International Security Dynamics and Superpower Invincibility in the Light of the Corona Pandemic

Timothy Ubelejit Nte (PhD)

Department of Political and Administrative Studies University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria

Corresponding Author: **Timothy Ubelejit Nte (PhD), Department of Political and Administrative Studies University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria*

Abstract: *The incredible and terrible death toll of USA as triggered by Covid-19 is not just pathetic but potent with superpower diminishing venom. The objective of the study is to examine the nexus between traditional security (TS) and non-traditional security (NTS) threats in an international security (IS) dynamics that x-rays the level of preparedness of the UN and USA as custodian of collective security and superpower of a unipolarised world respectively. Accordingly, the study is guided by three research questions. The theoretical framework of the study is a blend of political realism and neo-liberal institutionalism. The ferocity and lethality of Covid-19 is a clear indication that the greatest threats to peace and IS are not only nuclear arsenals but health and other elements of NTS. As at the time of writing, the Covid-19 death toll of USA was 1,000,500 which is far higher than any other country in the world and constitutes more than 15% of global death toll. The death toll of American citizens in all the wars fought in the 20th and 21st century is 39% as opposed to 61% death toll of Covid-19. The heavy death-toll is bringing into question the superpower invincibility of USA and emboldening over-ambitious countries like Russia to commit acts of aggression against Ukraine. The scenario is a clear reminder of the tripolarity projection of United State, Russia and China. The study recommends that USA should attach high premium on NTS and strengthen its diplomatic ties with allies.*

Keywords: *USA, Covid-19, Security, Superpower Invincibility.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The exceedingly heavy death toll of the citizens of USA by Covid-19 is unfathomable as there have been no war or combination of wars that have claimed the lives of US citizens in that manner. This has the propensity of diminishing the superpower status of the United States. The specific objective of the study is to establish a nexus between traditional and non-traditional threats in an international security dynamics that x-rays the level of preparedness of the United Nations and United States as custodian of collective security the superpower of a unipolarized world respectively; with a view to improving on the *modus operandi* and forestalling the reoccurrence of this incredible tragedy.

Accordingly, the study is guided by the under-listed **research questions**. What is the nexus between traditional security and non-traditional security in international security dynamics? How has the United Nations promoted traditional and non-traditional security in the international security dynamics? Why is the Covid-19 heavy-casualty on USA diminishing its superpower invincibility?

The article is divided into four sections. We are already in the first section which is the introduction. The second is materials and methods; the third section results and discussion that will examine the United Nations and security dynamics as well as the Covid-19 heavy casualties and superpower invincibility. Section four is conclusions.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The qualitative research methodology was adopted for the study. The study used facilities made available by high tech innovation in information technology (IT) as data collection source. Tables and graphs designed from data collected from reliable sources such as: Johns Hopkins, Microsoft Bing, NBC News, BBC, Bloomberg, New York Times, CDC Covid Data Tracker enhanced data illustration.

The theoretical framework of the study is a blend of political realism and neo-liberal institutionalism. Realism is a theory which holds the view that sovereign states are primarily motivated by the struggle and pursuit of power in the international system. The realist theory is sometimes referred to as *Realpolitik* or Power Politics and is the antithesis of idealism. According to Scott Burchill "Political realism, Realpolitik, 'power politics', is the oldest and most frequently adopted theory of international relations" [1].

Realism has been a prominent theory of international relations from the very beginnings but gained greatest prominence with the writings of Hans Morgenthau, E. H. Carr, George Kannan, Henry Kissinger etc. These scholars are regarded as the major proponents of realism. The progenitors of classic realism predicate there assumptions on the ancient tradition of thought by writers such as Thucydides, Nicollo Machiavelli, Thomas Hobbes. The prevalence of the ideas of Thomas Hobbes with respect to the war of all against all anarchical international system made the English school of thought to nickname Realism as the Hobbesian theory of international relations [2]. Sovereign states are the principal actors in an anarchical international system where survival from war and threats of aggression is predicated on the self-help [3]. This drives states to make the pursuit of power the greatest priority thereby making the budget for military defense paramount. This is the bases for the traditional definitions of security, the reason for the invasion of Ukraine by Russia and the need to consolidate superpower invincibility.

Neo-Liberal Institutional accommodates some of the deficiencies of political realism with respect to its state-centric cum military centric posture that focus on war as the exclusive threat in the international security dynamic thereby excluding people and other threats to human security from the security equation [3]. Neoliberal Institutionalism is of the view that there are countervailing forces, akin to repeated interactions, that drive sovereign states toward cooperation and that international institutions play a vital role in managing international cooperation [4, 5]. Liberal institutionalism does not attach much premium on military force and war as a significant instrument of foreign policy because it upholds the disbandment of war as an instrument of national policy in the international agenda [5]. Liberal institutionalism includes people as the referent object of security and explains the state's desire to limit war, aggression and collectively seek for solution to the common enemy of humanity as applicable in the globalised Post-Cold War era were cooperation manifest more than war. The traditional and non-traditional security threats presented by the concept of human security can be subsumed goal of limiting conflicts and humanitarian crisis of neoliberal institutionalism [6, 3].

