element of power as well as what factors make effective health mechanism truly effective.

2. Understanding the Evolution of National Power in the Pre COVID-19 Era

Power has always been a widely spoken yet highly controversial topic in the field of international relations. For realists, power is the decisive determinant in the relations among separate political communities and of crucial (Schmidt, 2007, p.43). While power has been at the center of discussion, it lacks a commonly accepted definition. Referring to power, Nye (2011) notes that no one definition is accepted by all who use the word, and people's choice of definition reflects their interests and values. According to Nye (2004) power is like weather. Everyone depends on it and talks about it, but few understand it. However, for the purpose of the study it is vital to go through some of the key definitions of power. In his epic work, Leviathan, Thomas Hobbes identifies power as the present means to obtain some future apparent good. As per Bertrand Russell (1938), power is the production of intended effects. Holsti (1997) view power from different perspectives; It is a means, it is based on capabilities, it is a relationship and a process and it can be measured, at least crudely. He breaks down the concept of power in to three distinct analytic elements; Power comprises (1) the acts (Process, relationship) of influencing other states; (2) the capabilities used to make the wielding of influence successful; and (3) the responses to the acts. As far as the vitality of power in international politics is concerned, Russell (1938) notes that the fundamental concept in social science is power, in the same sense in which energy is the fundamental concept in physics. In fact, the centrality of power, in its various guises to the theory and practice of world politics is impossible to overlook (Bilgin&Eliş,

2008, p.05). At the outset of his epic work, 'Politics among Nations' Morgenthau proclaimed that 'International politics, like all politics is a struggle for power. Whatever the ultimate aim of international politics, power is always the immediate aim' (1948, p.13). Morgenthau (ibid) further notes 'the aspiration for power being the distinguishing element of international politics, as of all politics, international politics is necessity power politics.... The struggle for power is universal in time and space and is an undeniable fact of experience.' Within an anarchic world order, each and every state strives to maximize its power. The power of any state is often reflected by the possession of elements of power. A country's national power shall consist of different sources of power and more the sources of power a country possesses, more powerful the country is. As Nye (1990b) notes, power means holding the high cards in the international Poker game. However, just as power, there is lack of consensus among scholars when it comes to identifying these elements of power. Morgenthau (1948) distinguishes between two types of elements of power as stable elements and those subject to constant change. The stable elements include geography, natural resources (food and raw materials), industrial capacity, military preparedness and population. On the other hand, he identifies three aspects that have considerable bearing of national power which are qualitative in nature. They are; national character, national morale and quality of diplomacy. Ray Cline put forth a formula for estimating power of given state which can be given as follows (Cited in Nye, 2011 & Badwin, 1979).

$$Pp = (C+E+M) * (S+W)$$

According to Cline, national power is the result of the sum of Critical mass (Population and territory), economic capacity, military capacity multiplied by the sum of the national strategic coefficient and national will. Handel (1990) categorizes the elements determining the strengths of a state as internal (domestic) sources of strength and external sources of strength. Internal sources are again categorized into four subgroups as (1) Geographic conditions (Location, terrain, borders, space etc.), (2) Material conditions (natural resources, industrial development, capital, technology etc.), (3) Human resources (Population size, national character, ethnic and political homogeneity etc.) and (4) Organizational capabilities (Political institutions, adaptability, military preparedness etc.). The external sources of strength have been sub categorized as international organizations and formal alliances (with great powers, mixed alliances and with other weak states). Meanwhile, Hartmann (1978) talks about six elements of national power, namely; Demography, Geography, economy, historical-psychological-sociological element, and military element. Furthermore, Mingst & Arreguin (2011) identifies the ingredients of national power under three main categories, namely; (1) natural sources of power (Geography, natural resources, population), (2) tangible sources of power (Industrial development, level of infrastructure, character of military), and (3) intangible sources of power (National image, public support, leadership). Kegley Jr and Wittkoph (1993) recognize the followings as the main elements of national power; Military capability, population, territorial size and geographic position, raw materials, degree of dependence on foreign resources of raw materials, technology capacity, national character, ideology, efficiency of governmental decision making, industrial productivity, volume of trade, savings and investments, education level and national morale. Looking at the literature, it is clear that there is no consensus among the scholars with regard to the elements of power. It is also important to note that, while there is no commonly accepted set of elements of national power, the significance of these elements of power also hadn't remained the same for throughout the history. Looking at the world history, no one country has maintained its hegemonic status throughout the history. For instance, the 19th century belonged to the British, while the USA had the upper hand in world affairs during the 20th century. The main reason for this has been the continuous change in the significance of these power elements.

