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Analysing Contribution of India and Its Leadership to the World in the Covid-19 Crisis

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ABSTRACT

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic has presented India with complex economic and public health challenges. Furthermore, these two crises interact with each other in unpredictable ways hence there is considerable uncertainty in designing a policy response. This article purports to place India's experience with the coronavirus with a cut-off date of 30 June 2020 in perspective and to examine the public health and economic challenges as well as the economy's prospects in a post-COVID world. The article lists key dates in the development of this pandemic in India and globally. We then outline the economic and health strategies followed in India to combat the crisis. We further discuss some consequences of the pandemic and elements of India's recovery strategy. We also assess elements of India's recovery. Finally, this article discusses prospects for the Indian economy in the short run.

Keywords: COVID-19, crisis management, public health

INTRODUCTION

In late 2019, a new virus, severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), emerged in Wuhan, China, causing an infectious disease [1–3] that would later be named coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) by the World Health Organization on February 11, 2020. This disease quickly spread across the globe, with a very rapid increase in new cases noted in many European countries and the United States between early February and early March 2020. On March 12, 2020, the World Health Organization declared the spread of COVID-19 a global pandemic. As of May 29, 2020, a total of 5,657,529 cases of COVID-19 were registered worldwide, with 356,254 confirmed deaths (4). In the United States alone, the total number of confirmed COVID-19 cases on May 28, 2020, was 1,698,523, and 100,446 Americans had died of this disease [1].

The complex crisis has at least four fundamental elements, and each of these interacts with the other. These elements are the following: (a) First and foremost, this represents a health crisis and an economic crisis that feed on each other—measures to curtail the health crisis (e.g., lockdown) lead to an economic crisis. However, the economic crisis, in turn, reduces the resources available for tackling the health crisis. An easing of one crisis would help in addressing the other. (b) The crises evolve—the spread of the virus depends on contact between

humans and the economic crisis depends on the sectors of the economy that are affected first and their feedback effects on other sectors of the economy including on labor. (c) Consequently, there is no easy way of predicting how the twin crises will play out over time, and hence, there is considerable uncertainty about the consequences of policy (unknown unknowns). (d) Finally, accepted antidotes are hard to find and indeed are not in sight, so that many countries, even those with otherwise robust health systems, are facing critical shortages of essential medical supplies needed to manage (as opposed to treating) the disease, such as testing kits, ventilators, personal protective equipment (PPEs), oxygen supplies, and the like.[2]

Governments everywhere faced daunting and often unprecedented challenges in the face of the first peak of the COVD-19 pandemic. Public leaders sought to regain control over a highly uncertain and dynamic threat, formulating strategies that were implemented at considerable economic, societal and political costs. Normal modes of policymaking had to be abandoned, as conventional toolkits and contingency plans proved ineffective. In this paper, we offer the first inventory of possible lessons that we draw from our study of crisis responses in various European political systems. We aim to formulate an agenda for learning lessons from the management of the largest crisis to hit the world in years. These lessons should help policymakers prepare for future crises, which appear inevitable.[3]

Public Significance Statement

This study advances our understanding of the importance of character in political leadership during crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Our findings explicate the behaviors associated with leader character. Additionally, the study reveals that trust helps to explain the effect of character on the perceived effectiveness of leaders.

Scholars have long pondered what leadership qualities people consider essential for effective political leadership. Perceptions of leadership qualities are associated with voting intentions and voting behavior [4]. Character is a key leadership quality that is often scrutinized, with a longstanding tradition of emphasizing the role of the character in presidential leadership [5].

In the discourse surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, the term *character* has been used frequently because a leader's character is considered essential to allay fear and reduce uncertainty, as well as to galvanize and move people forward toward a common goal. Wehner (2020) wrote about the challenges of presidential leadership during the pandemic, noting that "it's reasonable to expect that a president will face an unexpected crisis—and at that point, the president's judgment and discernment, his character and leadership ability, will matter."

This crisis has changed people's lives in unprecedented ways. In addition to public health concerns, the crisis has left many fearing for their jobs, struggling with rampant unemployment, and losing faith in the effectiveness of business and political leaders (6). The rapid escalation of COVID-19 highlights the need for timely and effective decision-making by leaders. Applied psychology research has shown that perceptions of who makes an effective leader can be altered in a crisis [7].

