

## CHALLENGES TO THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS SYSTEM AND PEACEFUL DEVELOPMENT IN THE POST-EPIDEMIC ERA

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### Abstract

After the outbreak of COVID-19, such global and public health events have a potential impact on the structure of international relations. Such impacts cover many areas of international relations, such as the stagnation of international economic development, the challenges of international security, and the obvious differences in the level of global health and epidemic prevention. When a real “post-epidemic era” is approaching, we need to conduct effective research and judgment on the international changes in the “post-epidemic era”, which has both theoretical academic value and practical needs. The academic community should strengthen in-depth research on the changes in the international situation of peace and development in the “post-epidemic era”. Combined with the new world changes, this article attempts to analyze the changes in international relations brought about by the “post-epidemic era” and the challenges faced by maintaining world peace from multiple perspectives.

**Keywords:** *post-epidemic era, international trends, peace and development, system of international relations.*

### Introduction

Since the outbreak of the new crown epidemic, the virus is still raging around the world, which not only has an impact on global health security, but also hinders the development of the world economy, and also has a significant impact on international relations. Now that the “post-epidemic era” is gradually coming, the US hegemony has declined, the global security situation has become more complex and volatile, and the international order is facing the possibility of reconstruction. More research and professional guidance. How to deal with the issue of international relations in the “post-epidemic era” requires more research and professional guidance from the international relations academic community.

The definition of the “post-epidemic era” is also worthy of our ideology. Most people simply attribute the areas affected by the epidemic to the “post-epidemic era”. In fact, if analyzed from an academic point of view, such a summary is inaccurate. The “post-pandemic era” should be equated with the “post-Cold War era,” referring to the consequences of the current global COVID-19 pandemic.

In contemporary times, under the impact of the epidemic, the inclusiveness and openness of the international system has declined, and the effectiveness of the international order has also weakened. The trend of anti-globalization in the international community has become popular, which makes the development of countries face more challenges. The “post-epidemic era” is like a catalyst for the effects of international relations. It exacerbates the structural contradictions

between hegemonic and rising powers, and highlights the urgent need for reform in the global governance system.

### Material and Methods

Methodologically, this research is based on the analysis and summary of papers on international relations published during the epidemic. This type of analysis requires contrasting and reorganizing the views of different scholars, and the categories share similar patterns and meanings. On the basis of this structure, it is possible to develop some critical interpretations and coherent meanings. For example, scholar Yang Shufei’s article provides some analysis of global industrial and economic trends in the “post-pandemic era.” and Li Chun’s article analyzes the issue of regional integration under the influence of COVID-19.

In the content analysis, the author combines the changes and status of the international situation under the influence of the epidemic, and attempts to analyze several aspects of future international trends from different perspectives. From the status quo of international relations, the accurate analysis of international relations in the “post-epidemic era” is practical and academically.

This paper focuses on the post-epidemic era, whether it is possible to rebuild the international relations system and the challenges to peaceful development. In the study of these two key issues, the definition of “post-epidemic era” needs to be professionally explained, and detailed analysis from national security,

world economy, international system and other aspects should be made, and make professional conclusions.

### Literature Review

Academic literature emphasizes the importance of analyzing changes in the international situation. Kissinger, in his 2015 article on world order, mentioned the law of changes in the world order. Samuel Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations" can be used to analyze whether the conflict between civilizations will become an important reason for breaking the existing international order when the international pattern becomes more complex in the "post-epidemic era". Saul Korn's *Geopolitics* analyzes factual knowledge of political geography changes in major regions of the world, including their historical and current interrelationships. In the age of globalization, the growing degree of strategic and economic interdependence presents an opportunity for geopolitical zones that are already areas of conflict between great powers. Saul Korn's profound geopolitical wisdom provides the knowledge base for our analysis of regional hotspots.