Period	Leading State	Major Resources
Sixteenth century	Spain	Gold bullion, Colonial trade, mercenary armies, dynastic ties
Seventeenth century	Netherlands	Trade, Capital markets, Navy
Eighteenth century	France	Population, rural industry, public administration, army
Nineteenth century	Britain	Industry, political cohesion, finance and credit, navy, liberal norms, island location (easy to defend)
Twentieth century	United States	Economic scale, scientific and technical leadership, universalistic culture, military forces and alliances, liberal international regimes, hub of transnational communication

Table 1: Leading States and Power Resources Sixteenth Century-Twentieth Century
Sources: Nye (1990b)

As given in Table1, different sources of power gained prominence over the others during times of the history. During the 19th century, the state which had the strongest naval power had the upper hand in world affairs. Explaining the significance of naval power, Alfred Mahan in his epic work, 'The influence of Sea Power upon World History' 1660-1783, underscores six conditions affecting the sea power of nations. The six conditions include; Geographical position, physical conformation, Extent of territory, number of populations, character of people, and character of the Government. However, by the 20th century, particularly during the post-World War II period, nuclear power became the most vital element of national power.

As a whole, throughout the world history, military power remained at the helm of national power where it was often used to influence other states. However, today, military forces and combat proficiency do not tell us much about outcomes, for example, in the world of finance and climate change (Nye, 2011, p.04). As noted by Nye (1990b); 'Traditionally, the test of a great power was its strength in war. Today however, the definition of power is losing its emphasis on military force and conquest that marked earlier eras. The factors of technology, education, and economic

growth are becoming more significant in international power, while geography, population, and raw materials are becoming somewhat less important'.

He further noted, while military force remains the ultimate form of power in a self-help system, the use of force has become most costly for many great powers than it was in earlier centuries (ibid).

Looking at the main forms of power, Nye (2004c) distinguishes between two forms power which can be explained as follows (Table 2).

	Hard	Soft
Spectrum of behaviors	Coercion, Inducement Command	Agenda setting, attraction, Co-opt
Most likely resources	Force Payment Sanctions bribes	Institutions values Culture Policies

*Table 2: Forms of Power
Source: Nye (2004c)*

As distinguished by Nye (2004c), while hard power refers to the ability to use the carrots and sticks of economic and military might to make others follow your will, soft power refers to the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payment.

3. Post Covid-19 National Power

New Coronavirus or Covid-19 has today become a major concern affecting the entire world. From the west to east, almost all the countries have been affected by the pandemic bringing the whole world to a standstill. As of 25 June, 2020, there have been over 9.2 million confirmed cases while over 470,000 deaths recorded of COVID-19 (WHO, 2020b). Looking at the impact of the pandemic from national power perspective, it is no exaggeration to state that this pandemic has questioned the real significance and relevance of most of the elements of power. Looking at the current world situation, the traditional sources, including economic strength, population, and military strength have proved to be less effective in protecting the countries from the pandemic.

Country	Total Cases	Total Deaths	Deaths/Million Population	Population	Gross Domestic Product (Current USD Million 2018)	Military Ranking (Global Firepower Index)
United States of America (USA)	2,504,676	126,785	383	330,896,410	20,544,343.46	01
Brazil	1,233,147	55,054	259	212,475,738	1,885,482.53	10
Russia	620,794	8,781	60	145,931,211	1,657,554.65	2
India	491,992	15,319	11	1,379,233,699	2,718,732.23	4
UK	307,980	43,230	637	67,866,605	2,855,296.73	8

*Table 3: The Impact of COVID-19 (As of 26 June, 2020)
Source: Worldmeter.Com, Global Firepower Index, World Bank*

The COVID-19 pandemic has made the entire world to rethink about the priorities of national power. The so-called powerful states have failed to protect their countries from the virus. As a whole, this pandemic has changed the world as well as the future of world politics in an unprecedented manner. Against this backdrop, this paper argues that in the post COVID-19 era, the most crucial element of power going to be the availability of a sound healthcare system. The availability of an effective healthcare system will be the new normal of power politics in post-COVID-19 era. The study brings out three main reasons for the growing importance of an effective healthcare system. They are;

- Spillover effect of COVID-19
- Possibility of biological warfare/bioterrorism
- Due to environment pollution and climate change, in the future people will have to live with various health hazards