The article is organized as follows. First is a review of theory and research on leadership in complex, fast-changing environments fraught with conflicting demands—with a focus on the crisis in particular. Next, hypotheses are developed that suggest versatile leadership is crucial, yet made especially difficult, in a crisis. Then, an opportunity to test these hypotheses with a quasi-experimental field study is described. After documenting the research methodology and results, there is a discussion of the implications for leaders, organizations, and the professionals who study and advise them about dealing with the paradoxical demands of disruptive change.[8]

India's role in tackling the Covid-19 crisis

In combating the pandemic, India has shown remarkable foresight and speed: India has been stepping up its response well ahead of schedule, from airport screenings to visa restrictions. In its battle against the coronavirus, India has followed a carefully crafted roadmap led by Prime Minister. The COVID-19 epidemic has wreaked havoc around the globe, obliterating geographical barriers as well as socio-economic and political barriers. It has severely pierced humanity's arrogance.

In combating the pandemic, India has shown remarkable foresight and speed: India has been stepping up its response well ahead of schedule, from airport screenings to visa restrictions. In its battle against coronavirus, India has followed a carefully crafted roadmap led by Prime Minister. Finally, the most difficult decision was made: to halt all movement to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. In many respects, this was an exceptional decision. From persuading people to stay at home to prepare for the economic consequences of such an unforeseen lockdown — and then putting it in place humanely and sensitively — there's a lot to do. Without excellent leadership abilities, the decision could not have been made. PM reached out to the 1.3 billion people directly to request their mandate, which is a commendable show of democratic ethos. They backed the decision, and the lockdown has now been extended with widespread approval. He also spoke with all of India's state chief ministers, who reciprocated in kind, demonstrating the country's cooperative existence. [9]

STEPS TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT TO FIGHT CORONAVIRUS IN INDIA[10]

Precautionary Steps

The government took proactive measures to control its spread in India. It conducted heavy screenings and mandatorily quarantined incoming International travelers and also conclusively suspended all visas, except for diplomats and employment, till April 15. All cross-national borders were sealed, and railway operations were suspended. Further, all schools, gyms, malls, clubs, hotels, community halls, etc. were shut. But due to the increased risk of the spread of the virus, on March 24, the Prime Minister announced a complete 21-day lockdown for the entire nation, banning people to move out of their houses. This act, thus, severely restricted the community's spread of the virus. However, the downside is that the lockdown is expected to shave off more than Rs. 10 lakh crores from the Indian economy.

Informative Steps

To control the growing panic and to distribute viable information, the government provides authentic information on the virus, its spread, preventions, guidelines, helpline numbers, registered cases, death tools, etc. on the Ministry of Health's official website.

Medical Steps

The government has designated 72 centers across the country for the diagnosis and treatment of COVID-19. As per the WHO estimate, there should be 3 beds/1,000 people while India has only 0.7 beds/1,000 people. Thus, to provide for more isolation wards, the government converted 20,000+ railway coaches into isolation stations. Meanwhile, the center has also ramped up steps to develop a vaccine for the pandemic.

Financial Steps

On the other hand, the RBI (Reserve Bank of India) undertook emergency measures cutting various interest rates to a record low to increase liquidity in the economy by over Rs. 3.7 lakh crores. It also ordered a 3-month EMI moratorium from banks and financial institutions such as Tata Capital, as well as provided relief for taxpayers by deferring the ITR and GST filing dates until June 2020. Moreover, to help low-income households, migrant workers, and daily wage laborers cope with the situation, the government has issued relief packages (worth Rs. 1.7 lakh crores for food and direct cash transfers), opened shelter homes, and other securities. The Indian government is leaving no stone unturned in battling coronavirus. However, whether or not the Government has successfully contained the spread of COVID-19 in the country, only statistics can tell.

Central finance minister announced that the government has deferred the last date for filing the income tax return for the previous financial year to June 30, 2020.

