Coronavirus: The Great Disruption

WHO and the war over global institutions

Donald Trump’s move to suspend funding for the UN health agency is part of a shift towards competitive multilateralism as Washington and Beijing fight to redefine global institutions.

By C. Raja Mohan

For The Straits Times

Last week, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) failed to agree on a resolution that would have endorsed the World Health Organization (WHO) as the lead agency and encouraged its role in the global response to the coronavirus pandemic. The failure is a setback for multilateralism and global governance as we face a global crisis since World War II, in which deep-seated divisions and a growing mistrust of multilateral institutions and rules have upended old certainties.

The coronavirus pandemic is pushing the world to its limits, raising questions about our ability to respond to global threats and challenges. The crisis is shining a spotlight on the weaknesses of our global institutions and the need for a new approach to multilateralism.

The world is facing a major public health crisis, but the response has been fragmented and lacking a coordinated global approach. The WHO, which has been the lead agency in the global response, has been criticized for its slow response and lack of transparency.

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The pandemic could be a turning point for the WHO, which has struggled to regain its credibility in recent years. The organisation needs to be strengthened and given more power to respond to future pandemics.

The WHO has come under pressure from some countries, including the United States, to cede some of its powers and responsibilities to other organisations. This is a threat to the organisation’s ability to respond effectively to future crises.

WHO and the United Nations

The WHO is one of the UN’s specialized agencies, and its work is closely linked to that of other UN agencies. The organisation has a mandate to respond to public health emergencies, but it has been criticized for its slow response to the coronavirus pandemic.

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Competing interests

The WHO is not the only global health organisation, and there are other competing interests in the field. The World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and other international organisations have a role to play in responding to global health crises.

Trust and confidence

Global trust and confidence in the UN system is crucial to its effectiveness. The WHO’s failure to convince the world of its value and worth has weakened its ability to respond to the coronavirus pandemic.

The crisis is a reminder of the need for a new approach to multilateralism, one that is more responsive to the needs of citizens and more effective in addressing global challenges.


correspondent. Liberal internationalism versus the Atlanticist dream of defining the UN concept of universal power requires a nationalistic approach that would be dangerous to our shared interests. The WHO should be a global agency for global solutions.

The WHO is a global public health organisation that provides technical guidance and support to national governments and international partners. The organisation's mandate is to lead and coordinate the global health response to the pandemic, and to provide guidance and advice to countries on how to deal with the crisis.

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