

CASS YOUNG VOICES ON COVID-19

Soft Power Projection amid COVID-19

Abdullah Rehman Butt



The COVID-19 has been declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO), affecting over 3.04 million cases in over 210 countries and territories around the world with China as its initial epicentre. Since its spread, the situation has worsened at an alarming scale. In terms of global politics, the outbreak of COVID-19 has given rise to two different schools of thought. According to one, COVID-19 has intensified the rivalry between the US and China; whereas the others are of the opinion that the outbreak of COVID-19 has highlighted the need for international cooperation. The pandemic that has touched every local and international stratum has also demonstrated the significance of soft power projection. China has taken a lead by timely provision of health supplies to virus hotspots like Italy, Pakistan and other Corona-stricken countries, and it is using the opportunity to fill the vacuum left by the US and the West, who are struggling to deal with the virus and have been hesitant to help other countries. China can therefore use this opportunity to establish its credentials as the global leader and saviour.

COVID-19 and India's Hegemonic Designs for the Indian-Administered

Kashmir

Amna Tauhidi

The outbreak of COVID-19 as a pandemic has further added to the miseries of people of Indian-occupied Kashmir (IOK) that has been under strict curfew since August 2019. In this time of pandemic, where the rest of the world is collaborating to fight the pandemic, India has made yet another insidious move by introducing a new domicile law



to change the demographics and ensure a Hindu majority in the region. Human rights had already been under stress in IOK since the abrogation of Articles 370 and 35-A. Since the outbreak of the disease, the attention of international community has been diverted from pre-COVID-19 issues to the containment of pandemic. The Indian government and authorities are exploiting the pandemic to further demoralize and destroy the will of the people in the IOK and suppress the freedom struggle and promote the Hindutva ideology. The strictness of curfew in the light of COVID-19 cases is the 'last straw on the camel's back' for the people who are working on daily wages of 300-400 Rupees in IOK. In other words, India is trying every method to deprive the Kashmiris of their political, social and economic rights by using the pandemic as another tool of suppression.

Covid-19 and the International Cooperation

Aneeqa Safdar



The COVID-19, while wreaking a humanitarian and economic havoc in the world, has also put the long-defended notion of cooperation through international organizations (IOs) under strain. With Italy accusing the European Union (the hallmark of regional cooperation) of betraying it in the face of the pandemic, and the biggest contributor of World Health Organization (WHO) - the United States, cutting its funding; questions about the efficacy of the IO's? have again surfaced.

Traditionally, it has received mixed responses from the critics. While one may agree that the IOs have generally remained unsuccessful to deliver actively in the face of the challenges posed to the world, the Covid-19 has made it more obvious that future threats to the world need a coordinated and collective response by the world community. The United Nations support to the developing world's call for debt relief amid the pandemic, and defunct organizations like SAARC coming in action to combat the pandemic are, however, some endearing display of solidarity. Today, in these difficult times, the need to renew the very spirit of collaboration on which these international organizations were made, is indispensable. The post COVID-19 world undoubtedly would see major geo-political shifts, but it should be ones with greater connectivity, integration and strengthened institutions.

BTWC and CWC: Global Pandemic Response Preparedness

Etfa Khursheed

The major victims of COVID-19 pandemic are Europe, the US, and China, which constitute the bulk of the world's economy.

The severity of the crisis shows that the world was completely unprepared for the health emergency of this scale. Treaties and Conventions like Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) and Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) could be a major source of World's Pandemic Response Preparedness in the times when even the



governments are finding it hard to control the pandemic. These conventions can be used to initiate a culture of training and safety measures for all the member countries because the centuries-old experience shows that the world is not immune to pandemics and yet it is unprepared for this and future pandemics as well. Well-funded CWC and BWC with dedicated regional offices can initiate various capacity building programs and equip member states with tools that can prevent any pandemic turning into a humanitarian crisis.

Would the World Become Worse for Refugees after COVID-19?

