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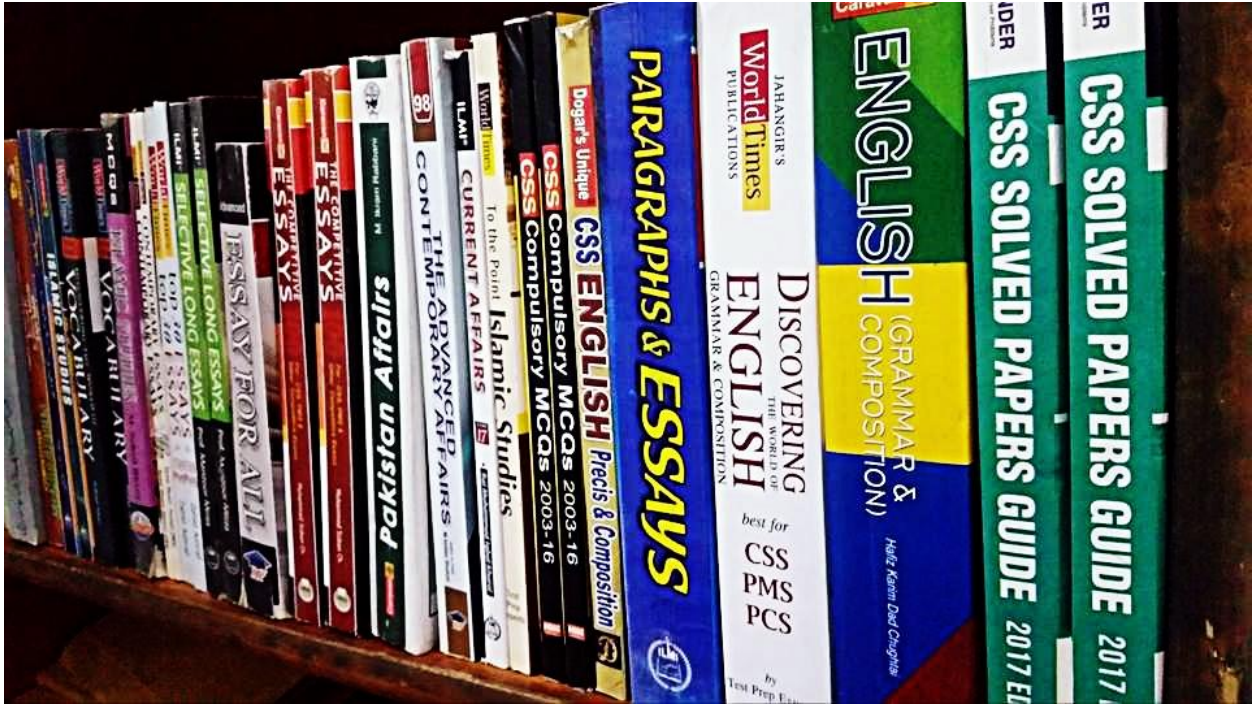
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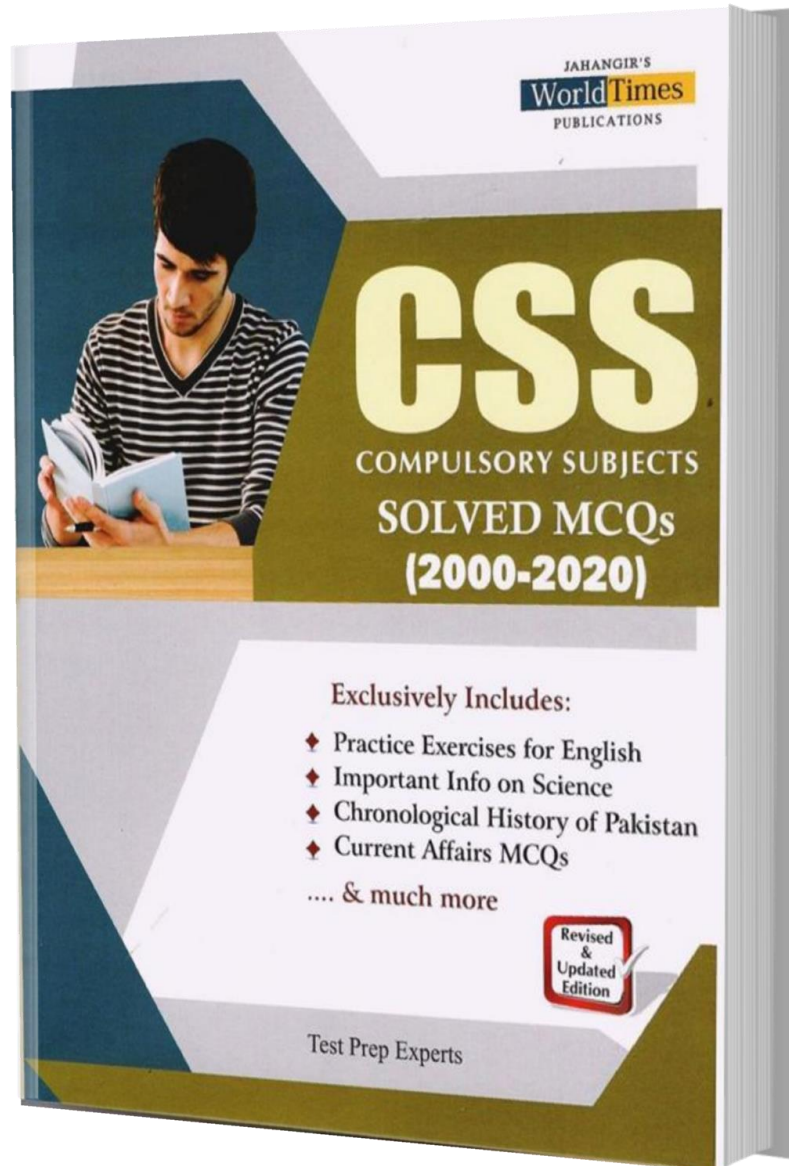