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. International Security Dynamics

Let us first and foremost operationalise security dynamics (SD). The notion of SD from the context of this study is the nexus between traditional security (TS) threats as proffered by the orthodox international security model or classical security approach in juxtaposition with non-traditional security (NTS) threats such as climate change, environmental degradation, infectious diseases, health, population explosion, economic crisis, unavailability of food, armed robbery, communal crisis and other challenges to human survival and welfare. It projects the human dimensions of security threats.

Before the outbreak of Covid-19, the greatest threats to peace and international security were chiefly predicated on challenges posed by nuclear arsenals and other weapons of mass destruction. Health Security and other NTS were grossly overlooked. "Today, the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated what a massive oversight that was; the speed and ferocity with which it has destabilized the world caught us all off guard and triggered the biggest global crisis of our time" [7].

Despite this crisis and other crystal clear latent threats posed by NTS, governments still invest much more on preparations for war than in health security and curtailing other NTS threats. Invariably, TS and its military cum state-centric view still dominate the perception of national and international security [8]. This is because within the perspective of TS international security is military defense of defined territory in anarchical system [9]. "Once a state is able to safeguard its military, territorial, and political interests from outside threats, it is perceived as having attained national security" [10].

Conventional international security is external in nature, protection of territory from external aggression, war, annexation, subjugation, conquest etc. It has to do with the protection of national

interest in foreign policy. "Security is the highest end. Only if survival is assured can states safely seek such other goods as tranquility, profit, and power" [11]. The fear and danger of cataclysmic world event like nuclear holocaust was the greatest security threat. The underlining factors in the security and insecurity continuum were conflict and cooperation. Security was hinged on the state and its survival. Sovereign States are protectorates of their populations and resources and guarantees the security of citizens. Security was seen as acquisition of power through arms race in every ramification including nuclear proliferation. "Security in an objective sense, measures the absence of threats to acquired values, in a subjective sense, absence of fear that such values will be attacked" [12].

The elements and threats of TS are external in orientation, military in nature, alliance in nomenclature and there are links with systemic security cum high politics. External aggression is what constitutes the greatest existential threats in TS [13]. In sum the traditional definitions were state-centric in perspective, perpetuated in freedom or protection of one state or alliance of state from external threat or aggression of another state or alliance of state. Imbued with the sacrosanct virtue of sovereignty, security was military in orientation and defense of borders in exclusivity [14].

On the issue of high politics versus low politics, international security experts are of the view that military force is a determinant to the extent that high politics is when military force is involved in an issue while low politics is when military force is not required [15, 16]. Existential threats or dangers that threaten the existence or wellbeing of a country is a vital element of traditional international security as well as a criterion for distinguishing low politics from high politics. The underlining question here is the magnitude of existential threat [17]. Military buildup and prowess are motivated by the desire to mitigate issues that revolve around high politics and constitute existential threats. International security is conventionally the military defense of a sovereign state [18].

Human Security emerged in the 1990s to challenge the traditional security perspective that dominated politics at this time. The rationale of human security was to have a more comprehensive approach to security that would attract greater attention and resources to a myriad of security challenges revolving around the everyday needs of humans notwithstanding the source or nature of the threat [9]. The paradigm shift from TS to NTS generates a new ontology [6, 19].

NTS are often accorded weak priority and most times absent in the list of potential threats. But Covid-19 pandemic has practically revealed the fact that TS and NTS are both crucial in existential security discourse. To this end issues that constitute NTS threats may be subsumed under seven dimensions of threats namely health security, food security, economic security, environmental security, personal security and political security [3, 9, 10].

3.1.1. Health Security

Over the years, NTS threats such as infectious diseases and health challenges have either been expunged from the list of major threats to security or accorded very weak attention and at best subsumed under the military-centric conception of security. The Covid-19 pandemic has called to question this mindset and practically proved that health can be an existential threat to national and international security [3, 16].

Health security (HS) is at the individual, national, international levels. At the individual level HS is the ability of people to sustain an ill-health free life quality devoid of the level that makes them vulnerable or insecure [10]. At the national level HS is protection of people from infectious diseases and other diseases that constitute threats to national peace, security and stability [3]. Finally HS at the international level are the required proactive and reactive activities for the minimization of danger and impact of infectious diseases and other ailments that constitute threats to people across international boundaries [20].

For most countries, the mode of operation for HS at the national level is couched into the narrow Westphalian, military-centric conception of traditional security wherein high premium is attached to illnesses manifesting through stealth biological weapons with potentials of circumventing national interest [3]. Invariably, as opposed to the human security perspective of health security which encompasses infectious, non-infectious diseases, and a broad range of illness that threaten the wellbeing of humans; national health security focuses on highly contagious diseases [3].

