



COVID 19; A GLOBAL PANDEMIC WITH EMBEDDED POLITICAL IDEOLOGIES FOR A NEW WORLD ORDER

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Abstract:

The COVID-19 pandemic presents itself as one major challenge to globalization as an important product of Liberal ideology (Political and Economic liberalism). After the discovery of the coronavirus in Wuhan, China, in less than three months the virus found itself in many countries of the global north, especially in Europe and followed by other regions of the world. The mode of infection and transmission of the virus from China to other geographies was through transportation and migration, especially air transport and trade. In the face of this global pandemic, many countries embarked on control measures such as lockdowns, social distancing, isolation and quarantines as well as detention of infected persons. The early control measures adopted globally to curb the rate of spread of COVID-19 were significant tenets of socialism, communism and totalitarianism, which are anti-integration, less cooperation and the control of individual liberties and freedoms. In spite of the anti-democratic nature of the early control measures against the COVID-19 pandemic, western countries, which are the champions of democratic values and the promotion of human rights and liberal principles, accepted the anti-democratic measures to contain and control the mode of spread and the global infections of the COVID pandemic. The use of socialist, communist and totalitarian tenets or ideas to control the COVID pandemic, which are products of anti-liberalism and globalization, are signs that some aspects of totalitarianism, socialism and communism can be adopted by Liberal states in times of global emergencies and stresses, but not to return to socialism, communism or totalitarianism which may erode the gains made in promoting human freedoms and the many avenues created by globalization through neo-liberal ideas.

Keywords: Communism, Globalization, Ideologies, Liberalism, Socialism

1. Introduction

The current global system after the end of the Cold War seemed to have been the highest period and time in global history when liberalism as a political ideology with its political

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and economic wings (democracy and capitalism) enjoyed the most success in the world through dominancy. According to Seliger, an ideology is a set of ideas by which men posit, explain and justify the ends and means of organized social action, irrespective of whether such action aims to preserve, amend, uproot or rebuild in a given social order (Seliger, 1976, p. 14).

Before the end of the Cold War in 1990, Liberalism and Socialism were two competing political ideologies globally, with Liberalism representing the West, led by the United States of America and Western Europe and Socialism representing the East, led by the former Soviet Union now Russia. These two ideologies were competing for political hegemony over each other. The ideological competition between Liberalism and Socialism made some countries even tag their names with either democratic republics or socialist republics. Examples of countries which were Socialist in the past and still maintain certain socialist tenets include Cuba, the former Soviet Union now Russia, Vietnam and others, while countries such as Belgium, Canada, France, Netherlands, the United Kingdom, the United States of America and etc. also being on the Capitalist bloc.

Though most European countries in the West, as mentioned are capitalist, their practice of Liberalism were/are not as strict as that of the United States of America especially in terms of the economic front. Most European countries which are Liberalist combine certain elements of Socialism to their practice of Liberalism giving a variant hybrid form of both Capitalism and Socialism known as Liberal Democratic Socialism.

In the late 1980s, the fierce competition between these two dominant political ideologies (Socialism and Liberalism) was on the brink of collapse, making Francis Fukuyama to describe that era in the ideological competition as the end of history. After three decades of socialism on the brink of collapse, even Socialist or Communist states such as Cuba, China, North Korea, Russia, Vietnam and others tried to embrace certain tenets of Capitalism, especially with economic restructuring and openness, but not allowing political participation and the right of dissent. The end of the Cold War in the early 1990s made Russia and other centrally planned economies to privatize certain state-owned enterprises. It also coincided with political openness and economic restructuring involving the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) in many developing countries especially in South East Asia and Africa introduced by the International Monetary Fund and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

After the end of the Cold War coincided with global economic restructuring and openness, strict Socialist and Communist practices in terms of economic control waned. The period of economic restructuring and openness paved the way for globalization to follow and thrive. Globalization ensured that former Socialist or Communist states embraced private-public investment through the transfer of capital, making China, which is a leading communist country to receive the highest form of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the late 20th century and early 21st century, setting the pace for China's economic and industrial transformation (Shan *et al.*, 1999; Wei, 2000 and World Bank, 2000).

