

How Consequences of Countries' Control of the COVID-19 Pandemic Affects the Global Trend of Ideologies

Ideology Affected by the COVID-19 Governance?: A Comparative Study of China's and the States' Pandemic Management

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced countries to take varying measures to contain the virus. Some countries have taken the lead in the fight against the virus, while others have loosened up or taken steps not in the majority's interests. China, for instance, has embraced a management formula that conflicted with that of western countries such as the United States. The United States has criticized China for using ideological hegemony against them. Through a critical examination of most Western countries, it is clear that they share a liberal ideology. China, on the other hand, opposes this ideology. Such differences make the western countries and China conflict on subjects such as democracy, human rights, and ideology. This essay discovers that China's effective control of the pandemic has threatened the ideological hegemony of the capitalist camp led by the United States. In the literature review part, we discuss how the capitalist camp and China consider the function of the authority and the different consequences they would lead to. We then compare the timelines of COVID-19 in China and the States and find the States slow in decision making and policy implementing, while China is successful in containing the virus in a shorter time. This study does not aim to prove the superiority of any ideology. At the same time, the effective containment of the epidemic in South Korea also shows that there is not a strong causal relationship between ideology and governance ability during public events, such as a pandemic.

Keywords: *Ideological hegemony, Western countries, China, COVID-19 management.*

1. INTRODUCTION

"That is, the end-point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government[1]. " Francis Fukuyama states so in the well-known book the End of History and the Last Man. Just one year before its publication, the cold war ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union, liberalism became the dominant ideology on a global scale. The world regards the economic and political success of the capitalist camp headed by the

United States in these decades as a sign of the superiority of liberalism. However, in the second decade of the 21st century, a powerful competitor China challenges liberalism advocated by the western. China has made significant progress and achievements in various aspects in the past decade. China's success seems to confirm Rothstein's doubt about liberalism. Judging the legitimacy of a regime depends not only on whether it is elected but also on the quality of the regime's governance[2]. In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the world. Through effective lockdown policies,

China spent two months control and contain the virus's spread and reopened in April 2020. Compared with China, the response of the United States to the pandemic is surprising. Problems like slow policymaking, the disorder of the public, and the lack of medical resources are exposed. As of April 7th, 2021, the number of COVID-19 infections in the United States has reached thirty million and nine hundred thousand, and five hundred and fifty-six thousand people have died from the pandemic. The contrast between the two has been noticed by the global.

This article will explore how China's management of the COVID-19 pandemic rattles the ideological hegemony of western countries led by the United States. Previous studies tend to focus on only one side, such as western countries' adherence to and promoting their ideology or China's opposition to the former and practice of their ideology. However, the COVID-19 pandemic allows the world to observe the different attitudes, measures, and results of two different forces in the face of the same event. This study has sociological meanings, as it shows how the difference between ideologies affects society at a macro level. In the following pages, we will show a literature review to understand how the ideological hegemony of western countries was established and its specific content, and how China has shaken its hegemony through this epidemic. Then, we also present a detailed analysis to prove whether our hypothesis is correct by comparing China and the United States, the top competitors with two opposite ideologies, in the face of the epidemic in different ways and results.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The liberalism ideology held by western countries attaches importance to the fact that the authority should not interfere in citizens' freedom and election freedom. As a governor, the government should not interfere in citizens' freedom and election freedom. [Paolo Pombeni](#) holds the point of view that in the 20th century, governance became more ideological. As a result, a government needs to have two forms of expression. One is the appeal for popular confidence. The other is to promulgate the platform[3]. After World War II, western capitalist countries emphasized that the people need to accumulate enough capital to safeguard the democracy of the country and the freedom of citizens, and that the government should not excessively interfere in domestic economic activities. Otherwise, it is betraying the principles of liberalism.

Western capitalist countries did get significant success under liberalism in past decades. High productivity in western countries has led to a rapid increase in personal income. In terms of diplomacy, the Western countries' final victory in the cold war in the 1990s also proves that their political system is the more superior and powerful one. Paul Miller, a senior fellow at

the Atlantic Council, claims that although liberal democracy comes from the west, it should not be limited to Europe and America. It is of positive significance to promoting liberal democracy on a global scale [4]. Criticism and questioning of similar views have always existed. Richard Youngs points out that although western countries have made many attempts to promote liberal democracy worldwide, the results are not achieved, such as the famous Arab Spring and Ukraine's political movement in the early 21st century [5]. Although these movements overthrew the original regime, they failed to help establish a new and reasonable regime because the western countries copied their examples mechanically and ignored the actual local situation.