### Results and Discussion

How to define the "post-epidemic era", some scholars believe that our current environment is the "post-epidemic era", but the author agrees that the "post-epidemic era" should be equivalent to the "post-Cold War era", referring to the current global new crown pneumonia pandemic's consequence. This definition is not only an interpretation of the "post-epidemic era", but also the direction of future trend analysis of international relations. We can use the direction of international relations analysis in the "post-Cold War era" as a guide to make predictions about international relations in the "post-epidemic era". Different scholars have different views on the impact of the new crown epidemic on the international landscape. At present, the academic community's prediction of the overall trend of the world's "post-epidemic era" is still uncertain. Some scholars believe that the new crown pneumonia epidemic can be an important watershed in the post-war world history and the history of human civilization. The epidemic not only affects the operation mode of economic globalization and global governance mode, but also affects the relationship between major powers, the international pattern and even human beings. The trend of civilization reshaping. Some scholars pointed out that the new crown pneumonia epidemic has affected

the current historical development path of the world, which will affect the world order established since World War II. "How to restore the future international order, how to establish leadership, and how to further strengthen international rules" is still unclear. The international order is likely to continue to change in the years to come. Some scholars also believe that "the new crown pneumonia epidemic may have a certain impact on changes in the international pattern, but even after the epidemic, the basic international pattern will not undergo fundamental and major changes." It can be seen that experts are analyzing the epidemic from different angles. It is not difficult to find that the current analysis of scholars mainly focuses on human survival and lifestyle, the world economy, the international pattern of internal and external environment faced by the country, the world order, the global industrial layout, and the form of world civilization. These aspects are interrelated.

The global outbreak of COVID-19 in 2019 has also made the international situation more complicated. The first is the negative impact of COVID-19 on the global economy. As we all know, the global economy is now in the worst recession since the Second World War. The global epidemic of the virus not only threatens the survival and development of human rights, but also increases the cost of social governance in various countries. In the context of epidemic prevention and control, a period of suspension, shutdown and other measures will have a huge impact on the established global industrial and supply chains, and several of the world's largest economies have suffered a heavy blow. For instance, the United States, which dominates the military, technology and finance sectors, has far more COVID-19 infections and deaths than any other country. In 2020, most of the world's major economies are in recession. In 2021, although the United States, Japan and other countries have seen a degree of economic recovery, the situation is still not very optimistic. On the whole, the United States is still the world's unique superpower, maintaining hegemony in many areas. Therefore, COVID-19 does not directly affect relations between countries, nor does it fundamentally change the results of the power balance between major countries, but it has a potential impact on international relations.

While global economic exchanges and social life have been affected by the epidemic, some changes have also taken place in global social ideology and politics. What needs to be emphasized is that this change is the acceleration of the trend of the change of the world pattern in the past. Marked by the Brexit referendum in 2016, there has been a wave of anti-

globalization around the world. Due to the global outbreak of COVID-19 in 2019, on the one hand, the global movement of people and goods exacerbated the spread of the virus and caused public discontent; On the other hand, the disruption of industrial chains in some countries due to the shutdown of factories caused by the epidemic has exposed the inadequacy of the current division of labor and intensified the public's rejection of globalization. Under the joint influence of these two aspects, the global economic growth curve began to slide. In this context, anti-globalization ideas gradually became popular and regionalism became more and more intense.

The COVID-19 outbreak is like a "butterfly effect", which first affected global health security, and countries have taken measures to restrict the movement of people in public places in order to prevent the epidemic. Although such measures are very effective for epidemic prevention, it also affects economic development. With the global economic downturn, the global governance system has also changed. The post-Cold War global governance system is centered on western countries headed by the United States. However, as United States hegemony declined, so did the willingness and ability of western countries to provide public goods to the world also declined. At the same time, as the US has become less inclusive in global governance, its leadership and participation in global affairs are increasingly focused on unilateral interests. The global outbreak of COVID-19 has accelerated this process.

Whether the world order in the "post-epidemic era" will change can be analyzed according to Kissinger's World Order published in 2015. World order has a process of germination, development, destruction and reconstruction, and the world order is formed on the basis of the international pattern. The international pattern is the result of the balance of power between nations over time. A striking feature of the international structure of today's world is the change in the balance of power between the East and the West. There is no doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a huge impact on the international landscape, and the international landscape and the balance of power has also begun to change, so the post-COVID-19 world order will undergo some changes. But the fundamental nature of the world order is not easily changed. The COVID-19 pandemic will only accelerate to a large extent the historical process of the world before the epidemic, including the basic dynamics of the evolution of major-state relations. It is obvious that the epidemic has hit the world economy and accelerated the adjustment of the strategic layout of major powers. The US, Europe,

Russia and other powers in the Asia-Pacific region compete with each other, the international situation is more complicated, and the future world order will inevitably be reconstructed, which is also in line with the laws of historical development. With the increasing uncertainty in the international environment, it will become more difficult to maintain world peace in the future, but the goal of peace and development is still the direction of human efforts.