The challenge posed by influenza virus pathogens with respect to frequent occurrence and quick spread of epidemics and the eventual outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic is paving way for a radical paradigm change with regard to HS as an existential threat [16]. "It is the nature of the influenza virus to cause pandemics. There have been at least 11 in the last 300 years, and there will certainly be another one" [21]. Security threats posed by health challenges are enormous and have been killing thousands of people in developed and developing countries. Annually, infectious and parasitic diseases kill as many as 17 million people [22].

3.1.2. Political and Democratic Security

There is the well-established democratic peace theory which holds the view that democratic government would greatly reduce international conflicts and pave way for peace and progress. It is of the opinion that democracies do not fight with each other but search for alternative peaceful means of resolving tensions and disputes. Wars between democracies are rare on non-existent because democracies are more likely to settle mutual conflicts of interest short of threats or use of any military force. Also, democratic states are said to be relatively stable but threat of war comes from authoritarian or non-democratic states. Major proponents of the democratic peace theory are Immanuel Kant and Woodrow Wilson. Francis Fukuyama optimistically argued that democratic government would be the end or final political system in all nations [23]. There is a wider dimension to politics which the Covid-19 pandemic has projected. The governments of some states are using their levers of powers to suppress dissent under the guise of pandemic restrictions. Most of the lockdown and restrictive measures are violating the human rights of individuals and groups without adequate safeguards for the restoration of civil order. Evidently, non-democratic states were more effective in containing the spread of Covid-19 in their country through authoritarian and draconian restrictive measures as was the case with China [14].

3.1.3. Demographic Security

A major exponent of Demographic Security is Thomas Schelling and Jessica Matthews. The focus here is on population growth rate, and the content and pattern of global migration. It took 1 million years to produce the first 1 billion people on earth. In like manner "it took 130 years for world population to grow from one billion to two billion but it will take just a decade to climb from today's five billion to six billion" [24]. As at the time of writing the populations of China and India have exceeded 1.4 billion people respectively [25]. It is projected that world population would be 8 billion people on 15 November 2022 [25]. With the rate at which the population of the world is growing it will inevitably increase to 9 billion people in six years' time. The actual challenge is that the astronomical increase in population is in diametrical proportion with food production and other commodities needed for good living. The natural resources of land, sea and the assorted rivers of water are depleting on daily bases as population is increasing on daily bases. Increase in population is also orchestrating crowded housing and ventilation obstruction in cities; thereby facilitating the spread of contagious diseases such as Covid-19 [14].

3.3.4. Ecological or Environmental Security

Environmental or ecological security is majorly caused by the depletion of the ozone layer naturally designed to shield humanity from ultra-violent rays. The depletion is caused by the industrial emission of dangerous gases such as chlorofluorocarbons [26]. Accordingly "environmental strains that transcend national borders are already beginning to break down the sacred barriers of national security" [24]. A lot of lands are lost through deforestation, desertification, droughts, floods etc. There is also the problem of water scarcity, soil pollution, and air pollution.

3.1.5. Food Security

"Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for active and healthy life" [42]. As a matter of fact, food security comprises the production, nutrition, consumption and entire supply chain [6]. Not having required nutrients sequel to shortage of food weakens the immune system of people and makes them susceptible to infectious diseases and other health challenges. About 800 million people around the world starve or go hungry because of no food. In sub-Saharan Africa some 240 million people are undernourished and there is inadequate access of food in South

Asia [22]. As a hungry man is an angry so shortage of food supply gives rise to a lot of hungry people who are not only angry but are violent trouble makers. There violence most times leads to crisis and conflicts in the process of scrambling for very limited supplies of food.

3.1.6. Personal Security

Physical violence, intimate partner violence and gender based violence have tremendously increased because of the Covid-19 pandemic and this has not receded [14]. The greatest source of worry for a lot people in our contemporary world is violent crimes like armed robbery, kidnapping, agitated killings, rape, torture, battering etc [22]. In Nigeria cases of armed robbery and kidnapping abound with heavy casualties. "Armed robbery is a recurring form of crime in Nigeria, contributing 50% of an overall 8516 deaths in 3,840 fatal incidents between June 2006 and September, 2015" [41] In sum, security-insecurity for NTS is predicated on vulnerabilities that threaten state structures and people [13].

3.2. United Nations and Security Dynamics

The promotion of peace and security through collective security was the motivating factor behind the establishment of the United Nation. Despite some dissenting voices on the exclusion of some fundamental issues bordering on what is now referred to as human security the Charter of the UN was signed on 26th June 1945 by fifty-one countries in the San Francisco Conference [27].

This desire for a holistic security bordering around the security dynamics (SD) discussed above was not only expressed by socialist and developing countries but by President Franklin Roosevelt of USA who led the allied powers to victory and hosted the Dumbarton Oaks and San Francisco Conferences in 1944 and 1945 respectively that led to the formation of the United Nations. Accordingly, the speeches of Roosevelt with respect to freedom from fear and want, as veritable freedoms that people all over the world must enjoy, is said to be the intellectual foundations of SD. The speech evoked the spirit of the compassion of humans and the realization of the interconnectedness in the fate of humanity by shifting the focus away from territorial security or artificial boundaries dividing humanity in the realization of collective and holistic security [3].