Ghanwa Ijaz



Approximately 70 million people are refugees worldwide, out of which 84 percent are being hosted by low or middle-income nations. Refugee settlement has been a perpetual issue with services provided being sometimes poorly wielded while most of the time overstretched. The refugee crisis has subdued under the shroud of the COVID-19 pandemic, where they have to deal with the global pandemic and its aftermath! Refugees are the most vulnerable populations and communities exposed to the disease. Apparently, the refugee

camps are ill-equipped with no real access to decent medical care and lack the potential for observing social distancing measures. Some have also termed the current situation in the camps as “disaster in waiting.” Unfortunately, around the world, the refugee population is

left out of epidemic preparedness planning. However, some government officials are handling the virus by fuelling the xenophobic sentiments of their subjects. Despite no evidence to support their argument, some populist politicians across the globe are attempting to draw a clear link between refugees and the outbreak.

As the current situation may result in over-exaggeration of people's perception of the refugees as a potential epidemic spreading cause, the anti-immigration group perspective that the state does not need to open its gates for the refugees may get more credence. The international community needs to realize that if this issue is left unaddressed, it would only create a vast underworld of human trafficking, illegal workers, and paperless children also having symptoms or a disease, which could lead to another pandemic with no clear origin thus making it further difficult to deal with the future pandemic.

Telecommuting in the Post Pandemic World

Hassan Tahir

Amidst Covid-19 pandemic, along with other changing patterns of human lives, telecommuting is specifically becoming a new normal and this trend is likely to continue in the post-pandemic world. In the days when internet provides a virtual world and the whole globe is interconnected, the diversification of its use is possible due to new technological



advancements. Today, 4-6 inched smart phone is a new office where one can connect with the other team members and perform the assigned tasks through video conferencing. Experts and professionals are conducting conferences, seminars and discussions with considerable impact on policy making and running their businesses. This increase in remote working with the help of internet has provided companies an alternative way of making high profits by saving much of their costs consumed in administrative/ logistic operations. But this transformation of work force to virtual domain has overburdened the existing internet systems due to which people are facing difficulties in video conferencing. For example, use of internet in Italy sharply increased up to forty percent during quarantine, Britain saw fifty percent rise and Pakistan witnessed twenty percent higher internet users causing frequent

disruptions in broadband services. In this emerging scenario, the 5G services will serve as a catalyst in supplying high-speed connectivity in the possible post-pandemic virtual world. The demand for 5G will rise in coming days because of massive surge in internet traffic and fast internet speed would serve as a fuel of the future world where telecommuting is a new reality.

Impact of COVID-19 on Aviation and the Fall of Commercial Air Travel

Maham S. Gillani



The spread of Covid-19 and the consequent preventive measures, inter alia, closing of borders in many countries, cancellation of major international events like Olympics 2020 and widespread curfews have led to a significant fall in commercial travel. Due to an alarmingly low number of passengers, some of the leading airlines around the world, like American Airlines and Virgin Atlantic have already started deploying their passenger aircraft to carry cargo, while relatively smaller airlines like Easyjet has announced plans to ground majority of its fleet. According to experts, the fall in air travel would persist even in the post-coronavirus world; this can be attributed to various trends that are emerging. For instance, an increasing number of people are becoming accustomed to doing video conferences and virtual summits through applications such as Zoom. This would be further enabled by the introduction of new technologies, for instance 5G – which would allow high-speed connections in addition to enhancement to the meeting experience through holograms, virtual reality and haptic technology. Experts have predicted that in the coming decade stakeholders should expect air traffic to substantially decrease and investment into digital and technological advancements to increase. Moreover, the current health crisis is also expected to spur investment in different segments of drone technology and robotics. It is noteworthy to mention that these changes were already in motion before the spread of the pandemic but now they have accelerated, forcing the aviation industry to rethink its ecosystem and robustly adopt new technology.

US-China Global Influence amid and Post COVID-19 World

Maheen Shafeeq

Post-COVID-19 geopolitical implications will dictate the next decade of political environment. As the US is struggling to navigate through the pandemic, it is restrained from taking a leadership role to respond to the crisis. The initial strategy opted by the US was of closed borders by barring its allies - the Europeans from entering the US. This initiated a rift between the allies, which further intensified when the US denied assisting Italians, and China emerged as a rescuer amid crisis by sending medical supplies and doctors.



