Deputy Editor,

The COVID-19 transmits “person to person,”1 but international trade and the subsequent international mobility of human capital would be difficult to stop immediately by its nature. Accordingly, many democratic nations that were more open to world trade suffered the most. For example, globalization was found to accelerate the spread of COVID-19,2 international trade also raised the pandemic,3 democratic nations were more seriously infected by COVID-19,4 fatality rates were also found high in democratic countries,5 and the confirmed cases in developed nations were generally greater than in underdeveloped countries.6 At this point, I pose a question more specifically: Is the pandemic a disaster not only for highly developed democracies but also for more open economies? Why not so serious in economically closed and politically suppressed nations?

This article aimed to examine the rising patterns of COVID-19 pandemic. Many papers in the literature investigated the causes of COVID-19 in the early stages of the pandemic, but few studies were related to the causes of the pandemic, which had different growth patterns across countries. More specifically, some countries were relatively easy to control the epidemic within a short period of time so that the confirmed cases were slowly increasing, while some others were unable to cope because the pandemic was growing out of control. Various upward patterns were largely due to the political and socioeconomic characteristics of each country.

A structural model is specified to investigate the potential causes of the COVID-19 pandemic. One salient feature of the finding is that a rising pattern of COVID-19 is significantly different depending on the degree of openness and the level of democracy. Subsamples divided by the countries with similar political and socioeconomic characteristics also show various patterns of infectious diseases. But, in general, many democratic nations especially in Europe that are very open to world trade suffered the most because of the rapid growth of epidemics. In contrast, many authoritarian regimes in Africa that are less open to international trade had a slower growth of the pandemic. In particular, the number of confirmed cases appears to be smaller if countries are politically more suppressed and economically less open to world trade. Even in some socialist countries, dictatorships facilitate to control the epidemics more effectively. Confucianism also plays an important role in controlling the pandemic.

Therefore, I conclude with two policy implications. First, each country proposes to cooperate with neighboring countries in implementing strict government policies to prevent a recurrence of a pandemic such as COVID-19. Second, globalization, which prevailed around the world in the second half of the 20th century, is now expected to gradually ease over time, and a new era of global order is expected. In this case, an international gap will inevitably widen as underdeveloped countries, which usually rely on export-led growth, will suffer more losses than advanced countries.

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