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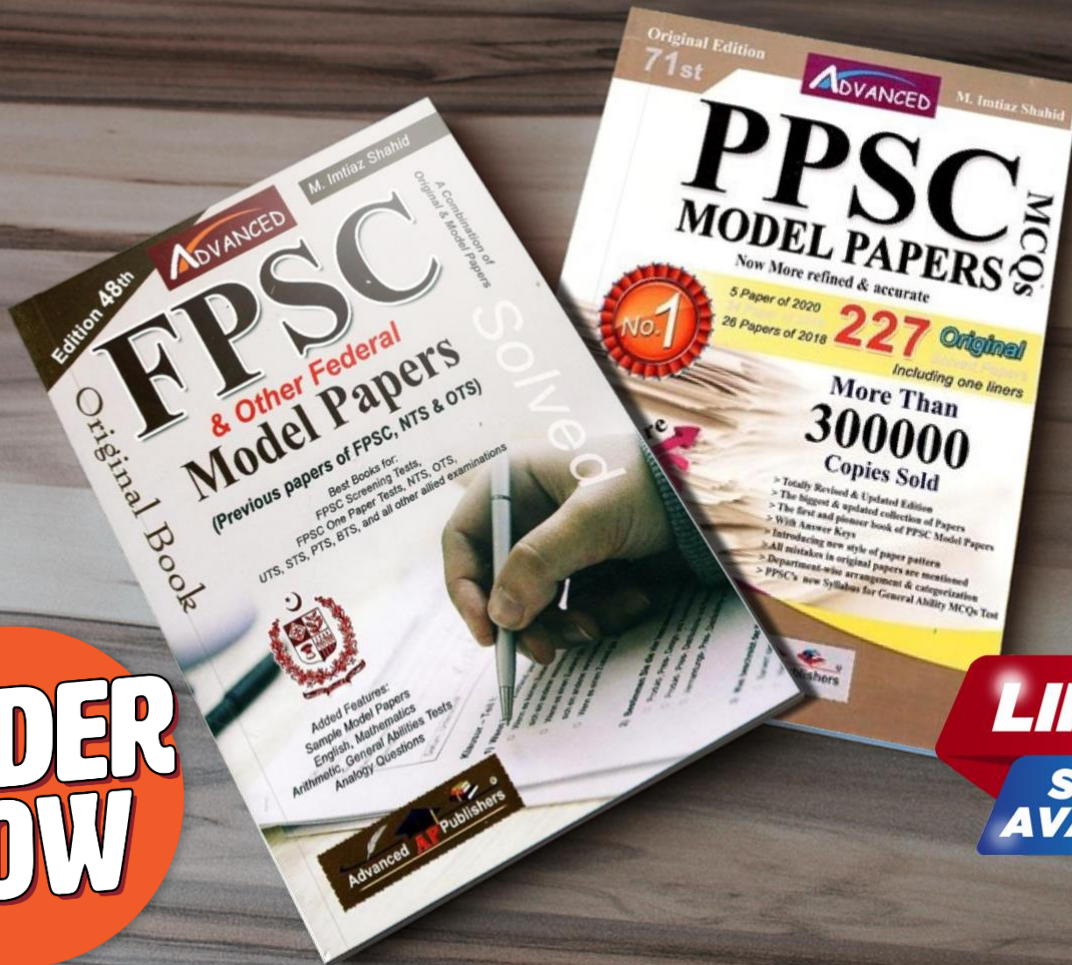
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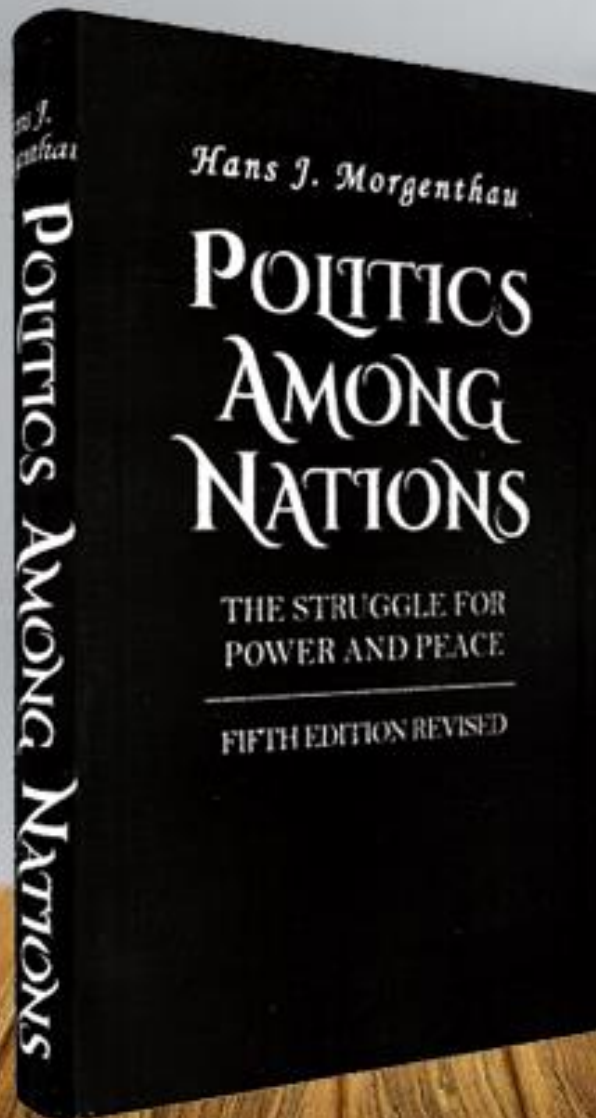
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PAKISTAN

