

## Working of WHO And Covid Politics

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### Abstract

Danger lies not in any certain event but in politicizing the same. Covid 19 left with devastating consequences. It changed the fate of the whole world. The novel corona virus was first detected in the Wuhan district of China. The cases were slowly increasing. Then the spread was very rapid. Later it started to spread in rest of the countries. Gradually the whole world was affected due to the outbreak of Covid 19. There was lockdown in most of the countries in the world. This was later declared a global pandemic by WHO. Fortunately, the spread has decreased. The countries have already removed restrictions. (WHO (World Health Organization) played a key role in this pandemic. It took collective efforts in stopping the spread of Covid 19. Its primary responsibility is regulating the health sector around the world and protect the world from deadly diseases. China heavily influenced the working of WHO. It also manipulated the reports and statistics. As it is one of the super powers, it vitiated the working of WHO. Such actions of China are very dangerous for the friendly relations among nations and international peace. WHO's independent working has been affected from the influence of certain big powers. World Health Organization is one of the specialized agencies of united Nations. It plays a crucial role in regulating the health. It is highly essential to maintain the independence of WHO because if independence is affected then the world health may be put to jeopardy. There must be concrete reforms as to non-interference of any country in the smooth functioning of WHO. To study how the corona virus began, to examine the working of WHO, to study the role of WHO in containing the spread of covid 19, to study how the WHO is influenced by the working of 5 super powers, to suggest measures for effective working of WHO.

**Keywords;** WHO, Covid, Politics

### Working of WHO and Covid Politics

#### Introduction

The phase of 2020 brought with it attack of Covid 19. The humanity was not even aware of the meaning of the term "Covid". After a span of six months this officially declared a pandemic. There was hue and cry because of this. Many people lost their lives and the families. But then the question was, how did this pandemic begin? Whether it was natural or man-made? Whether China was responsible for this? There was so much of politics. There were many allegations and the counter allegations. Investigation was done. There were many reports as to China's response to this pandemic. Many countries alleged that China concealed the fact of the outbreak and because of it the whole world faced the consequences and hence, China must be made to pay the compensation. However, China rejected the allegation as baseless because it claimed that they had already informed the world community very earlier. This politics seriously affected the working of WHO (World Health Organization). Now the role of WHO was judged as a sole follower of China. WHO (World Health Organization) is one of the most important organs of the United Nations. It shoulders important responsibilities pertaining to health sector. WHO (World Health Organization) played a crucial role during pandemic but it could function properly due to outside pressure. Now whether the WHO was influenced from China is still questionable. One thing is clear from all this that there serious flaws in the working of the WHO which is a matter of concern. WHO is a very essential organ of United Nations. Certain changes are very much required.

#### Specialized Agencies

The Specialized Agencies are different and unique organs. They possess their own constitutions, governing bodies, executive heads and secretariat. Legal agreements of UN are binding

on the Specialized Agencies. Functions of Specialized Agencies are specific and unique. These organs perform very important functions. These functions are very important to the UN. Every Specialized Agency has important scope of autonomy in matters of membership, personnel, programs and finances<sup>ii</sup>. The Objectives of these organs need to be in consonance with the United Nations' working. These organs have the specialized personnel of the respective field and they have the ability to coordinate the efforts among different member states. Article 57 of the UN Charter regulates the formal agreement between the specialized agencies and the United Nations.

### **World Health Organization**

It is a specialized agency of the UN regarding health and interrelated fields. This is the United Nations' health agency. It possesses its own constitution. It was enforced in the year 1948. 7<sup>th</sup> April is celebrated as World Health Day because it came into force on that day. World Health Organization was created for the purpose of fighting deadly deceases. It was created for protecting the world health. It plays a crucial role in preventing many deceases. It also conducts research in medical fields for improving the medical services and improving the world health.

### **Objectives and Functions of World Health Organization**

The aim of WHO to promote the levels of public health and act as "directing and coordinating authority on public health"<sup>iii</sup>. The World Health Organization act as a guard in preventing various diseases and protects the world health. It also strives for the eradication of various diseases. The principal function of WHO is to raise the standard of health as to physical, mental and social, devoid of disease and infirmity. WHO strives to improve the easy access to essential medical health care. It aims to develop the best medical facilities for all irrespective of their financial condition. It aims to create pragmatic health policies involving general public in decision making and improving the health care facilities. Its objective is to tackle the emergencies by preparing plans and executing the same for preventing the havoc. Health is the most important aspect of everyone's lives. Hence, WHO aims at emphasizing on health in all the possible policies. It strives to create health as one of the most important determining factors in all policy framing activities. WHO functions on preventing not only the physical health diseases but also the mental health diseases.