2. Features of the two main political ideologies (Liberalism and Socialism)

In terms of scholarly works, Socialism seems to have received so many early publications than Capitalism. Publications on Socialism could be referenced from Plato's Republic to the more radical authors of Socialism, such as Karl Heinrich Marx and Fredrich Engels and their late followers. In terms of the practical aspect of Socialism, it was Stalin of the Soviet Union who started it in the 20th century.

Capitalism as a political ideology also grew out of protestant conception when men began to exploit their fellows during and in the immediate aftermath of the Industrial Revolution in Europe, thereby becoming more grounded in the United States of America after the mass migration of Europeans from Western Europe to the New World (the Americas). These two dominant political ideologies have distinct features and are as follows;

The features of Socialism include the following;

Political Censorship does not allow citizens to participate in the day-to-day administration of their own state. Under political censorship, the ruling class is separated from the ruled class, and thereby, the ruled do not participate in selecting those who should be members of the ruling class. The ruling class in socialist states are mostly a few members of the only political party in the country who are the central members of the political party.

In Socialist states, censorship does not allow citizens to air their views on important national issues, and the content of the media is strictly controlled. The state is very repressive against dissent, and in the author's view, this makes socialist states militaristic in nature and non-tolerant to certain aspects of diplomacy that may lead to a freer society with dissenting views. Political leaders in Communist countries are mainly dictators or authoritarians as they are themselves the highest law of their state since there is no use of a credible and accepted constitution.

In the area of the economy, Socialist states also do not allow market forces and the invincible hands of demand and supply to regulate the economy and the market but rather the state. The state envies individual wealth creation, and for this matter, the state controls the means of production and the allocation of all resources for production.

The features of Liberalism are as follows;

Liberalism, in the political sense, promotes the full participation of all citizens in political decision-making through the election of political leaders with fixed and determined tenure of office. Citizens are uncensored and have the liberty to make individual decisions and personal freedoms. Leaders in liberalized states demand legitimacy from their citizens, and there is an acceptable constitution that regulates all the aspects of the state (Ryan, 1995).

In the area of the economy, capitalist states allow demand and supply to fix prices without state intervention. The decision to produce goods and services in the country is at the privilege of individual investors. What the capitalist state does is not to interfere with the market operations but to create an enabling environment for individual investors to operate freely without any impediment or hindrance.

3. Why is COVID-19 a global pandemic?

COVID-19, as a global pandemic, did not just achieve its name from the laboratory. However, rather the name is a manifestation of certain features, including the rate of spread, the medium of spread and the glocalization of the variants or strains of the COVID-19 virus as well as the vaccines used in the pandemic containment. After the discovery of the COVID-19 virus in Wuhan, China, the virus spread to global cities, especially in the global north countries and global south countries, within the shortest possible time through trade and transport communications (Li, 2020). The rate of global spread of the virus could corroborate what Jan Aart Scholte (Jan Aart,1995) used in his definition of globalization as the simultaneous and instantaneous receipt and reply to information. The COVID-19 pandemic spread in a simultaneous and instantaneous manner globally. There were virus strains or variants after the initial virus that was discovered by scientists in Wuhan. The variants or strains found in the COVID-19 Virus also glocalised as variants or strains later developed in countries such as the United Kingdom, India, South Africa and many others, thereby leading to names of COVID-19 variants or strains such as Omnicom, Delta, Alpha and others.

The medium of infection of the COVID-19 virus was also embedded within globalization through improved communication and transport, especially air and sea transport (Metelmann *et al.*, 2020). Migrants and travelers who were moving from city to city or country to country were the primary vehicles for transmitting and infection or carriers of the virus. Since the medium of transmitting and infection was through human mobility, it is no wonder global north countries such as the U.S, the U. K, Spain, Italy, France, Australia, Japan, Belgium, etc. and global south cities amongst the BRICS (Brazil, India, China Russia and South Africa), as well as South Korea, Algeria, Egypt, Tunisia, Ecuador and others, were the hotbeds of the COVID 19 pandemic.