Smart Lockdown | Editorial

The evidence coming out from the smart lockdown in specific sectors of Islamabad is proof that this strategy, if implemented properly, can be quite effective in curbing the spread of coronavirus cases in high incidence areas. The need to enforce such measures will continue to arise because despite repeated pleas, many people continue to violate SOPs created by the government. The situation in Punjab remains precarious because of widespread violations as well. The kind of smart lockdown observed in Islamabad has not been seen in Lahore and other major urban centres in Punjab.

Though the Punjab government announced that it will be sealing specific areas, said areas remained relatively open with people easily able to navigate through the blockades. Furthermore, there is a considerable body of opinion that suggests smart lockdowns alone will not prove adequate towards achieving total eradication of COVID-19 from the country. They put forward New Zealand as the role model for a highly effective approach. But the fact is that Pakistan and New Zealand are very different countries. Pakistan has a huge population, far higher population density and fewer governmental and medical resources available to deal with the pandemic. The country's economic realities, which have also guided the government's opposition to a complete lockdown, are also very different from New Zealand or the US.

There is also the issue of awareness and lack of education, which makes the job of government functionaries even more challenging as their efforts are routinely undermined by the very people they are trying to protect. It certainly has not helped that several political leaders of the ruling party have also engaged in irresponsible messaging in order to downplay the crisis at hand. If the smart lockdown strategy is to yield results like those observed in certain sectors of Islamabad, the implementation will need to be thorough and strict. Otherwise, transmissions will continue unabated.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/19-Jun-2020/smart-lockdown>

Modi's Media Ploy | Editorial

New Delhi continues with its efforts to use Pakistan as a bogeyman to divert attention from its human rights abuses in Kashmir and general mismanagement of the Indian economy and state. After nine months of torturing people with the lockdown in Occupied Kashmir and ravaging the economy and society with one of the worst-managed Covid-19 responses in the world, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi turned to his security forces to give him a way to change the news cycle. With its actions on the Line of Actual Control, the Indian Army incompetently handed him a choice between sparking World War Three or publicly begging for mercy from the Chinese.