### **Collection of Data**

WHO collects wide array of data. It conducts research in plethora of areas. The areas of data collection and research such as Noncommunicable diseases profile, the global observatory for health research and development, HIV laws and policies database, neglected tropical diseases, etc. It also regulates the pricing of the medicines based on the data collected. WHO conducts research in widest possible areas under health sector. WHO also focusses on health of the children.

### **Beginning of Corona Virus**

In the year 2019 there were some rumors as to spread of some unknown virus. The world community had no idea of the same. People were completely unaware of the coming of the virus. According to the reports the virus began in the city of Wuhan in China. There was no hint with respect to the spread of the virus. It was also time of economic war between the USA and China. Then slowly it spread across China and later it engulfed the entire China. Then the world community came to know of outbreak of this virus in China. Gravity of the same was completely unknown. Slowly some countries were affected because of spread of this virus. Initially, Italy was the most affected and later India's situation also got worsened. Then the name of this virus was disclosed. As per facts it is claimed that the cause of spread was animal. Some reports claim that the virus spread from a bat. There were other allegations claiming that the virus spread from some Chinese laboratory and the same was not disclosed before world community. There were lockdowns and curfew in many regions. In order to curb the spread of this virus countries imposed severe restrictions such as travel bans, closure of schools, closure of businesses, etc.

### **Impact of Covid 19 on India**

India was one of the worst affected nations in the world because of the spread of corona virus. The delta variant began in India itself. This variant was so severe that unfortunately it left a bad impact on India. The healthcare facilities were insufficient for coping with the virus. There were no medicines for treating the diseases. General health facilities were provided by the healthcare professionals. India's economy was devastated, the businesses were shut down and laborers had no job and hence no source of income. The hospitals were completely unprepared for this. This had happened for the very first time and hence, there was no infrastructure in dealing with the same. Initially, India's performance was good but later on the conditions worsened. The mortality was very high. Then India came up with the vaccine which really helped in tackling the situation. Vaccines really helped in fighting and preventing the spread of the virus. Another severe impact was on education. The schools were shut and there was no infrastructure as to online education. Many children dropped out of schools because of no physical education and parents' incapacity to pay the fees. There were many other sectors which were affected due to the outbreak of covid 19 in India.

### **Impact of covid 19 on various groups**

Covid 19 has impacted various groups in our society. This has impacted many families. This unpredicted calamity brought with it many unpredicted consequences. World economy was affected because of closure of various industries. The unemployment was spiked due to the spread of virus. Following are the various groups which were affected because of the spread of virus.

- a) Older persons- Older people were particularly vulnerable to the attack of corona virus. Age, diseases and immunity are the causes of vulnerability of older people. Older people not only had to fight with the virus but also they had to fight the isolation when they needed the most support. They had to face not only the physical health issues but also mental health issues.
- b) Persons with disabilities- Already there are countries which do not have infrastructure supporting the persons with disabilities. The outbreak made this group vulnerable to the virus. In the event of infection, it affected their lives. There were strict guidelines as to social distancing. They were devoid of support from healthcare professionals. There were many healthcare buildings which did not have enough infrastructure for supporting the persons with disabilities.
- c) Youth- Although it was said that youth were not vulnerable but it turned out to be opposite because youth had to handle everything. They were most susceptible to the infection because they had to take care of those who were infected. It was claimed that the virus would not affect the youth. However, youth were one of the most affected groups among all. Youth faced severe impact on their education. Online education is not comfortable and friendly for all and hence, many students dropped out of schools. There were lot many who lost their jobs. Closure of companies led to lay offs and removal employees.
- d) Families- There were many families which were affected because of the outbreak. The families had faced financial issues. Many poor families faced hunger issues. They also faced unemployment issues. The families below poverty line were severely affected and were very much vulnerable to the spread of corona virus.