The desire for a comprehensive SD would have to wait for another five decades when human security (HS) was launched under the United Nations Human Development Programme (UNDP) in 1994. HS from this perspective attached very high premium on peoples feeling of insecurity predicated on worries of daily life such as disease, hunger, joblessness, crime, torture, repression, gender violence etc. as opposed to insecurity arising from dread of a nuclear cataclysm [7]. Invariably, the 1994 UNDP report is of the view that "human security means, first, safety from such chronic threats as hunger, disease and repression. And second, it means protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life – whether in homes, in jobs or in communities" [28].

The foremost definition of "human security" was given by Mahbubul-Haq in 1994 at the UN Human Development Agency (UNDP) Human Development Report. The amplification of this concept has made the security framework to draw attention to vast and varied threats around the entire spectrum of people. From the HS perspective security covers any insecurity arising from human activities encapsulating the relationship between security, development and human rights. Invariably, HS promotes a commitment to an integrated model for peace, security and stability between and within nations. It protects the emancipation of people from every security threat [14].

Viewed in this manner, the primary precept of HS is connectivity in the sense of security revolving around the interest of human beings. This is in no way undermining or ignoring the military threats of national security in the orthodox frameworks but there is a symbiotic relationship between these threats and security challenges to the extent that none of them should be underrated [17, 29].

Invariably, HS is a national and international security approach that attaches very high premium on humans and their complex socio-political and economic affairs. As a departure from conventional international security the subject of HS are individuals and it objective is the protection of humans from traditions security threats such as military aggression on the one hand and non-traditional threats such as disease, poverty etc. on the other hand. Central to this approach is the fact that deprivations can breed insecurity and undermine peace within and between states. The HS approach does not

replace state security but compliments the security agenda by inputting some gray areas that would enhance human security [23].

HS has made available a model for state and non-state actors who are interested in addressing the human impacts of insecurity by expanding the narrow scope of state-centric, military and national security perspective of the international security worldview. The starting point of human security scholarship was to challenge the dominant military, state-centric, national-security, worldview in order to accommodate the yearnings of most people who are of the view that diseases, hunger, violence, environmental degradation, and the everyday experiences of violence and deprivation are the principal threats to security. HS is now fully operationalized and occupies center stage in security studies and diplomatic agenda [9, 30].

The expounded threats of HS are in conformity with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) projected to be realized by 2030 [14]. It is also in tandem with the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) resolution as ratified in the World Summit of 2005. Hitherto, the sovereignty of states was sacrosanct with respect to external interference. The Rwandan Genocide (1994) and the Srebrenica Massacre (1995) motivated Kofi Annan (United Nations Secretary) to make a case for the introduction of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) Clause in the United Nations Charter. R2P is to the effect that states forfeit some elements of their sovereign powers when they fail to protect their populations from mass atrocity crimes as well as authoritarian government that have plunged their state into pathetic humanitarian crisis [6].

The World Summit of 2005 also granted the right of people to live in dignity, free from poverty, fear, despair and want. In solidarity, regional organizations have been supportive in operationalizing the concept as a working document. In 2004 the UN Human Security Unit was established and it has contributed immensely in the realization of the goals and objectives of human security [18]

The score card of the United Nations with respect to the objective of maintaining peace and security is very high but the there is much to be done on HS in general and prevention of infectious diseases in particular as made crystal clear by the Covid-19 pandemic. It is enough to motivate us in collectivity to be more proactive even if our shared humanity is not sufficient to do so [31].

This was reiterated by the UN Secretary General – António Manuel Guterres who on March 23, 2020 appealed for international ceasefire for a more concerted response to the Corona pandemic. As at 25 June 2020, 172 member states of the United Nations have formally heeded the appeal for a global cease fire and this paved was for the passing of UN Resolution 2532 for the immediate cessation of hostilities in every ramification. There was a call to silence the guns and for a greater international cooperation to fight the pandemic which is the true enemy of our lives that relentlessly attacks all. Earlier, precisely March 25, 2020 – there was the launch of the global humanitarian response plan where the UN Scribe cautioned that it has the potential of diverting international resources dedicated to peace keeping and enforcement in conflict inflicted countries [32].

Implicit in the above discussion is the fact that existing health cooperation at a global level is very porous as manifest in the international efforts to detect infectious diseases. The combined research programmes on pandemic response mechanisms as sponsored by the World Health Organization (WHO) are not as effective as designed. WHO, is saddled with the responsibility of making available health information and medical materials to mitigate epidemics, pandemics and other health related challenges. To this end WHO coordinates joint programs, monitors risk and provides public health information. These measures can be very helpful to the individual governments whose responsibility it is to implement the health programmes designed to mitigate the spread of contagious diseases [33].