Modi is many things — mostly terrible — but he is not a fool. He knows India cannot win a war with China. But he also knows he cannot show weakness, or his Hindutva base will eat him alive. Most democratic parties cannot handle the political fallout of foreign policy humiliation. For fascist parties, it is a death knell. Thus, it would appear that he is trying to rig the news cycle by accusing Pakistani embassy officials of espionage. While the compliant Indian media keeps parroting the government's version of events — we came across only one major Indian publication that referenced the Pakistani Foreign Office's response to the charges — Modi has time to quietly make peace with China on Beijing's terms without being tarred and feathered by his own people.

Speaking of feathers, India already tried to divert attention to Pakistan with another ludicrous spy pigeon story. When this was lambasted even by their own media, some popular Indian propaganda news channels tried and failed at blaming Pakistan for the locust crisis hitting both countries. Even the FO noted the curious circumstances of the expulsion of embassy staffers. "The Indian action has been accompanied by a negative pre-planned and orchestrated media campaign, which is a part of persistent anti-Pakistan propaganda," said a Foreign Office statement.

By the time the focus shifts back to the real story along the border, the Indian government will divert attention to some other talking point. Probably its continuing failure to handle Covid-19.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2233327/6-modis-media-ploy/>

An Expansionist South Asia By Shahzad Chaudhry

Siachen glacier lies just northeast of point MJ9842 where the demarcated Line of Control (LoC) ends. Beyond this is unmarked territory, uninhabitable, impassable and impossible to survey. At least that is what the 1949 Karachi Agreement between Pakistan and India to denote the Cease Fire Line (CFL) thought. It thus envisioned, 'the CFL extended due north (beyond MJ9842) to the Chinese border'. India considers northwest to Indira Col as the terminus of the notionally extended CFL while Pakistan claims sovereignty over areas west of the line joining MJ9842 with Karakoram Pass in the north east. This would include the Siachen glacier.

The two armies had patrolled the glacial region consistently over the years and had nicely kept out of each other's way. When expeditions routed to the region from Pakistan began to be harried by Indian patrols for territorial violation Pakistan knew it was time to assert its right. Pakistan planned permanent posts in the area to keep the Indians at bay. Planned for 1983, the execution was postponed for the next summer. As Pakistan hurried to acquire high-altitude gear to survive the elements at those heights she learnt from the contracting vendor that India too was in a rush to buy the same equipment in large numbers. The race was on.

In 1984, Pakistan probing patrols sent to assess the state on the ground were surprised by the Indian presence already established in flimsily structured posts. Clearly they had been beaten in time. Since then numerous skirmishes and a short sustained conflict have been unable to dislodge the Indians sitting above at higher peaks. Holding higher ground helps dominate the surroundings and denies access to the area. The Indians have that advantage. We settled in by creating parallel posts on the peaks of west of Saltoro Ridge just across Siachen where both sides now observe each other in clear sight. Some say Pakistan was beaten to the Siachen peaks by a day only.

Having failed to find progress on the issue in numerous rounds of the Comprehensive Dialogue with India, Pakistan resorted to redeeming its operational disadvantage by moving troops to the Kargil watershed in 1999.

Pakistani troops occupied high points at Kargil and dominated the Srinagar-Leh highway which passed below these heights in easy range of automatic weapons. The Indians would have only moved on the road if Pakistanis permitted, threatening to choke Indian supplies to Siachen. It didn't last much longer and within 1999 Pakistan had to withdraw from the peaks. What has recently happened along the India-China border in Ladakh is a replica of what occurred at Kargil. Another supply line of India is being threatened by China occupying the heights on the Galwan watershed.

India built a base at Daulat Beg Oldi (DBO) raising it from a remote outpost to a Brigade strength garrison. To provision they developed a road along Leh-Shyok-DBO axis. It passes only kilometres away from the Line of Actual Control (LAC) between China and India and at some places across the claim-lines of China. This brings into play both, Tibet Autonomous Region and Aksai Chin, which are incorporated as regular Chinese territories since the early 60s. India lays a weak claim over Aksai Chin and isn't loathe to experiment in deliberate nuisance in Tibet. And she claims sovereignty over entire Ladakh contesting China's claim lines.