The sudden interruption of global supply and demand caused by the epidemic has also made countries realize that in the "post-epidemic era", they should restructure their industrial chains and reduce external dependence. Therefore, the global industrial and supply chains are bound to be recombined, and the international strategic confrontation and geopolitical conflicts are inevitably further deepened. The Russia-Ukraine war is a typical manifestation of geopolitical conflicts. Ukraine, which is linked to Russia and Europe, has an important geographical location, and the major powers have been intervening in Ukraine for a long time, and there are complicated interests' disputes. The outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine war, in addition to the internal ethnic conflicts and economic depression in Ukraine, also has external factors affecting the strategic deployment of the United States to Ukraine and Russia's national security considerations. There are powerful political blocs on both sides of Ukraine. NATO's eastward expansion has touched the strategic bottom line of Russia's national security. The Ukrainian government failed to keep strategic clarity and broke the balance diplomacy when its own strength was insufficient, which is bound to lead to Ukraine becoming a victim of international power struggle.

The outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine conflict shows the instability and uncertainty in the changing world. International tensions caused by conflicts undoubtedly pose more severe challenges to the development of other countries. States around the world are seeking their own new international status, and the relations between states are more complicated. To some extent, the Russia-Ukraine conflict also led to the serious regression of the globalization of the world economy and the partial separation of the international market. For instance, the EU and the US imposed extreme economic sanctions on Russia, which was the main energy exporter of the EU, because the sanctions made the energy prices of the EU countries soar. Russia and Ukraine are also a major food exporter in the world. Because of the outbreak of the conflict, the food export of Russia and Ukraine will be sharply reduced. For countries that rely heavily on food import, they will also face the problem of insufficient domestic food

supply due to rising prices. This shows that although maintaining peace and development remains the goal of the international community, the environment for maintaining world peace and promoting common development is very complex. The outbreak of military conflicts and the rise of traditional and non-traditional security risks will intensify the confrontation of ideologies and values and intensify the confrontation between political groups worldwide. The US and Europe imposed extreme sanctions on Russia, which forced small and medium-sized states in the gap between big powers to defend their own security by taking sides with political groups. After some NATO members issued a statement against Russia, Russia put its nuclear forces into a “special combat readiness state”, causing people to worry about nuclear war, to the outbreak of another world war, the nuclear game between the United States and Russia will continue to impact global strategic stability. At the same time, the sanctions against Russia have even spread to the fields of culture and sports. Such a result will only intensify the ideological struggle, the conflict between civilizations and the confrontation between peoples around the world.

### Conclusion

Peace and development are in line with the general trend of world development. At present, regional hotspot conflicts continue and states around the world face more and more challenges. But maintaining peace is still the theme of the world, and the force of maintaining peace is far stronger than the force of war. In light of the development of the epidemic, the situation of international relations in the “post-

epidemic era” is becoming more complex, the evolution of the international landscape is accelerating, a multi-polar international landscape is emerging, global governance is becoming more difficult, and the international environment for peacekeeping is changing. State behaviour has become less predictable and the foundations of the international order have been shaken.

As the spread of COVID-19 has a global effect, the conflict between nationalism and globalization has intensified. Countries adopt trade protectionism and isolationism policies for their own interests. The implementation of these policies challenges the original order of international relations, and the emergence of international problems is more sudden. Under the influence of anti-globalization trend, people’s attitude towards globalization has become negative. In spite of the bad international environment, we should still have confidence in the future development of international relations. The possibility of global systemic war is still very low, and the fluctuation of relations between the major powers in the world is also at its peak. For instance, the trade war between China and the United States for a long time led to a sharp decline in China-US relations, but China still sought to solve the problem through negotiation and consultation. It can be seen that the interaction between China and the United States is still within the framework of peace, and the two sides do not regard war as a solution to the problem. In general, COVID-19 has had a negative impact on international relations, but these impacts are still within the scope of changes in the international system and have not directly affected the development of the existing international system.

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