The outbreak and disastrous consequences of Covid-19 reveals the unpreparedness of governments for a pandemic of that magnitude. It also revealed that a great number of countries lacked the capacity to manage and superintend over emergency situation. This is coupled with the fact that major powers – especially USA under the leadership of Donald Trump displayed a lackadaisical attitude at the formative stages of the pandemic. This may have affected the leadership of the United Nations as the Security Council didn't meet to deliberate on COVID-19 challenges until the 100th day of the pandemic. Unfortunately, the meeting nearly ended in a deadlock as no meaningful agreement or resolution was passed [34].

It suffices to state that this is not the first time that the United Nations is calling for a cease fire on account of infectious diseases that could threaten international peace and precipitate secondary impacts. UNSC Resolution 1308 that was unanimously adopted on 17 July 2000 for HIV/AIDS epidemic was remarkable because it established the link between international security an infectious diseases for the first time. It recognizes that HIV poses a formidable challenge to progress, stability, development and survival of society except radical measures are undertaken. It also emphasized a coordinated global response to the epidemic; noting that conflict-ridden states are fertile grounds for breeding infectious diseases which conversely worsens violence and instability [32, 16].

United Nations Resolutions 2177 and 2439 were passed by the Security Council in 2014 and 2018 respectively because of the Ebola pandemic which ravaged Democratic Republic of Congo and other West African countries. The Ebola epidemic hampered peace keeping operation and incited some armed groups to take advantage of the crisis in Congo. The resolution underscored the fact that the control of highly contagious infectious diseases like Ebola requires coordinated and urgent action by the international community. The resolution declared that the disease constitutes a major threat to international peace and security and reiterates the fact that it undermines peace keeping operations in that area which complicates and aggravates insecurity. The Congo crisis negatively impacted on the ability to respond to the pandemic conversely the pandemic incited vicious armed groups which orchestrated large movement of people thereby aggravating levels of infection as well as reducing access to health facilities [32].

Control of epidemics and pandemics have actually been in the agenda of the United Nations since 1993. This was the time the World Health Organisation (WHO) released data on global emergency status and aroused international sensitivity on lethal viruses that were rapidly spreading as well as stressing the need for increased vigilance as the first line of action to fight looming epidemics and pandemics. Invariably, health was securitized and given the prime of place as an existential security threat at this time [16]. It is on this premise that Antonio Guterres – UN Secretary General, declared that: "In an interconnected world, none of us is safe until all of us are safe. COVID-19 respects no borders. COVID-19 anywhere is a threat to people everywhere" [31].

3.3. Covid-19 Heavy Casualties and Superpower Invincibility

Covid-19 caused by SARS-CoV-2 virus first ravaged the Hubei Province of China in November 17, 2019. The goodwill and courage of ophthalmologist Dr. Li Wenliang who literally gave his life to save others when he defied Chinese government orders and made public the siege of this lethal virus and proffered precautionary measures against it must be commended [35].

Further delay in the release of this vital information to humanity may have made the Covid-19 pandemic much more gruesome than it became. From China, Covid-19 spread around the world "barreling through 114 countries in three months and infecting over 118,000 people" [35]. Covid-19 was officially declared a pandemic by the World Health Organisation on 30-Jan-2020 [36]. As at 10 May 2022 more than 516 million (516,922,683) people have been inflicted and more than 6.259 million (6,259,045) people killed by Covid-19 and its variants [20].

This high death toll is not taking into account the several indirect deaths sequel to the fact that the health systems were overwhelmed by the Covid-19 pandemics. There were unprecedented delay in seeking for health care not just because all the hospitals were filled with Covid-19 patients but because a lot of specialists Doctors and social workers were also infected and some died thus precipitating too much caution and sometimes apathy and disorder. Also the resources for other ailments were diverted to deal with the pandemic thereby making patients of other ailments to be too vulnerable and die of preventable ailments [23].

Ironically, the US and other superpowers that were from every indication best prepared for any epidemic or pandemic became the worst affected with very heavy death toll [14]. The death toll of USA in the Covid-19 pandemic (DUSC19) was one million, five hundred (1,000,500) as at 8th May, 2022 [37]. This is despite the political will and funding by the United States and other developed countries as well as the high-tech advancement in medicine, pharmacy, hospital facilities, science and great enlightenment which facilitated precautionary measures that culminated in the development of vaccines in a record time.

The exceedingly heavy death toll of the citizens of USA by Covid-19 is unfathomable as there have been no war or combination of wars that have claimed the lives of US citizens in that manner. As a matter of fact the death toll of American citizens in all the wars fought in the 20th and 21st century which encompasses the First World War, Second World War, Korean War, Vietnam War, Gulf War, Afghanistan War and Second Gulf War (Operation Iraqi Freedom) is 39% as opposed to 61% death toll of Covid-19. Please see the table below for further clarification. Unfortunately, the death toll is still rising as the pandemic has not fully ceased.