President Trump refused to act as a global leader and blamed the World Health Organization (WHO) for failing to control the virus and froze funding, when the WHO needed more resources to deal with the pandemic. The US also instigated the blame game by naming the virus as 'China virus' and 'Wuhan virus', that not only exacerbated reaction by the Chinese but also resurrected xenophobia and racism that caused socio-political disgust towards the US. China, on the other hand, proclaimed its success in managing the virus and helping the others. It rolled out its soft diplomacy and Confucius-inspired 'gestures of goodwill' strategy that displayed a course of tolerance and humanity during the global crisis. China filled the void by extending assistance to not only the Europeans but also Asian and African regions. The US, during the crisis, curled inward and maintained a nationalistic 'America first' approach, while China took an outward and internationalist approach. This, according to some experts, will introduce a dramatic change in the world order in the post COVID-19 period.

COVID-19 and Religious Congregations

Omer Amir



COVID-19 is a recent phenomenon that has gripped Pakistan and the world alike. The consequences that it will have range from political, social, economic to financial, diplomatic and legal. However, one of the most contentious domains in Pakistan has been the religious one. There is a constant tug of war between the religious clerics and the government regarding how to deal with religious practices, in particular the congregational prayers. It must be noted that as the virus spreads far and wide, there is a need for a holistic approach to deal with it, and all stakeholders including the *ulema* should be on board vociferously, with regards to measures taken to tackle the pandemic. Day to day firefighting approach is not the way forward. As the COVID-19 is new, very little is known about the virus and no specific treatment or vaccine is available, therefore preventive measures are the best possible option available to the authorities. Even though, the National Action Plan for Preparedness and Response to COVID-19 infections lays out noble goals, the need to enforce it across the board has been found wanting. It has become challenging for the government to control the devout from engaging in congregational worship. In some particularly conservative places, regular altercations between the law enforcement agencies and the mosque goers have been seen. As the holy month of Ramadan dawns, it is imperative that a consensus is reached in order to ensure the well-being of the general populace.

Relevancy of Nuclear Weapons in Post-Pandemic World

Shaza Arif

While the origin of the COVID-19 is still shrouded in controversy, the virus has triggered debates on the relevance of nuclear weapons vis-a-vis biological warfare in the post-pandemic world. Nuclear arsenals remain to be the prime instrument to restrain the rival states from any action on the assurance of unacceptable damage. Alternatively, biological warfare can result into the elimination of a large segment of the population in a relatively short time span, but it can't be in



any way used to deter one's adversary. Furthermore, in a globalized world, the tactics of biological warfare are bound to backfire and unleash new threats to the instigator as the virus doesn't differentiate between allies or adversaries nor does it adhere to territorial boundaries or limits. However, the pandemic can encourage some countries to use nuclear weapons as a deterrence tool, to dissuade the adversary from using biological weapons. Such scenarios serve only to strengthen the existing deterrent capability of nuclear weapons and may provide incentive for some to continue modernizing their nuclear arsenals. Nuclear weapons, therefore, due to their inherent deterrent capability will remain as relevant as they are today.

Role of Global Institutions in Controlling Pandemic in the Third World

Zohaib Anwar



COVID-19 has been viewed as a global disaster accompanied by worsening health indicators and economic disruptions. As a matter of fact, the outbreak of COVID-19 is not something new to the world, as many pandemics have been reported in the past. This time the pandemics should be evaluated from the lens of preparedness, will and capacity of the third world/ poor countries. From a global health perspective, the World Health Organization (WHO) holds the primary responsibility of international coordination during pandemics. However, the means of coordination are still in the making as the world reacts to this novel health threat. Despite

international attention and health awareness, disease surveillance remains weakest in underdeveloped countries at greatest risk.

The third world is lagging behind in capacity and resources such as labs, infrastructure and trained epidemiologists. Under-investment in preparedness reflects the painful choice facing poor countries with high disease burdens. Low and middle-income countries (LMICs) have weaker health systems and limited capacity to handle surge in cases. If a flu pandemic similar in severity to the 1918 Spanish flu pandemic were to hit today, there could be 62 million deaths, of which 96 percent would be in LMICs. We can curtail pandemics if we quickly develop vaccines and make them widely accessible. However, without vigorous efforts to secure equitable access, vaccine distribution will follow the logic of the market. During the 2009 swine flu pandemic, wealthy countries secured large advance orders for vaccines, but despite the efforts of the WHO to negotiate donations, poor countries were crowded out—receiving vaccines more slowly than rich countries and unable to cover as many of their citizens.