China opposes the western countries' liberal ideological hegemony and their interference in other countries internal affairs. It makes China and the western countries headed by the United States have differences in democratic topic and ideology issues, human rights and ideology. In the article *EU, China, and the Concept of Human Rights: from a Cultural Relativism Perspective* written by Kaiyu Shao, Shao says that in the competition with China, western countries are deeply aware of the obstacles caused by cultural relativism to their ideological output. In the past, due to the massive power gap between western countries and developing countries, developing countries are often powerless in the face of Western interference [6]. In governance, it is different from the referendum, ruling party, or leader rotation emphasized by western countries. China pays attention to the quality of governance, which is embodied in economic growth, increasing employment, social welfare, and national defense. Therefore, compared with the western government, the Chinese government often has more robust power at the macro level. In many cases, it is regarded by the western world as typical totalitarianism and an infringement on social democracy and civil liberties.

The world defines COVID-19 as a globally changing event that reflects an unending tragedy. It forces countries to take action to curb the pandemic. Scholars claim that the epidemic of COVID-19 has slowed down the trend of population and economic growth and harms the regime's stability. Countries like China and Russia benefit temporarily from the pandemic. Bremmer claimed that the pandemic of the three forces would shape a new global order: de-globalization, increasing populism and nationalism, and a rising China [7]. As Biscop points out, COVID-19 can affect all aspects of society [8]. The consequences are linked to public welfare, health systems, and the crisis response's solution.

Objectively, countries such as China and the United States benefit from the pandemic to mobilize more capital than other powerless regimes [9]. COVID-19, concerning the increased great power competition of the twenty-first century, did not alter this pattern. " The popularity of de-

globalization has had several impacts on the global pattern: the collapse of the free global order established since World War II, the acceleration of rivalry among major powers, and the emergence of an offensive mode of information warfare [10]. The strategic realignment is expected to accelerate the global race for vital minerals [11]. Depending on how efficiently or ineffectively they handle their rehabilitation, the outcome will either sustain or shift the balance of forces.

Some people are optimistic about the Western countries' ability to handle the pandemic. For example, the European Union is very confident in resisting COVID-19. At the same time, some people have expressed concern because it requires the EU countries to work together to deal with the epidemic. That is, the EU needs to carry out crucial internal and external reforms. Indeed, the pandemic can offer some prospects for the EU, but only if there is the proximity between internal solidarity and stability and the opportunity to project force internationally [12].

Competition between China and the United States has been launched in various fields in recent years. Poowin Bunyavejchewin held the point of view that the COVID-19 pandemic has allowed the rest of the world to observe both sides facing the same dilemma. There are two points they focus on. One is whether the United States can continue to play the role of the world leader. The other is how China, which runs counter to the liberalism held by western countries led by the United States, reacts to the pandemic.

Friedman distinguishes four aspects functioning concurrently in the United States regarding attempts to contain the impacts of COVID-19: medical, fiscal, social, and diplomatic [13]. The United States tries to use the pandemic crisis to defend its privileged global diplomatic status, but it is undeniable that its global influence is weakening. For example, China and Iran officially signed a 25-year cooperation agreement on Saturday (March 27, 2021). This unprecedented agreement is expected to strengthen all-round cooperation between the two countries in the fields of economy, trade, energy, and security and weaken U.S. efforts to isolate Iran. For several years, the growth of China's global economic and military power and control has been under increasing scrutiny and has been causing alarm to the US's relative decline. Based on influencing global public sentiment and opinion on China's treatment of the pandemic and the threats faced, it has been estimated that the pandemic could be an incentive to destroy Chinese soft power and eliminate this challenge. At the same time, there are specific indications that the US has lost its previous capacity to broker deals, such as Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's effort to push a joint G7 declaration that contained a reference to the "Wuhan epidemic," which allies failed to approve. The epidemic has further alienated the relationship between the United States and

its allies, causing the United States to withdraw strategically in many parts of the world and emphasize the priority policy of America First with the United States as the center.

There are a deep sense and opinion among international relations academics that the US was not managing the rapid pandemic response, costing credibility, despite predictions that the effect and adjustment to the world order would be minimal in the end. The fundamental concern for COVID-19 is that the world pattern may change and will lead to new globalization and New Liberalism [14]. As a result, a sequence of events and responses has been set in motion. Although globalization can keep the United States in a leading position, the United States and the European Union did not want to use COVID-19 as an opportunity to reverse the current de-globalization. It is to re-establish the mechanism of globalization, to limit the speed of China's rise so that the west can maintain a dominant position in the global economy.