The global and glocal nature of the COVID-19 pandemic also resulted in global efforts by pharmaceutical companies, researchers, investors and global organizations as well as countries to find a lasting solution to the rate of spread of the virus. The efforts by countries, organizations, entities as well as individuals to find solutions to the COVID-19 pandemic also led to the proliferation of COVID 19 vaccines such as Astra Zeneca, Johnson and Johnson, Sputnik, COVAX, Modena, etc. (Ayati *et al.*, 2020).

4. Embedded political ideologies found in the COVID-19 global pandemic

The embeddedness of political ideologies in the COVID-19 pandemic could be realized from how democratic states especially adopted specific measures to ease or control the rate of spread of the COVID-19 virus, which was more than a blazing fire. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, countries which are democratic, such as Australia, Belgium, Canada, Germany, Italy, Japan, South Korea, the United Kingdom, the United States of America and others, used some aspects of Socialism and Autocracy as means of stemming the tides on the rate of COVID-19 virus and pandemic spread.

These Socialist, Communist and Autocratic elements used by democratic countries of the global north to control the COVID-19 pandemic were also sanctioned by global health organizations such as the World Health Organization, global research bodies and global medical organizations. These embedded political ideologies in the control of the COVID-19 pandemic include border closures and lockdowns, social distancing, distribution of money and other life essentials such as welfare, mandatory quarantines, isolations and vaccinations as a means of managing and containing the global health crisis (Greener, 2020).

5. Effects and meanings of the control measure of COVID-19 in line with existing political ideology

Border closures and lockdowns represent ad hoc measures which countries globally adopted to ensure that their nationals are protected and restricted from foreigners so that the rate of spread and transmission of the COVID-19 virus is not overwhelming to becoming a national health catastrophe. In doing so, countries were indirectly promoting protectionism as the closure of borders prevented importers from importing certain goods and services into their country or preventing exporters from the exportation of certain goods and services outside their countries, leading to protectionism and isolation at a time when the global system instead needed deep integration and co-operation than ever as said by Bill Gate (Boone, 2020).

For instance, Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, New Zealand, Spain, the United Kingdom, the United States of America etc., banned people and goods from countries including India, South Africa, Brazil and China. The banning of goods and services through border closures and lockdowns was upfront to globalization, which is a product of liberalism, thereby leading to the promotion of protectionist tendencies (IMF, 2020) and inward-looking Socialist and Communist practices found in countries such as China, North Korea, Russia and Cuba.

Lockdowns introduced and implemented by countries globally as a means of reducing human-to-human contact as a way of preventing or slowing the transmitting and infections of the COVID-19 pandemic also turned to curtail the freedoms and liberties of their citizen at those very periods, hence resembling the censorship of movements by countries where freedom of movement is restrictive as part of their cardinal features in their governance systems.

Libertarian countries such as Australia, Belgium, Canada France, Finland, Germany, Japan, Sweden, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, etc., all embraced lockdown. Censorship of movement is a cardinal feature within Socialist, Communist as well as Authoritarian states. However, at the time of global emergency during the COVID-19 pandemic, liberal democratic states evoked censorship of movements amongst their nationals as a restriction on their fundamental human rights.

Social distancing measures were also evoked by democratic countries in the West during the peak of the COVID-19 infections. The use of social distancing in control of human lives during the COVID-19 pandemic ensured that freedom of assembly was

curtailed amongst the citizenry. Per the social distancing norms, citizens were not supposed to assemble, hence preventing citizens with the legitimate right to assemble and fight particular unjust cause(s) that ought to have been prevented from happening. In the midst of social distancing rules in Western countries such as America, Australia, Belgium, Britain, Germany etc., citizens who flouted this order or control measure to assemble were inflicted with hefty fines and fierce crackdowns with state security apparatus. During the period of social distancing, security officials, including military personnel in liberal states, became agents of repression against citizens, which is a model and cardinal practice under Socialist, Communist and Totalitarian states.

The COVID-19 pandemic led to many countries in the West providing assistance in the form of money and other life essentials, such as food rations to nationals. At the same time, lockdowns and social distancing rules were enforced. Especially in the United States of America, where the practice of capitalism is at its peak, the state does not intervene to give out handouts such as money, food and other life essentials to its citizens. However, individuals are at liberty to engage in lawful enterprises for their self-gains and satisfaction (Milani, 2020). In the hard times of the COVID-19 pandemic, countries such as the Netherlands, Germany, Italy, Spain, Denmark, and Canada, as well as the United States and others, provided financial and material assistance to some of their citizens, which is practiced in Socialist and Communist states where the state distribute equal welfare income to their nationals including food rations.