The abrogation of Article 370 last year and separation of Ladakh as a Union Territory has brought India into direct confrontation with China. While India had been in a perpetual fight with Pakistan over Jammu and Kashmir — and China had deferred to Pakistan as the principal party to the conflict — by this action India has converted the J&K issue into a three-way confrontation. If earlier only the McMahon Line and disputed claims over LAC were a problem now China is a direct participant in the J&K issue. It isn't over yet between them but how India and China settle will determine if indeed it has been strategically as blunderous as it seems.

In its arrogance and hubris India decided to build at DBO. That's a strategic move of no uncertain proportions by an expansionist India. DBO is only 8 kms away from the LAC with China. By building the road and supply network India has created the means for future expansion in an effort to project power in multiple directions. Through her persistent presence it has established her hold over territories in Ladakh claimed by China across the LAC. India can also threaten expansion into and beyond LAC over Aksai Chin which she has recently begun to assert as its territory. The Karakoram Pass is only eight miles away from DBO while it serves as a supporting rear base for Siachen. The Karakoram

Pass links Pakistan to China and then descends down to Skardu and beyond where CPEC and plans to build a huge dam (Diemer-Bhasha) are underway. Both CPEC and the dam are the lifelines of Pakistan's economy. India wants to choke these avenues with her ambitious expansion. That invokes China's attention too as these projects are equally vital to China.

When China descended on Galwan and took hold of it, it check-mated India's stealthy design. India forced woke a rather passive giant into an assertive dragon. A lot that China would probably let go is instead now of close scrutiny for it after India attempted a creeping encroachment into what was vital to China. If earlier China would simply advise both Pakistan and India to work their problems through than resort to use of force has now China join the melee as an active participant with force. China sits atop the peaks in Galwan valley and dominates the DBO-Shyok-Leh road. India will move on it if China allows. That's China's strategic riposte to India. India was stealthy; China has called India out on it. That compromises both DBO and Indian claims over any areas either side of the LAC. If it enters war with China, the past haunts. Today China is far superior, and the power differential between the two vast.

Here are three options for peace of strategic consequences in South Asia:

A Boundary Commission instituted under the auspices of the UNO can work a Modus Vivendi between conflicting claims of the three nations through minor adjustments around existing lines of control.

The Commission should create a 'demilitarised' Kashmir Autonomous Region (KAR) composed of IOJ&K and AJK. Ladakh may be retained as India's Union Territory while addressing claims of both China and India. The question of Jammu be left to the KAR representative assembly to establish future disposition.

Leave the region to slug it out and find a balance around force and power. The flip side is obvious. Three nuclear states in a confrontation can only spell disaster for the rest of the world. Deterrence stability will be the first to unravel among the three belligerents with varying thresholds.

The region is currently living the reality of the third option. It just may be time for the world to act.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2246916/6-expansionist-south-asia/>

Moving Forward | Editorial

Despite hostile world powers working to undermine the agreement and a global pandemic threatening to devastate entire economies, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is moving on to its second phase. The second phase has been envisioned to focus on the development of Special Economic Zones, the agriculture sector and socio-economic development.

As often reiterated before, CPEC, if it pans out, could be extremely profitable for both countries. Yet the first phase has not always proceeded smoothly. We are still quite behind on many of the projects which were planned to have already been finished by now – several construction targets have been missed out on, and there have been many project delays. As we move forwards towards Phase-II then, we should learn from past mistakes and vow to complete the previous incomplete projects as soon as possible. It is good that the government has assured that all projects of Phase-I of CPEC held up or delayed because of procedural or technical issues would be completed on a priority basis.

Other than construction delays, a second matter in which Pakistan should proceed more cautiously is regarding transparency and building diplomatic credibility. It should not be underestimated that there are certain countries which are greatly unhappy with CPEC – the United States, for example, has criticised the project many times, saying it lacks transparency and has added significantly to Pakistan's foreign loan burden. With further tensions between the US and China over trade and the coronavirus pandemic, it is likely that the US will start voicing these concerns loudly. Coupled with the US's warm relationship with India, which is currently embroiled in conflict with China, Pakistan can take advantage of its relationship with the US and close association to China for everyone's benefit. If we can conclusively put the fears of the US to rest by implementing greater transparency, questions against our closest friend might also become irrelevant.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/20-Jun-2020/moving-forward>

The Fuel Crisis | Editorial

The ongoing shortage of fuel in the country is not the first of its kind. We saw similar situations in the past as well. Each time successive governments assured the public of fixing the situation and every time it failed to fulfil the promise made to the people. Fuel shortage occurs either because of hoarding or the failure to keep the needed stock. The present crisis, however, in all probabilities is a mix of the two.