The COVID-19 crisis is throwing up a mirror to Western nations. It reveals that our view of ourselves could be skewed. The situation would be a big challenge for us: our ability to manage it will either intensify or delay the world's de-Westernization. In either event, that would be a blow to globalization and a reshuffling of the international order. Long-term detrimental consequences of inadequate geopolitical policy and weak political and economic management have been expected. This may entail faster fragmentation of international blocs with insufficient convergence and US-China tension escalating into a broader "Cold War" that divides the world into opposing camps. According to Richard Horton (editor of the *Lancet*), anti-Chinese speeches and activities are disproportionate, endangering global security at a time of uncertainty and being exploited to cover up the West's shortcomings in handling the pandemic. This expresses itself in various forms, such as the great powers' worldwide scramble to develop a vaccine and the idea of 'vaccine imperialism,' where the law of first come, first served applies at the detriment of notions and values of global unity. Stability, if not tested, will cause its impact to spread to other sectors and regions.

The pandemic original health-related essence has developed into additional aspects of the crisis in governance and the economy. Economic hardship and political turmoil in the West, especially in the United States, is hastening geopolitical deterioration, which in turn is generating and influencing geopolitical contentious domestic politics. For example, the highly offensive economic and military repression against China raises violent regional clashes. Andrés Ortega sees the latest global pandemic scenario as actually hastening the de-westernization trend, which can be slowed but not stopped using the crisis. Not least because of internal divisions within the Western establishment. This

scenario provides both a reason and an incentive to question and change global architecture.

With the obvious signs of instability, weakness, and the absence of global leadership, emerging forces at the local, regional, and international levels are more probable and capable of asserting dominance by hard and soft power means. This can be seen, for example, in China and India's quest for economic prospects in the Middle East area, both of which are "newcomers" in contrast to leading Western countries [15]. To raise their global soft strength, Russia and China have been instrumental in initiating humanitarian diplomacy in assistance to different countries, including Italy and the African continent. The absence of the United States in regions such as Africa has aided this target [16]. China, in particular, has gradually become an ideal partner for western traditional developed countries.

In contrast, the United States and other key Western countries were virtually absent. Chinese humanitarian diplomacy through Africa exemplifies a strategy in which China portrays itself as a champion of the developed world [17]. From Italy's standpoint, it was noticed that they got assistance from China, Cuba, and Russia before their allies or the EU, which has the power to reshape diplomatic relationships. Chinese global humanitarian diplomacy activities have also sparked speculation over whether there would be a "Chinese Marshall Plan" (after the US aid efforts to Western Europe in the wake of World War Two). Exact forecasts, however, are challenging to make in such an unpredictable political, economic, and global geopolitical setting, and patterns can alternate and shift at any time.

Indeed, the absence of US leadership challenges the US's global importance, theoretically opening the floor to other players such as China [18]. Suppose China is willing to overcome allegations of blame and liability for the pandemic. In that case, it will assume a global leader's role. So, it may face difficulties in gaining political support for its global leadership. Thus, the US's loss would promote an accessible challenge to US global leadership tangibly (by establishing a physical vacuum) and intangibly (by eliminating cognitive impediments to challengers). In the run-up to the 2020 US presidential elections, a schism between various domestic political conceptions of the country's position is visible, trapped between recent historical role references and the possibilities and challenges posed by the Coronavirus. These visions, which can be loosely described as 'America first' vs. the US as a global unipolar hegemony, are incompatible with a lack of consideration for, or even the possibility of, a middle ground or consensus.

3. ANALYSIS

This study adopts a relative comparison method, taking the emergence of the first case in China and the United States as the beginning of the epidemic in the country, and separately assessing the time of the first death in China and the United States, the time of the 10,000th death, and the time of fangcang shelter hospitals' establishment to compare the gap between China and the United States in responding to the epidemic.

The interval between the appearance of the first case between China and the United States was one month. According to the Lancet's research on January 24, 2020, the first confirmed patient with novel coronavirus pneumonia became ill on December 1, 2019 [19]. After a preliminary understanding of the symptoms and response measures of the novel coronavirus, the Chinese government quickly informed the World Health Organization of the novel coronavirus pneumonia on December 31, 2019 [20]. The first confirmed case of novel coronavirus pneumonia in the United States was in January 2020 [21].

Besides, the interval between the appearance of the first death cases in China and the United States was also about one month. The first death case in China occurred on January 11, 2020 [22], and the first death case in the United States occurred in early February 2020 [23]. It can be seen that the time difference between the previous epidemics between China and the United States can be identified as one month.