- ✓ If there is any delay in payment, the interest levied will be lower, 9 percent instead of 12 percent.
- ✓ The scheme for resolving tax disputes, Vivad se Vishwas, has also been extended to June 30. The program offers relief on the 10 percent interest on the principal amount till March 31, and that deadline has been deferred till June 30.
- ✓ The last date for the obligatory seeding of Aadhaar with PAN has been pushed from March 31 to June 30.
- ✓ Notices under the Income Tax Act will also be issued at a later date.
- ✓ Sitharaman declared that the deadline for filing GST returns for March-April-May has also been moved to June 30.
- ✓ As a relief to companies with an annual turnover lower than Rs 5 crore, the late filing of GST returns would not attract any penalty or interest.
- ✓ For companies having more than Rs 5 crore annual turnover, no late fine will be imposed if the GST filing deadline is crossed by up to 15 days. After that, a diminished rate of 9 percent will be charged as interest.
- ✓ The rule about holding mandatory general board meetings every two quarters has been relaxed. If a board meeting is not held for 2019-20, it will not be considered an infringement.
- ✓ Under ordinary circumstances, you need to maintain a minimum bank balance in your savings account, or else you attract a fine. Under the altered conditions of the coronavirus catastrophe, the government has decided to relinquish the charges for not maintaining such balance.
- ✓ Sitharaman said that for the coming three months, debit-card holders would be able to withdraw cash from all ATMs, even those not belonging to their home banks, without having to pay any extra fees.
- ✓ To prevent companies from being driven to insolvency, the government increased the threshold limit for triggering bankruptcy under Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code from Rs 1 lakh to Rs 1 crore.

INDIA STRATEGIC ROLE IN THE POST COVID-19 GLOBAL RECOVERY

In the aftermath of the COVID-19 geostrategic chaos, India is well placed to take center stage in providing strong leadership and guidance in the G20 decision-making phase, restoring stability and equilibrium to the evolving global order. The G20 members are increasingly aware of India's ambitious multi-pronged strategy and ability to play a greater strategic role. The claim is that India's ability to manage global political and economic problems by improving collective approaches to issues such as climate change, medical diplomacy, and technological advancement has generated favorable optics for India to be at the core of the G20 forum. Because of India's clear track record of working responsibly in concert with the international community and in accordance with the existing laws, norms, and principles of multilateralism, there is a lot of hope and aspirations right now.

New Delhi's call for a revamped multilateralism based on a framework of deeper cooperation, reliable confidence, and convergence exemplifies the country's commitment to providing strong leadership in the post-COVID-19 regional process of recovery. As the United States grapples with the pandemic and the continuing presidential transition phase, there is a perceptible void in the current broken global geopolitical architecture. Meanwhile, great powers in the European Union are suffering from an ongoing economic recession and the revival of COVID-19, while China faces internal issues as a result of the international community's growing isolation as a result of the pandemic's confidence deficit, as well as its belligerent expansionist stance. India has a unique opportunity to fill a geostrategic vacuum while establishing a credible presence in the G20 club as a global strategic and economic powerhouse, thanks to the current geopolitical disarray.

PM has well-articulated India's pivotal position in shaping the contours of the post-COVID-19 world order through strong statesmanship in fostering a reformed multilateral framework. “Today, the planet is confronted with a major threat in the form of Corona Virus. It has also been seen as a significant obstacle for the financial community by financial institutions. Today, we must all work together to meet this challenge. We must triumph through the force of our ‘Collaborate to Create' resolution.” PM negotiations well express India's pivotal influence in forming the outlines of the post-COVID-19 world order by way of vigorous statecraft in fostering a reformed intergovernmental construct.

In today's geopolitical landscape, India's dedication to bilateral institutions in maintaining peace, defense, and territorial integrity in the critical Indo-Pacific Region is exemplified by its leadership position in the QUAD architecture, an exclusive grouping that includes India. The US, Japan, and Australia are working together to identify new vistas of strategic cooperation in areas such as connectivity, infrastructure development, and security paradigms such as counter-terrorism, cyber-security, maritime security, humanitarian aid, and disaster relief, to ensure a free, open, and inclusive world. New Delhi's recent approval of Australia's involvement in the November 2020 Malabar naval exercises, upping the ante against China, demonstrates India's firm resolve to fight China's belligerent behavior while maintaining the Indo-Pacific region's geostrategic power balance. At the same time, India's Indo-Pacific Ocean Initiative (IPOI) is widely regarded as a watershed moment in geopolitics and a game-changer in promoting robust multilateral engagement between New Delhi and ASEAN partners across politico-economic and socio-cultural divides, all while ensuring protection, maritime security, and stability in the Indo-Pacific region. India's pioneering role in revitalizing other multilateral forums such as the JAI (Japan-America-India) trilateral grouping, BIMSTEC, the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), and BRICS (Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa) shows New Delhi's strong commitment to robust diplomatic engagement in shaping the trajectory of emerging regional and trans-continental geopolitical nomenclature. India's continued efforts to strengthen geostrategic cooperation in the strategic Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), in line with its groundbreaking vision of SAGAR (Protection and Growth for All in the Region), highlight New Delhi's ability as a formidable first responder in providing security in the Indian Ocean Region.) India's statesmanship and persuasive capabilities in shaping global geopolitics are effectively demonstrated by such credible interventions. [10]