Regardless of which reason is the cause behind the shortage, the government is accountable. Only recently, the government suffered embarrassment because of sugar and flour crises. The government tried to assuage the public by saying categorically that no one would be allowed to hoard public commodities.

But the present fuel crisis exposes that little implementation went behind this call. The ruling party, like all other political outfits, also came to power after criticising the previous governments for poor governance and mismanagement. However, the queues outside filling stations tell us that this government has not found keeping supply lines open any easier.

It is unclear who is exactly to blame; depending on who you ask, fingers are pointed at the government, OMCs and petrol stations. Some experts blame petroleum companies for creating an artificial fuel shortage in the market. Since these companies failed to buy petrol at cheaper rates, now that the prices have been reduced, they want to cover their losses by hoarding the fuel. Even if this is the case, the fact that the authorities failed to keep a check on the situation while all of this happened, knowing full well that they were reducing prices to record lows, reflects the inability to foresee a major issue.

Thankfully, Prime Minister (PM) Imran Khan has ordered action against the artificial fuel shortage. However, we know such ad hoc solutions never work in the long run. Before anything else however, the PM must take the Oil and Gas Regulatory Association (OGRA) to the task, as it failed to notice the delay in the import of petroleum. Doing so will automatically prompt OGRA to take action against the ones who defied the government orders.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/11-Jun-2020/the-fuel-crisis>

Hajj Policy For 2020 | Editorial

The annual Hajj pilgrimage sees hundreds of thousands of Muslims across the world travelling to the holy city of Makkah to perform their religious duty. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, there are serious concerns whether the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) will postpone this year's Hajj. A final decision on the matter is yet to come. However, Indonesia has now announced that it will not be sending its citizens to Makkah this year due to coronavirus fears. It would be prudent for the government of Pakistan to begin consultations and announce its policy on the matter well before the final days of July when the Hajj is due to take place.

A case can be made for postponement because, already stretched to capacity, it would be quite a momentous challenge for the Pakistani state to monitor and screen each person visiting and returning from KSA. In 2019, a total of 2.5 million Muslims participated; 200,000 were from Pakistan. Currently, there are over 76,000 cases of coronavirus in the country. Prime Minister Imran Khan has already stated that he expects the numbers to rise further in the coming months. The health system is severely overburdened with no respite in sight. Therefore, the government should do all it can to minimise the risk.

The Hajj policy for 2020 should be devised with these considerations in mind. If the KSA decides to host pilgrims this year, there are chances that it will reduce the quota for each country. If the government of Pakistan decides to go ahead with it, it should only send the number of people that it can practically monitor and screen. These are difficult decisions for any government to make. People wait years for the opportunity to perform Hajj. They save and prepare with great anticipation and zeal. It would be helpful if the government is able to bring religious leaders on board to secure support for its policy. At this time, public health concerns should take precedence over everything else.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/03-Jun-2020/hajj-policy-for-2020>

Plane Crash Report | Editorial

The Aviation Minister, Ghulam Sarwar Khan, has handed over the initial report of the Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) plane crash in Karachi last month to Prime Minister (PM) Imran Khan and the findings within reportedly reveal how all the institutions concerned displayed negligence in the performance of their duties. It pins the blame on both the air traffic control (ATC) officials and the flight crew. The document also counters earlier claims of PIA and the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), which they made against each other to absolve themselves of any blame. According to the initial findings, the officials of both institutions are at fault and the back and forth is ultimately pointless.

Targeting and scapegoating individuals involved will not solve the larger issues that Pakistan's aviation industry is facing. Perhaps, the higher-ups must stop the standard procedure of accountability; firing some staff members whenever a tragedy happens. This 'head must roll' approach has not worked before and there is no evidence to suggest it will suddenly prove to be effective. A crash of this magnitude should become that watershed moment where both PIA and CAA decide that the current modus operandi needs to change, for effective service delivery and safety.

Hopefully, the government will take action against now that the report is out. However, the document is also a testament to institutional lapses in the aviation industry and beyond. Systemic issues such as the lack of training and treating rules and procedures with offhand carelessness are both avoidable, and the main reason behind the death of the plane crash victims. And this is exactly where our focus must lie, to improve on foundations instead of looking for quick fixes.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/24-Jun-2020/plane-crash-report>

Indian Lies On FATF | Editorial

The Indian media as well its Ministry of External Affairs have been falsely claiming that the June 24 plenary meeting of FATF decided to keep Pakistan on the grey list due to the country's failure in becoming compliant to the body's recommendations. As clarified by Pakistan's Foreign Office, the fact is that Pakistan was not even on the agenda. The review process has been halted for at least four months due to the COVID-19 situation, and the body has simply maintained status quo, which does not speak to Pakistan's performance one way or the other. Indian propaganda reveals desperation in New Delhi, which has been on a mission to vilify Pakistan internationally while seeking to score political points with its domestic audience through incessant lying and misreporting.