Table1. *Death Toll of USA in all the Wars (DUSWARS) of the 20th and 21st Century*

| War	Date	Death Toll
First World War	1917-1918	116,516
Second World War	1939-1945	405,399
Korean War	1950-1953	36,516
Vietnam War	1965-1973	58,209
Gulf War	1990-1991	258
Afghanistan - War On Terror	2001-2019	2,400
Second Us Invasion Of Iraq	2003-2009	31,000
TOTAL		650,298
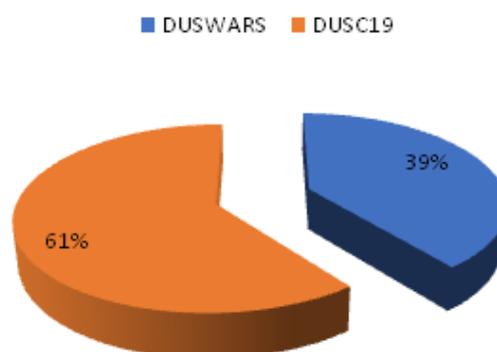
Fig1. *Death Toll of USA in all Wars of the 20th and 21st Centuries versus Covid-19 Pandemic Death toll*

The greatest casualty for USA is not the death toll per se but impact on its superpower invincibility. The United States of America is the most powerful state in our contemporary world and has hegemonic control over other states in the international system. It became the most powerful state of world after leading the Allied Powers to victory in World War II (1939-1945). The powers of the United States of America in the international system started manifesting when it almost single handedly saved the Triple Entente from being mauled by the Triple Alliance in the First World War (1914-1918). Woodrow Wilson was the American President that paved the way for the defeat of the Central Powers and eventually charted the contemporary international system.

The overwhelming powers of the United States of America makes the contemporary world order unipolar - the world order in which one single state controls military, economic, cultural and ideological power in the international system. The United States of America emerged as the single power dominating the world order after the implosion of the Soviet Union in 1990 and end of the bi-polar world order. As part of its might, the defence budget of USA is "close to half of global military expenditures; a blue-water navy superior to all others combined, a chance at a splendid nuclear first strike over its erstwhile fore, Russia; a defence research and development budget that is 80 percent of the total defence expenditure of its most obvious future competitor, China" [38].

The heavy death toll emanating from Covid-19 is dwindling the overwhelming powers of USA and "the country's aura of invincibility has been shattered as it suffers from the highest COVID death toll of any G20 nation, bringing into question the effectiveness of its system of governance and the quality of American institutions" [39]. Inexplicably, the G20 countries had the highest Covid-19 death tolls but the disparity for USA is embarrassing. As a matter of fact the Covid-19 death toll of USA is far higher than any other country in the world and constitutes more than 15% of the global death toll. Please see tables and figure for clearer illustration.

Table2. *Covid-19 Death Toll of Major G20 Countries*

| S/N	Country	Death Toll	Position
1	USA	1,000,050	1st
2	India	523,975	3rd
3	Russia	368,974	4th
4	UK	175,717	7th
5	France	143,176	10th
6	Germany	136,125	13th
7	Turkey	98,808	19th
8	Canada	39,532	26th
9	Austria	18,222	48th
10	Saudi Arabia	9,096	67th
11	China	5,141	87th
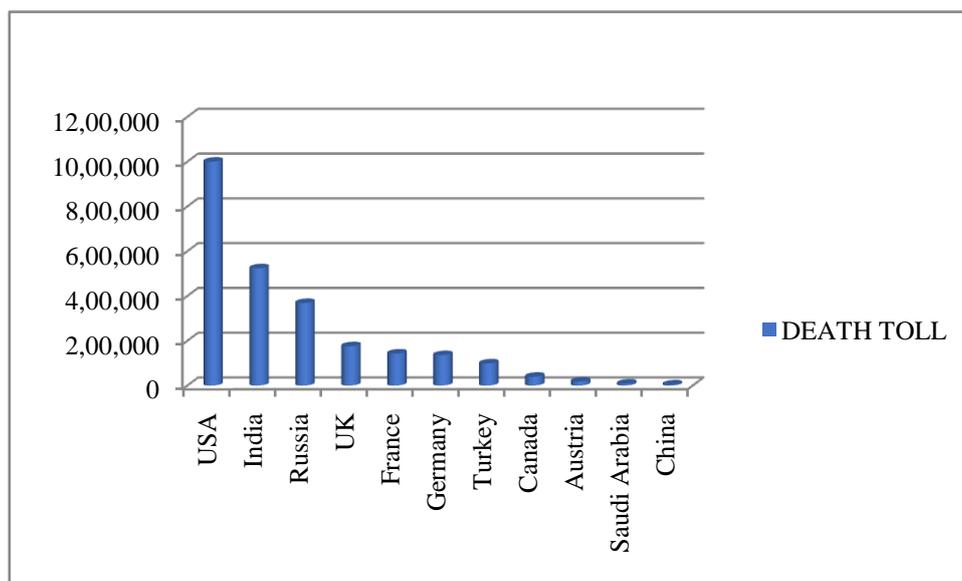
Fig2. *Covid-19 Death Toll of Major G20 Countries*
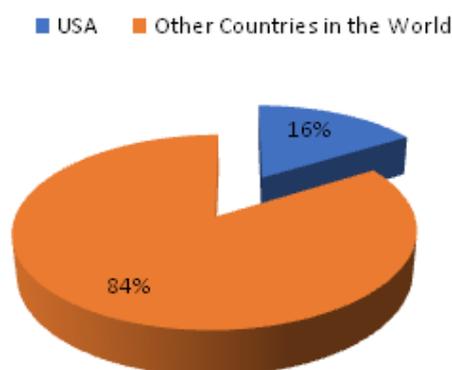
Fig3. *Covid-19 Death Toll of USA versus All the Countries in the Word*