Crisis Leadership

The pandemic has intensified the problems in the current organizational context; the COVID-19 epidemic is the definition of VUCA. “A specific, unexpected, and non-routine event or series of

events that cause high levels of uncertainty and endanger. an organization's high priority goals" is how a crisis is identified. People and operating processes are both shocked and stressed during crises. Furthermore, in times of uncertainty, disorder, and danger, humans are predisposed to pursue leadership as an adaptive solution for organizing a collective response. As a result, there is a substantial body of theory and study on crisis leadership. [11], [12].

Another common blunder made by leaders during crises is waiting for a complete collection of facts to emerge before deciding what to do. Facts cannot become apparent within the required decision-making time frame because a crisis entails many unknowns and surprises. Leaders should not, however, rely solely on their country. Leaders can cope better with confusion and the sensation of déjà vu by gathering data as the crisis unfolds and analyzing how well their responses perform.

In practice, this entails taking regular breaks from crisis management to analyze the situation from different perspectives, predict what may happen next, and then act. The pause-assess-anticipate-act cycle should be used regularly because it helps leaders retain deliberate composure and avoid overreacting to new knowledge[13-14]. Although there will be times during the crisis where decisive action is required because there is little time to evaluate or predict, leaders will inevitably find opportunities to pause, reflect, and plan before moving forward.

When it comes to assessing and anticipating, two cognitive patterns can help leaders. One is called updating, and it entails revising proposals based on new information and expertise gathered by teams. The second, doubting, assists leaders in objectively evaluating current and future behaviors and determining whether they need to be changed, adopted, or discarded. Updating and doubting help leaders balance their opposing urges to devise solutions based on what they've achieved before and to devise new solutions without reference to previous experiences. Leaders, on the other hand, put their perspectives to bear while still embracing new insights as they arise. Leaders must act decisively after they have made their decision. [15] Visible decisiveness not only increases the organization's confidence in its management but also encourages the network of teams to keep looking for solutions to the organization's problems.

OXYGEN CRISIS & INDIAN GOVT STEPS

As India fights a second wave of the Covid-19 epidemic, the central government is working closely with states to address the country's persistent oxygen shortage. Here are some of the immediate actions being taken to alleviate the shortfall so that India does not lose more lives as a result of the lack of treatment than the virus itself.

Liquid Oxygen Use For Non-Medical Purposes Is Prohibited

To make it easier for hospitals treating Covid patients to get oxygen, the government limited the use of liquid oxygen to medicinal purposes alone. The order also covers existing liquid oxygen inventories with industrial facilities. In its decree, the government stated that "no industry would be immune from this directive."

A total of 551 Psa Medical Oxygen Generation Plants have been approved

The Centre has authorised the funding of 551 specialised Pressure Swing Adsorption (PSO) Medical Oxygen Generation Plants at public health institutions across the country. These plants will be constructed at government hospitals in district headquarters that have been identified.

Local Containment Zones Have Been Recommended to States

On Sunday, the Union health ministry published local containment recommendations for areas with a test positive rate of 10% or more in the previous week, or with more than 60% occupancy of oxygen-supported or ICU beds. To avoid the virus from spreading, the Ministry emphasised local containment zones for 14 days with precise boundaries and strict controls.

Railways Gears Up with Oxygen Express

The Oxygen Express trains have been expanded by Indian Railways to carry liquid medicinal oxygen to several states throughout the country. Since the first train of empty tanks departed Mumbai for Vizag on April 19, the railways have successfully carried more than 302 tonnes of oxygen to various states throughout India, with another 154 tonnes on the way to areas in need of the gas.