COVID-19, a mere health concern at the beginning has now affected almost all the sectors of human life. The spillover effect of the impact of COVID-19 is immense and unprecedented (Figure 01). From an economic perspective, almost all the economies at all levels are now faced with severe challenges. At the state level, soon after the outbreak of the virus, almost all the countries around the world-imposed travel restrictions followed by close down of factories, businesses and all kinds of financial activities. As a result, millions of people lost their jobs and means of income. In USA, by mid May 2020, over 30 million had become unemployed due to the pandemic (Kretchmer, 2020). People losing jobs is most certainly trigger severe political, economic and social issues including rise in poverty levels, degradation of quality of life of people and political unrest among people which would eventually lead to political instability. Looking at this from an international perspective, today we are living in a highly globalized and interconnected world where almost all the

countries engaged in international trade and for the vast majority of the countries international trade remains a major source of foreign exchange. However, at the moment international trade is at standstill. The World Trade Organization's quarterly goods trade barometer which provides real-time information on the trajectory of world merchandise trade relative to recent trends, slumped to 87.6 on a scale where anything below 100 indicates a downturn (Portington, 2020). Looking at the tourism sector, as of 28 April, 100% of all worldwide destinations had introduced travel restrictions, and never before in history had international travel been restricted in such an extreme manner (UNWTO, 2020b). According to World Tourism Organization, there will be a decline of 58% to 78% in international tourist arrivals for 2020, depending on the speed of the containment and the duration of travel restrictions and shutdown of borders, although the outlook remains highly uncertain (UNWTO, 2020a). The organization further notes that 100 to 120 million direct tourist jobs are at risk due to the pandemic (ibid). This would again increase unemployment rates in individual states. Thus, the spillover effect of the impact of the pandemic is immense and unprecedented. COVID-19 is no longer a mere virus. From individual level to international level, the pandemic has already affected all sectors of the international society.

Looking at the last two centuries the world has encountered a significant number of global pandemics, which include Spanish Flu, Asian Flu Pandemic (1957-1958), Hong Kong Flu pandemic (1968-1969), Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), Swine Flu, Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), Ebola and COVID-19 being the latest. The outbreak of COVID-19 has made the world realize the damage a tiny virus can cause. However, by no means the world can guarantee COVID-19 would be the last pandemic the world is facing. Looking at COVID-19, first there were allegations against China saying that China is responsible for the outbreak of the pandemic. However, releasing a statement, titled 'Intelligence Community Statement on Origins of COVID-19', The Office of the Director of National Intelligence-USA, noted that 'COVID-19 virus was not manmade or genetically modified'. Given the fact that now the world is fully aware of the consequences of the pandemic, there is space for a biological warfare or bioterrorism. In simple terms, biological warfare is the intentional use of microorganisms, and toxins, generally of microbial, plant or animal origin to produce disease and/or death in humans, livestock or crops (Dasilva, 1999, p.99). There are number of reasons that make infectious diseases more suitable and powerful as a means of biological warfare or terrorism. They are;

- High morbidity and potential high lethality
- High infectiousness or high toxicity
- Suitability for mass production and storage without loss of pathogenic potential
- Suitability for wide area delivery, and with standing the delivery process.
- Stability in the environment after dissemination, long enough to infect humans
- Suitability for being a biological agent, improved by genetic engineering and the weaponization process (Jansen et al, 2014, cited in Frinking et al., 2016, p.06).

As observed in COVID-19, it is far more difficult task to figure out how the virus was born or who created. This also makes the biological warfare/bioterrorism far more hazardous. When it comes to bioterrorism, understanding your enemy remains almost impossible. Ancient Chinese military strategist Sun Tzu once proclaimed;

'If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles'

It is also vital to understand that viruses are not the only health related matter faced by the world today. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), nine out of ten breathe polluted air every day. In 2019, air pollution was considered by the WHO as the greatest environmental risk to health (WHO, 2020). Furthermore, environmental pollution-contamination of air, water and soil by human activity is the largest cause of disease and death in low-and middle-income countries (Landrigan & Fuller, 2015, p.761). Moreover, as per the WHO, Climate change increasingly affects people's health and well-being, and also increases the frequency and intensity of health waves, droughts, extreme rainfall and severe cyclones in many areas and modify the transmission of food-borne, water-borne and zoonotic infectious diseases, resulting in large impacts on health (WHO, 2019).

Figure 1: Spillover Effect of Covid-19

The above-mentioned factors have necessarily made the establishment of an effective health mechanism vital. Here, effective health mechanism goes beyond the traditional perspective of health which deals with mere possession of highly advanced hospitals and other health related infrastructure. The study argues that an effective health mechanism consists of three main components. They are;

- Advanced and affordable health care facilities
- Research and development in bioscience and other health related areas.
- Health literacy