During the last review meeting, FATF in fact acknowledged that Pakistan had indeed made progress on several fronts. Pakistan's report highlighted the several measures it had taken, which included money laundering investigations, proscribing organisations, registration of terror-financing cases and convictions, amending money laundering laws, seizures and confiscations of properties and assets as well as booking thousands of individuals under the Anti-Terrorism Act. Since the last review, more progress has been made, evidence of which would be made available at the right forum.

Since India joined FATF in 2011, it has been pushing to put Pakistan on the black list. Pakistan's addition to the grey list has plenty to do with the geopolitics in the South Asia and Asia Pacific region. India is now viewed as a strategic partner by the US while Pakistan's involvement in CPEC with China has irked Washington; something its most senior officials have articulated on several occasions. Therefore, the sword of Damocles hangs over Pakistan's head, but the country should remain resolved to defend its national interests. It should continue making efforts to comply with FATF recommendations to weaken the case of its foes, but it should not lose sight of the fact that the issue will ultimately be resolved on the political front where it belongs.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/28-Jun-2020/indian-lies-on-fatf>

Reopening Kartarpur | Editorial

In these times when demagogues are scapegoating minorities for problems of all sorts, our country is trying its level best to protect them. Pakistan is also going an extra mile in preserving their culture and history. The latest decision of our government to reopen Kartarpur Corridor on the death anniversary of Maharaja Ranjit Singh is case in point. While the religious sites are opening around the world, Pakistan also took the right decision to reopen the corridor for Sikhs pilgrims. Now the ball is in India's court.

But the incumbent government of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is not showing any interest in the proposal. Nor has it responded to the request for finalisation of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) that are necessary to ward off the threat of COVID-19. The paranoid Indian leadership is unable to see Pakistan's initiative beyond the usual suspicions of a façade.

The Indian government calls Islamabad's initiative a "mirage of goodwill." The Indian response is indeed unfortunate – surely, all looks yellow to a jaundiced eye. The lame excuses, both regarding delays in administrative procedures and lack of infrastructure for the facilitation of pilgrims, are more than enough for Sikhs to see the real face of the champions of Hindutva project.

Nevertheless, Pakistan's intentions are pure. The move is an excellent gesture from Pakistan; it shows our willingness to keep the corridor open. The decision has already won a lot of appreciation from the Sikh community all over the world, including India.

The reopening of the corridor, coupled with Imran Khan's approval for construction of the Hindu temple in Islamabad, sends a great message to both citizens here and international audiences. Many such steps that the government of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has taken so far are meant to ensure that the minorities live as equal citizens. Nonetheless, if the Indian government drags its feet on the matter like it did the last time around, Pakistan should not worry; we have our priorities straight.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/29-Jun-2020/reopening-kartarpur>

The PSX Attack | Editorial

Full marks to Pakistan's brave security agencies for foiling the attack on the Pakistan Stock Exchange compound in Karachi yesterday in a matter of only eight minutes, which shows that they stand ready to face all sorts of circumstances at all times. But our foremost thoughts, prayers and gratitude must go to the three security guards and one sub-inspector who laid their lives so others could live and the nation be spared of yet another black mark on its conscience. It is now the responsibility of the state of Pakistan to make sure that their families never face any hardships as they learn to live without not just their bread winners but also their family heads. The four attackers seemed to have planned a long attack, most probably by storming into the main compound and taking hostages, since they carried arms as well as food rations.

All accusations about a security lapse in this particular instance are simply wrong. Quite to the contrary, actually, the manner of the response proved that the security system is always on its toes, always prepared to respond rapidly whenever there is a terrorist threat. Even with much reduced attendance – because a large number of people are working from home due to coronavirus compulsions – there were still in excess of 6,000 people in the building. Rangers and policy personnel must therefore be credited for saving many lives by their prompt action. Also, as explained by law enforcement agencies, this attack was on the same pattern as the 2018 attempted attack on the Chinese consulate in Karachi. Both hits are attributed to the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), and since there is a very well-known link between them and our not-so-friendly neighbour India, security officials have a pretty good idea where the funding and support would have come from.