The Navy and the IAF are assisting in the fight against an oxygen shortage

Oxygen fast ferries to island areas have also been launched by the Navy. 35 oxygen cylinders, Rapid Antigen Detection Test kits, PPE gear, and other medical equipment were handed to the Lakshadweep administration by INS Sharda. To address the oxygen deficit, the IAF has begun airlifting oxygen containers to filling stations.

In Delhi, the ITBP has reopened the Covid Care facility

With 500 oxygenated beds, the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) reopened its Covid care

centre in south Delhi today. This was the world's largest shopping mall until it closed in February of this year. Following a plea from the Delhi administration to the Home Ministry, the facility has been reopened.

Global Support

The US, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the European Union have all expressed interest in assisting India in its fight against the epidemic. While the United States has promised to supply raw materials for vaccine manufacture in India, the United Kingdom has declared that it would also send life-saving medical equipment such as ventilators and oxygen concentrators. Angela Merkel, the German chancellor, has also stated that her government is "urgently" organising a "help mission" for India. [16]

VACCINATION DRIVES IN INDIA

On January 16, India launched the world's largest vaccination campaign to protect nearly 300 million people from the coronavirus illness (COVID-19). COVID-19 vaccinations will be given out at 3,006 locations around the country, including all 50 states and territories. Ten million health-care professionals, who are at high risk of being infected with the COVID-19-causing Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV2), are among the first to get vaccinated. COVID-19 immunisation will help save lives, stabilise health systems, and promote economic recovery, but COVID-appropriate social behaviour and basic public health procedures – detect, test, trace, isolate, and treat – will need to be maintained until vaccinations are widely accessible and the pandemic is ended. India had delivered approximately 332 million doses in total as of June 29, 2021, including the first and second doses of currently authorised vaccinations. [17],[18].

DISUSSION

In summary, the health crises unleashed by the pandemic represent a very serious challenge for the Indian economy. Serious efforts have been made to stabilize the economy and meet the public health challenge [19]. Some success has been achieved in both these areas, but much will depend on how the pandemic pans out, the availability of a vaccine, and the public's response. People have continued participation in the process of healing from both the economic and the health crises are central. At the same time, the pandemic represents an opportunity to carry out reforms that would not have been possible under more ordinary circumstances [20]. India is currently facing a dreadful impact from COVID-19 and due to its combined fear and lockdown scenario; a majority of Indians will face unemployment which will trigger them towards hunger issues, poverty, and mental illness. Even though it is still not clear whether coronavirus or hunger is proponent to which Indians are exposed every day. So far it is clear that COVID-19 created a mixed impact on society including the economy, lifestyle, and environment. It is hard to imagine that the traumatic experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic will be forgotten quickly or disappear entirely over time.[21-22] Lack of trust may grow between the citizen and the institution body. There is no space to celebrate or follow any model as there is a chance of the second wave. There is a probable chance to have the second wave of COVID-19 and if that occurs India will suffer in huge from every aspect. Previously in 2009, the HIN1 influenzas flu and 1918 influenza pandemic both had the second wave, and that was more drastic than the first one. In another study, it was predicted that India may see 2.87 lakh cases per day by the end of 2021.

CONCLUSION

Leaders must not only show empathy, but also open themselves up to empathy from others while remaining aware of their own well-being. Leaders' abilities to process information remain level-headed, and exercise good judgement can deteriorate as stress, exhaustion, and confusion mount during a crisis. If they empower colleagues to show concern—and heed the alerts they receive—they would have a greater chance of preventing functional declines. Investing time in their well-being can help leaders maintain their effectiveness throughout the weeks and months that a crisis will last.

India's leaders are undeniably influential among the general public. India pays close attention to what they think. Last year, it worked well, and people were forced to wear masks and maintain social distance, which helped to flatten the curve and limit the number of people killed. Giving public remarks, on the other hand, would not suffice during the second wave. A leader must be seen following these activities in their everyday lives, but this does not seem to be the case.

Leaders also addressed many demonstrations attended by thousands of unmasked people during the ongoing elections, ignoring COVID constraints. When leaders address large crowds without masks or social distance, the public will not only believe that all is natural, but they will also lose their fear of COVID. Remote leadership is ineffective in combating the pandemic. It's not convenient to be far away and providing orders in the midst of a pandemic. Only by extending effective ideas and initiatives and having the right leader on the ground would we be able to resolve the crisis.

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