The introduction of mandatory quarantines and immunizations of nationals in Liberal states in the global north and other Western countries was tantamount to abuse of fundamental human rights. During the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, mandatory quarantines were implemented by Western states against citizens and people who showed symptoms of COVID-19 or were infested with the virus (Mills, 2020). In these places of quarantine and isolation centres, persons infected or carrying the virus were not allowed to mingle with their fellows, hence curtailing their fundamental rights of association and assembly. Migrants who happened to enter certain countries were also detained and taken to detention centres in instances where such migrants were without COVID-19 vaccination cards.

In terms of mandatory vaccinations by global north countries, the agency of their citizens to make choices and decisions from alternatives or decide for themselves was not enforced or ensured, leading to arbitrary decisions from state and its authorities on the nationals. The mandatory vaccination policy denied citizens of liberal democratic countries their right to choose, leading to suppression and oppression and the denial of their human agency. For instance, during the ATP Australian Tennis Open, Novak Djokovic was denied entry to Australia based on non-COVID-19 vaccination against the mandatory vaccination policy of the Australian government, hence attracting a diplomatic brawl as well as demonstrations from some Australian citizens either for or against their government or Djokovic in early 2022.

6. Synthesis of the limitations of liberalism in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic and its ideological outcome

In the face of the COVID-19 global pandemic, initial social measures used against the lives and activities of nationals to mitigate the pandemic before vaccine solutions emerged are rather seen to be aligned with Socialism than Liberalism. These elements of socialist ideology, used by the entire global system to restrict the movement of their nationals and goods in and out of their economies through lockdowns and social distancing, mandatory quarantines and vaccinations, and border closure, do not necessarily promote globalization or the fundamental human rights of people.

As much as certain features of Socialism, Communism and Totalitarianism were appealed to as mitigation measures in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, it does not suggest that Socialism, Communism, and Totalitarianism are good political ideologies for the modern state. However, Liberalism can be synthesized with its political and economic wings along some of the good tenets of Socialism, Communism, and Totalitarianism, which were used globally to control and contain the COVID-19 pandemic.

When there is the synthesis and synchronization between social distancing, mandatory quarantine, mandatory vaccination, lockdowns and closure of ports and borders, which are Socialist, Communist and Totalitarian in practice with the tenets of Liberalism, it will reinforce Liberal Democratic Socialism, which is the leading practice in most Western European countries. In this view, the author proposes that the new world order after the COVID-19 pandemic to be led by Liberal Democratic Socialism as the primary ideology since strict Liberalism cannot provide solutions to all the human challenges, especially in emergency global crisis situations and periods such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

The researcher's conclusion is in line with the fact that ideologies are variegated, complex, intertwined, overlapping, plural, intermixed and so on (Freeden, 1996, p. 13; Heywood, 1998, pp. 17–9; Vincent, 1992, p. 18) and that it is also necessary to observe that there are some principles or concepts or criteria in them which are so fundamental that they deserve to be characterized. Resorting to Communism, Socialism or Totalitarianism excessively will be a retrogression to human development and the security and freedom of humanity. Liberalism has led to globalization, promoting common standards for humanity and new avenues of global cooperation and development amongst nations, thereby helping to provide solutions to many human challenges globally.

During the late 1980s, on the brink of the end of the Cold War, Francis Fukuyama referred to this period as the end of history (Fukuyama, 1992). However, in the researcher's view, combining the good elements of Socialism, Communism, or Totalitarianism with Liberalism in global emergency situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic led to the beginning of a new history, hence the coining and introduction of the term the "New Normal Era" in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

About the Author

Nyarko Daniel Ofori is a Social Science Scholar from Ghana. Nyarko Daniel Ofori after his PhD studies, assists in teaching and learning at the Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana. Nyarko Daniel Ofori received his Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral Education from the College of Humanities, University of Ghana. The research interest of Nyarko Daniel Ofori are Migration and Security, Globalization and Development, Human Security and Colonialism in Africa.

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