The pandemic has to a great extent impaired the military prowess of USA and drastically hindered its level of alertness worldwide as manifest in the incidences of USS Theodore Roosevelt aircraft carrier quarantined in Guam sequel to the siege of Covid-19 on the sailors. The statistics of U.S. Department of Defense, with respect to service members that have been infected, hospitalized and death is not encouraging. Heavy infection rate on US armed forces has the propensity of hampering its operational capacity by ill-health or death. As the world's superpower, a lot of countries look up to USA in times of willful aggression but Covid-19 is negatively impacting on its ability to create security in the international arena [16]. This is apparently, emboldening over-ambitious countries like Russia to commit acts of aggression against Ukraine despite its membership of NATO.

What happened to USA wherein the quintessentially powerful state of traditional security would not have sufficient quantities of materials required to identify the sick and sustain those that are not sick leading to the loss of more than 1 million lives within a very short duration, dwindling the economy and degrading its military preparedness was a perfect storm with potentials of diminishing the national security and military might of the United States of America [9, 14, 16]

The storm also battered the socio-political, economic and psychological standing of USA. Because of Covid-19 "unemployment rate rose by 1% in Italy and Germany, by 5% in Canada and the United States and by 2% in the United Kingdom" [40]. It also shattered public confidence in government at different levels cum local, state, federal as well as the presidency, and the party system of the United States of America and other countries [16].

The pandemic is greatly eroding the confidence people have on democracy as the best system of government. With is authoritarian inclination China was able to swiftly put the pandemic under control and was able to quickly make decisions and take actions that have achieved economic stability for it within the same period that advanced democracies have been reeling in pains and uncertainties. Italy and Spain readily receiving help from Cuba and Russia as palliatives for Covid-19 is also an aberration to the prevalent world order and a pointer that the US is losing grip as the most trusted and dependable ally [6].

Fight and war against Covid-19 is a rhetoric that has been used by the leadership of USA and other countries in the same way that health workers has been referred to as Corona warriors not just as a metaphor but with all the consequences and associated death toll. This war is however not executed by sophisticated guns, bombs, fighter jets, submarines, bunker busters and in extreme cases nuclear bombs for which USA is the superpower but by epidemic and pandemic alertness and preparedness for which USA needs to do more [6]. The arms race for pandemics is not nuclear proliferation but "a perpetual arms race between science and pathogens that will continually threaten to undermine global security" [7].

The unfathomable Covid-19 death toll is bringing into question the superpower invincibility of the United States of America and a clear reminder of the tripolarity projection to the effect that the post-cold war era would witness the emergence of three major powers in the world namely: United States, Russia and China. In this tripolar world order there was likely to be a tendency for two powers to coalesce against the third [5].

This study is of the view that China may be inclined to coalesce with Russia but the formidable force of the European Union, UK, Canada and Australia would balance the power. China is fast emerging as a very powerful country but the powers of Japan and India and allies of USA cannot be underrated. NATO is also very strong and strategically positioned to counter the emerging powers of both Russia and China. In sum, the Covid-19 pandemic has brought to the fore some gray areas in international security dynamics which threatened the superpower invincibility of United States of America who would come out of it stronger.

The consciousness and resilience of USA and other countries is now fully aroused as manifest in the incredible ingenuity of retooling and creating pharmacological machine, factories and industries with potentials of producing, respiratory facilities, protective equipment, vaccines and medications in record time [14]. The initial underestimation of the velocity and lethality of Covid-19 by the national health systems, reluctance to become vaccinated and the emergence of new variants of SARS-CoV-2 virus may have contributed to the very high death toll [35]. The acts of affection, compassion and solidarity amidst Covid-19 as manifest in heavy fundraising, passionate support and doorstep ovations for health workers, reconnection through Zoom, etc. are heartening and indicative of the triumph of the goodwill of humanity [31].

4. CONCLUSION

Using the research questions as guide the study hereby presents the summary of findings. The first question is: what is the nexus between traditional security and non-traditional security in international security dynamics? As discussed in Unit 2: Covid-19 pandemic has reiterated the need for a juxtaposition of traditional security (TS) threats with non-traditional security (NTS) threats in contemporary international security dynamics. External aggression is what constitutes the greatest

existential threats in TS with elements such as external in orientation, military in nature, alliance in nomenclature and there are links with systemic security cum high politics.