### **Covid politics**

The investigation was conducted by WHO regarding the outbreak of the virus. Everything was unclear. There were many observations as to the outbreak because some reports claimed that the virus started and spread from some market while some claimed that the virus spread from a laboratory. USA has alleged China of spreading a bioweapon. However, many scientists have stated that this is not a bioweapon. The economic war was already going on between China and USA. USA has severely alleged China as being responsible for the outbreak<sup>iv</sup>. USA and some other countries have contended that China must be asked to pay the compensation. It has also been alleged that China is influencing the working of the WHO. USA specifically criticized the working of the WHO. It has also been alleged that China made many human rights violations during the outbreak. It has also been

criticized that WHO didn't investigate the outbreak of covid 19 properly. There are certain political reasons behind this. It has been stated that China wants to increase its influence in health space<sup>v</sup>. WHO is highly influenced from China. It pays huge amounts of money as support to WHO. Former President Donald Trump has alleged WHO as being the puppet of China<sup>vi</sup>. USA stated that it contributed to WHO more than China but the WHO still follows the directions of China only. WHO was following the direction of China on every aspect. It declared lockdown as China wanted, it framed guidelines with China's help. There was no independence of WHO in the fight against coronavirus. As claimed by some reports, some favors were also provided by China to the chief of WHO. China promised to provide help to the country he belonged to. It was also very much evident that WHO was actually defending China at many levels. As an independent organization it was not impartial in its working. German Health Minister Jens Spahn said the WHO must become "more independent from external interference" and that its role in "leading and coordination" must be strengthened<sup>vii</sup>.

### **Responsibility under International Law**

There are many lawsuits against China claiming compensation for the pandemic. The lawsuits are filed not only in international court but also in Municipal courts<sup>viii</sup>. It has been argued that this pandemic has caused a huge loss to the humanity and China is responsible for this. "Every citizen of India has been affected from different angles. The affected persons wish to seek justice from the courts. One of the ways in which such accountability can be pinned is by judicial recourse for recovery of damages from the Chinese government," said a letter signed by Dr. Adish C. Aggarwala, chairman of the association<sup>ix</sup>. Many advocates have also filed the lawsuits in International Criminal Court as well. It has been opined by many jurists that China is responsible under International Law. It violated many customary rules which regulate the health. China did not inform to the world community regarding the outbreak intentionally and hence, it is liable for reparations.

### **Role of WHO**

WHO played a positive role in curbing the spread of coronavirus. It managed to curb the spread by implementing good policies and guidelines.

- a) Helped Countries in preparation and response- WHO indeed helped countries in responding to the situations and challenges of coronavirus. It helped in preparation of building the health infrastructure of less developed and weaker nations.
- b) Accurate information- There were many myths surrounding the spread of novel coronavirus. WHO made all the efforts to spread the best and the most accurate information to the general public. The false information was spread by mainstream media and hence, the general public was unaware of the accurate information.
- c) Assistance to frontline health workers- Frontline workers played a crucial role in controlling the spread of coronavirus. Frontline workers involved doctors, nurses, ambulance drivers, etc. All forms of assistance were provided to the frontline workers by the WHO. In fact the frontline workers were the most vulnerable to the covid 19 because they were in direct contact with the patients. Hence, WHO made all the efforts that these frontline workers are safe.
- d) Vaccine- WHO coordinated the efforts of all member states in creating the vaccines. It helped the countries in creating and distributing the vaccines all over the world.

Now this was the positive side of how WHO played a positive role in fighting covid 19. However, it has also failed in containing the spread of covid 19.

- a) Late reporting of the outbreak- WHO failed to take cognizance of situation at the earliest. Panel made the investigation and found out that WHO's Emergency Committee should have declared the outbreak in China an international emergency a week earlier than it did<sup>x</sup>.
- b) The Travel provision- There was a provision as to travel ban as a last resort. This provision proved to be fatal. Countries started to act after the situation was worsened.



- c) China's influence- China heavily influenced the working of WHO. It not only interfered but also continuously influenced the working of WHO. Everything was done as per China's directions.

## Conclusion

Covid 19 was an unpleasant surprise to the humanity, whatever happened in the last two years was not expected. This catastrophe has left a deep scar on all the countries around the world. WHO tried performing its duty but it failed to do so. It is the specialized organ of the United Nations. It needs to become more independent. Despite it being an independent organ, it is influenced by many big powers. Not only China but any country might try to exert its influence over WHO. It's a need of an hour that WHO must be allowed to work independently without fear or favour. It performs a very vital function of regulating public health. WHO has a very important responsibility to perform and that is protecting humanity.

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