

# AKSHAT JAIN WRITES, 'PANDEMIC COULD ACT AS CATALYST FOR REWORKING WORLD ORDER, GIVING INDIA LEADING ROLE'

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India's Foreign Policy evolution and changes

*(Written by Akshat Jain)*

The world might soon realise the immense need to include India in the UNSC club, and [COVID-19](#) will likely act as the catalyst for a UNSC permanent seat.

Let's consider the context. While [China](#) kept briefing the World Health Organisation (WHO) and other countries that the situation was under control, and that no human-to-human transmission was traced, the situation in Wuhan — where the virus reportedly originated — was getting out of hand. Officially, China only declared the death of 2,535 due to COVID-19, as on March 30 though local residents, and other indicators, suggested otherwise. Approximately 40,000-50,000 urns had been delivered to the eight mortuaries in Wuhan during that period. Locals were being paid 3,000 yuan (\$685) as “funeral allowance” as well.

It took the Chinese government almost seven weeks after the first case of COVID-19 to impose a lockdown in Wuhan. Despite informing the WHO about the unknown virus on December 31, China allowed millions of people to travel to and from Wuhan outside the country around January 17, the time of Chinese lunar new year celebrations. According to a study by the University of Southampton in [England](#), had China acted three weeks earlier, 95 per cent of the worldwide cases, and the consequent spread of the virus, could have been stopped.

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It seems that China also started hoarding masks and sanitisers just before the virus became a [pandemic](#). China had reportedly already made half of the world's total masks before January: They not only stopped exporting the masks from January onwards, but they also started buying the remaining stock worldwide.

The global number of cases is now over one-and-a-half million with more than 1,00,000 people dead. The Asian Development Bank has predicted that the economic damage to world GDP would be close to \$4.3 trillion. In the US, millions have already filed unemployment claims. In Africa, 31 out of the continent's 54 countries have already imposed a full border closure and an estimated 50 per cent of the jobs in the continent are at risk. In [Spain](#), close to a million people have also filed unemployment claims in just a month.

The UN has predicted that for the upcoming financial year, except for China and India, every major country in the world is likely to face recession. From the past year to this year, the world saw 178 new billionaires, 80 of which were from China: The top 100 billionaires in the world saw six new Chinese entering the list. Most of them had bought shares in companies producing goods and services which are now in prime demand due to the lockdown worldwide, for example, Zoom, the digital meeting app, or companies making certain medicines, masks or ventilators. And while the world is grappling with this pandemic, Hubei province — where Wuhan city is located — has already lifted its trade restrictions. They have declared Wuhan open once again with a big festival involving laser lights and fireworks no less. In fact, since the start of the pandemic, from January 31 to March 31 this year, the top 100 billionaires of the world lost over

\$400 billion of their wealth. Strangely enough, only nine of those 100 were richer at the end of March than they were in January. And they all happen to be Chinese.

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India, one of the founding members of the UN, has been claiming a permanent seat at the UNSC for a long time. Out of the five permanent members of the UNSC, four have been in support of India getting a permanent seat. China has been the only nation blocking India's entry by using its veto power.

The traditional superpowers are outraged at China's supposed involvement in the origin and the spread of COVID-19. And tensions flared up further after China apparently demanded that France give 5G contracts to [Huawei](#) to procure COVID-19 testing kits.

India would be the perfect counter to curb Chinese influence and power in the region. A UNSC reform is long overdue, but countries like Germany, Brazil and South Africa are not viable options at present. And China would never agree to the seat going to Japan.

India's response to the pandemic has been arguably one of the best. India has also imposed a largely successful lockdown and enjoyed relative success in slowing the spread so far. The Indian government's efforts to lead the G20 as well as SAARC countries in tackling the pandemic reflect its willingness to be the leader at this crucial time. India's leadership has not only been praised by smaller neighbouring nations, but also by Australia.

China has already proposed India as a temporary member of the UNSC seat for two years, starting in 2021. But, there is a high chance that by the time the world recovers from COVID-19, the picture is entirely different. China will surely be in a tough situation as questions will continue to mount regarding its role in the pandemic. Often in the past, China has used its veto power to block many WTO resolutions to benefit itself. If India is also given the same access, it could be a game-changer in terms of the shift in balance of power in world politics.

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