Challenges to human survival and welfare such as climate change, environmental degradation, infectious diseases, health, population-explosion, economic crisis, unavailability of food, armed robbery, communal crisis etc. is what constitutes NTS. The ferocity and lethality of Covid-19 is a clear indication that the greatest threats to peace and international security is not only nuclear arsenals and other weapons of mass destruction but health and other elements that constitutes NTS.

The second question is how has the United Nations promoted traditional and non-traditional security in the international security dynamics? As discussed in Unit 3: Despite the very slow pace, the United Nations (UN) has promoted traditional and non-traditional security in the international security dynamics. At the formative stages of the UN, the comments of President Franklin Roosevelt of USA in the San Francisco Conference with regards to respect for freedom from fear and want, as veritable freedoms that people all over the world must enjoy, is said to be the intellectual foundations of human security which is the orbit on which NTS revolves. This did not however reflect in any of the articles of the Charter signed in 1945. The desire for a comprehensive SD would have to wait for another five decades when human security (HS) was launched under the United Nations Human Development Programme (UNDP) in 1994.

Control of epidemics and pandemics have actually been in the agenda of the United Nations since 1993. This was the time the World Health Organisation (WHO) released data on global emergency status and aroused international sensitivity on lethal viruses The expounded threats of HS are in conformity with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) projected to be realized by 2030. It is also in tandem with the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) resolution as ratified in the World Summit of 2005.

UNSC Resolution 1308 that was unanimously adopted on 17 July 2000 for HIV/AIDS epidemic was remarkable because it established the link between international security an infectious diseases for the first time. United Nations Resolutions 2177 and 2439 were also passed by the Security Council in 2014 and 2018 respectively because of the Ebola pandemic which ravaged Democratic Republic of Congo and other West African countries.

USA under the leadership of Donald Trump displayed a lackadaisical attitude at the formative stages of the pandemic. This may have affected the leadership of the United Nations as the Security Council didn't meet to deliberate on COVID-19 challenges until the 100th day of the pandemic.

The third question is: Why is the Covid-19 heavy-casualty on USA diminishing its superpower invincibility? As discussed in Unit 4: Covid-19 heavy-casualty is diminishing superpower invincibility of USA. The exceedingly heavy death toll of the citizens of USA by Covid-19 is unfathomable as there have been no war or combination of wars that have claimed the lives of US citizens in that manner. As a matter of fact the death toll of American citizens in all the wars fought in the 20th and 21st century which encompasses the First World War, Second World War, Korean War, Vietnam War, Gulf War, Afghanistan War and Second Gulf War (Operation Iraqi Freedom) is 39% as opposed to 61% death toll of Covid-19. The Covid-19 death toll of USA is far higher than any other country in the world and constitutes more than 15% of the global death toll.

The pandemic has to a great extent impaired the military prowess of USA and drastically hindered its level of alertness worldwide. The statistics of U.S. Department of Defense, with respect to service members that have been infected, hospitalized and death is not encouraging. This is apparently, emboldening over-ambitious countries like Russia to commit acts of aggression against Ukraine despite its membership of NATO

In conclusion, the United States of America emerged as the single power dominating the world order after the implosion of the Soviet Union in 1990 and end of the bi-polar world order   and   has remained invincible. The very high death toll and other casualties on the United States of America as precipitated by Covid-19 have drastically diminished its superpower invincibility. The death toll of American citizens in all the wars fought in the 20th and 21st century is 39% as opposed to 61% death toll of Covid-19. The death toll of USA is not only far higher than any other country in the world but constitutes more than 15% of the global death toll. The pandemic is greatly eroding the confidence

people have on democracy as the best system of government and battered the socio-political, economic and psychological standing of USA.

This is apparently, emboldening over-ambitious countries like Russia to commit acts of aggression against Ukraine despite its membership of NATO. The unfathomable Covid-19 death toll is bringing into question the superpower invincibility of the United States of America and a clear reminder of the tripolarity projection to the effect that the post-cold war era would witness the emergence of three major powers in the world namely: United States, Russia and China. In this tripolar world order there was likely to be a tendency for two powers to coalesce against the third.

This study is of the view that China may be inclined to coalesce with Russia but the formidable force of the European Union, UK, Canada and Australia would balance the power. China is fast emerging as a very powerful country but the powers of Japan and India and allies of USA cannot be underrated. NATO structure is also very strong and strategically positioned to counter the emerging powers of both Russia and China. In sum, the Covid-19 pandemic has brought to the fore some gray areas in international security dynamics which threatened the superpower invincibility of United States of America who would come out of it stronger.

To this end the study makes the following recommendations. USA should strengthen it diplomatic ties with allies and be very friendly with potential allies. Non-traditional Security threats like ill health with potentials of causing epidemics and pandemics should not be treated with levity by the United States and United Nations. USA and the international community should prioritize and invest in health security more than on military arsenals and weapons of mass destruction. USA and other countries should establish early warning systems and be alert in the identification of tinctures of infectious diseases for public notification.

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