However, when comparing the ten-thousandth death cases in China and the United States, the gap is very obvious. The first 10,000 deaths in the United States occurred on April 6, 2020 [24], while the number of deaths in China has never exceeded 5,000.

Next, let us focus on the measures taken by China and the United States to treat patients. To treat patients, China quickly adopted strong blockade measures to quickly contain the virus's rapid spread and established a shelter hospital in February 2020 [25]. This measure proved to be very efficient and effective in later practice. Thanks to the powerful combinational measures of the Chinese government, as of March 10, 2020, China no longer needs shelter hospitals to treat patients. Simultaneously, China's epidemic prevention measures have changed from controlling the spread of the local virus to preventing the spread of the virus due to the importation of overseas cases [26], which shows that the control of the COVID19 has been declared a success in China. In contrast to the United States at the same time, the first square cabin hospital in the United States was completed in New York on March 24, 2020 [27]. Then the President of the United States, Trump, was still busy politicizing the novel coronavirus issue and stigmatizing China [28]. This distracted people from the poor domestic epidemic prevention and control situation, and the fact was that this

trick had indeed worked politically. The Pew Center report in June 2020 shows that half of Americans believe that the virus will hit China's international reputation. Under such political operations that ignore science, the result is that the COVID-19 epidemic has gotten out of control in the United States. The comparison of epidemic data between China and the United States is extremely shocking. As of April 18, 2021, the total number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the United States is 31,250,635, and the total number of deaths is 560,858, while the total number of confirmed cases in China as the outbreak site is 103,273, and the total number of deaths is 4856. The United States accounts for nearly 4% of the world's population and contributes about 22% of the confirmed cases and about 19% of the deaths. In contrast, China, where the epidemic first broke out, accounting for about 17% of the world's population, has only accounted for 0.07% of the world's total number of infections. And the death toll only accounted for 0.16%. In the face of huge numbers, the result speaks for itself.

These comparisons are the relative change in the international influence of China and the United States. The respective countermeasures of China and the United States and the consequences of this epidemic have fully demonstrated the strong execution of the Chinese government and the superiority of the Chinese system. In contrast, the United States, which has occupied the world's voice for a long time, has suffered huge losses. The international influence of China and the United States has changed oppositely, resulting in very significant changes. With its outstanding anti-epidemic results and active international assistance measures, China has greatly improved itself and promoted its international influence. In contrast, the United States has been labelled the decline of hegemony.

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this essay discusses that under the COVID-19 pandemic, how China challenges the ideological hegemony of western countries led by the United States. Throughout the literature review, we find the difference of ideologies makes the countries differ in many aspects, such as the legitimacy of governance, how to define democracy, and how to deal with a particular social phenomenon. Countries prove the superiority of their ideology through economic and diplomatic success. Although the Chinese government's excessive interference in individuals or groups is regarded by western countries as a severe violation of human rights and democracy, objectively speaking, this high sense of identity with the authorities enables Chinese society to respond quickly to specific events.

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic shocked the whole world. Contrary to widespread expectation, western countries, which have comparative advantages since the end of the cold war, have not responded well to the

pandemic. By comparing pandemic-related quantitative data from China and the United States, several drawbacks of liberalism are apparent. First, due to the lack of effective execution of the government to the public, the western countries cannot effectively curb the spread of the virus through the lockdown policy, and the individual's 'own way' during the lockdown further worsened the situation. Second, to distinguish it from China's anti-epidemic measures, although the United States received the impact of the pandemic later than China, the United States did not adopt China's Countermeasures at the first time.

On the contrary, the United States uses meaningless blame games to divert the attention of the domestic public, desalinates the seriousness of the new coronavirus, and lays a hidden danger for the subsequent spread of the virus, resulting in unexpected deaths and economic losses. In addition to the differences in anti-epidemic means and results, the contrast between the two countries in international vaccine distribution has also been noticed by the international community. Unlike China's active vaccine support to other countries, the United States still refuses to export vaccines when its demand has been met, making countries gradually question whether it still has global leadership. Through analysis, we believe that China's positive response to the COVID-19 pandemic has indeed shaken the liberal ideological hegemony established by western countries since the end of the cold war. However, there are potential limitations in this paper. That is, we cannot exhaust all the variables that may affect the research results. Fukuyama believes that although the COVID-19 pandemic does impact liberalism, it should not be seen as a sign of the weakening of the ideology. South Korea - as one of them, it has also effectively controlled the pandemic. At the same time, the unsatisfactory performance of the United States, the former hegemon, is caused by other factors, such as the political factors of the presidential change. This requires future research to further explore and test the hypothesis.

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