In the future, availability of advanced and affordable health facilities will be of paramount importance. It is the general perspective that if a country possesses the most advanced health care facilities, then that country has a good health care system. However, COVID-19 had made us realize that it is not about the mere possession of health care facilities but also the accessibility to such health care facilities. Looking at the current situation, countries with some of the greatest healthcare facilities are now struggling to come to terms with the pandemic. There are two reasons for this struggle. First, no country in the world expected a pandemic of this nature. As revealed by the Global Health Security Index-2019, the world was not prepared for a globally catastrophic biological event, including those that could be caused by the international spread of a new or emerging pathogen or by the deliberate or accidental release of a dangerous or engineered agent or organism. Preparedness remains vital in facing any kind of threat. Second aspect is the accessibility to public health care facilities for the general public. One of the major challenges faced by the USA in its fight against COVID-19 is providing equal access to health care facilities. In fact, the coronavirus pandemic has revealed that the US health care system is in bad shape; it is both overdeveloped and underdeveloped, creating a confusion pattern of excellence and profound failure (Singh, 2020). While the USA has a very advanced health system, it is yet to achieve universal health coverage as around 8.5% of the population go without coverage (Maizland & Felter, 2020). According to Sanders and Jayapal (2020), before the pandemic around 87 million citizens in the United States were uninsured or underinsured and over 30,000 died every year due to their inability to go to a doctor. Furthermore, over half a million families declared bankruptcy each year because of medically related debt. Looking at the world's situation, as per the report 'Tracking universal Health Coverage: 2017 Global Monitoring Report, at least half of the world's population cannot obtain essential health services (WHO, 2017). This has made government investments in health services vital and it is a matter of time till every government takes health a priority in the policy making. Health facilities with equal accessibility to the general public are as important as military. Thus, this pandemic will certainly lead to a reassessment of national priorities of countries around the world.

Another important aspect of effective health mechanism is health literacy. According to Nekmat & Yue (2020) what makes the current pandemic more dangerous than any before is that the spread of rumors and false information on the internet is even faster than that of the coronavirus itself. Making a twitter statement António Guterres, Secretary General of the United Nations noted that while COVID-19 is our common enemy, infodemic of misinformation is also an enemy (UN, 2020). Unlike most of the other threats a country may face, during a pandemic the general public shoulders great responsibility. For example, during the time of war, the government and military shoulder the greater share of responsibility in protecting the country while during an economic crisis once again the government and other decision-making institutions become the focal points in handling the crisis. However, during a pandemic like COVID-19, the general public has a significant and decisive role to play and in this context health literacy becomes a focal point. Health literacy is linked to literacy and entails people's knowledge, motivation and competences to access, understand, appraise, and apply health information in order to make judgments and take decisions on everyday life concerning healthcare, disease preventions and health promotion to maintain or improve quality of life during the life course (Sørensen et al., 2012, p.03). As stated earlier, during the time of a pandemic as this, misinformation and lack of awareness are as dangerous as the pandemic itself. Therefore, right information becomes vital in minimizing the possible risk of spreading the coronavirus in both the society as well as the country. In this regard, media too has a vital role to play. All kind of media shoulder the responsibility of disseminating accurate information on the virus and guidelines to minimize the spread of the virus. As lack of information and lack of awareness make everybody vulnerable to be exposed the virus, it is imperative that every single citizen is aware of how to minimize the risk of being exposed to the virus as well as what measures to be taken when the virus is being infected.

Another major aspect of effective health mechanism is research and development. As stated earlier, the world was not prepared for a pandemic. For many years, all the countries around the world have been spending billions of dollars of national wealth on military spending military. For instance, global military expenditure is estimated to have been \$ 1917 billion in 2019, the highest level since 1988 (Tian et al., 2020). However, in the post COVID-19, more investments will be needed in the fields of research and development particularly in bioscience and other health related areas. This comes as part of preparedness. Therefore, it is vital for governments to emphasize more on investments on public health related areas.

4. Conclusion

For many long years, the power of a state has been determined by the possession of traditional elements of power. From the possession of gold to nuclear weapons, different elements of power have come to the forefront of in determining the strength and global recognition of a country. Today, power in international relations is seen as a mean of force or attraction. In other words, it is about influencing others. However, with the outbreak of COVID-19, the world has made to redefine and rearrange the real significance of elements of power they possess. Today, health has become a matter of great concern for the entire world alike. For the first time in the history of mankind, health and well-being has become a major

national priority. COVID-19, a virus which was a mere health concern at the beginning is now posing a great threat to the very existence of human kind. Unlike any time in the history, now the world has made to understand the importance of an effective health mechanism. In the post COVID-19 world, power in international relations will no longer be only about force and attraction but also about resilience. With the outbreak of the virus, international relations will not be the same again. Now the world has been forced to rearrange its national priorities and means to attain them. While everyone is concerned about the outbreak of another pandemic, no one is certain when. Under such circumstances, the countries, regional and international organizations and all other related parties should make health a matter of major concern. It is imperative that Countries going beyond the traditional perspective of national power and national security.

Figure 2: Effective Healthcare Mechanism

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