Such operations are never “stand alone incidents,” as Sindh Rangers Director General Ahmed Bukhari said at the press conference after the attack, since it is not possible to plan and conduct them without the help of “outside intelligence agencies.” Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi and Special Advisor to Prime Minister on National Security Dr Moeed Yusuf were more direct in their accusations, holding India squarely responsible. It would be a good idea to involve reputable international organisations like the UN in the investigations that will now follow, because only by exposing India at the highest level will Pakistan

get the international community to finally understand all the problems it has to face because of the eastern neighbour. *

Source: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/633819/the-psx-attack/>

ECONOMY

Budget 2020-2021 | Editorial

The federal budget for the fiscal year 2020-2021 comes at a challenging time when economic growth all over the world has been severely impacted by the coronavirus pandemic. It appears that the government has attempted to create a favourable budget in order to provide some sort of relief to the common people and decided against burdening them with a new set of taxes. This, the government hopes, would contribute in reviving economic activity that has stagnated during the last few months.

That the government did not announce an increase in salaries and pensions of its employees and pensioners clearly shows that it has had to make difficult decisions due to the many constraints presented by the ongoing economic situation in the country and worldwide. This is also why subsidies have been slashed by 40 percent. The focus seems to be on inviting foreign direct investment (FDI) targeting a 25 percent increase and using public investment to create jobs and address poverty. The government is also hoping that it will be able to spend its development budget on areas previously ignored and help remove the vast disparities that exist in different parts of the country. The increase in the budget for defence is expected because of an increasingly aggressive India and the need to improve border management. Perhaps the most unfortunate aspect of this year's budget is that the biggest chunk, Rs2.946 trillion, has had to be allocated for interest payments and debt servicing. To manage everything else with what is left behind is rather difficult.

Perhaps the government could have introduced a greater increase in the health budget as the healthcare system is under tremendous pressure. Education should have been prioritised better as well. This year, the government has placed immense trust in the FBR's ability to perform, as the body is expected to achieve a Rs4.963 tax collection target, which would be a significant increase from the preceding year. Let's hope it can rise to the occasion.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/14-Jun-2020/budget-2020-2021>

Covid-19 and Pakistan's Economy By

Khayyam Munawar

The Corona Virus, codenamed COVID-19 was first traced and reported back on the 1st of November in the Wuhan city of China and has since wreaked havoc worldwide. With over 8.66 Million reported cases and approximately 460,000 deaths to date it was declared a global pandemic by WHO on the 11th of March-2020. Although the exact source of this RNA virus remains to be officially named, amidst numerous conspiracy theories and opinions it is believed to have been contracted from a species of bats and contrary to popular belief is neither caused by 5G towers nor does some multibillion dollar corporation have a stake in its spread.

A global recession seems inevitable as worldwide trade continues to contract which is predicted to be much more potent than the one caused in 1945 and 2009. With reference to the IEA Oil Market report, the worldwide average oil consumption is expected to contract by a record 9.3 mb/d comparative to 2019 in relation to the twin demand and supply shocks caused by containment measures across 187 countries. Oil prices reacted to the thinning demand and have decreased by 62.51% since January-2020. The impact of COVID-19 is widespread and the total exports across 46 major contributors to the world trade fell by 11% over the first 4 months of 2020 in comparison to 2019. Livelihood of millions is at stake as numerous small-scale businesses worldwide cease operations and widescale unemployment looms on the horizon.

The economy of Pakistan paints a similar picture: With the country being a low-income developing entity, its economic metrics were showing signs of mild improvement prior to the pandemic and inflation was expected to stay at a single digit figure after soaring to 7.3% in 2019. The State Bank of Pakistan suggested a modest figure of 3.3% in terms of actual GDP growth however the state had to impose a lockdown on the 23rd of march in line with the directions of WHO and the GDP growth as a result was revised to a negative 1.3% with serious implications to the low-income earning group ,125 million of which are expected to fall below the poverty line over the course of 2020.

Surviving the pandemic requires a collective effort. It is high time that we embrace that it is decidedly unlikely that the situation will improve and we're looking at changes that might permanently be baked into our lives

With the spread of COVID-19, China had to restrict its trade, and the majority of that vacuum was redirected to the remaining Asian states. Loss of a major supplier meant higher lead times, inability to meet export orders and potential loss of international customers, all of which are conditions that raise doubt over the ability of an entity to operate as a going concern. The effects of this have trickled down to the sectors of Agriculture, Machinery and Equipment, Transportation, Textiles, Tourism, Financial Services, Telecom and IT, Automotive, Construction, Education, Power generation and Health and Care. Exports were cut short by US\$ 2 Billion for the period March-May 2020 compared to the year 2019

The lockdown dictated a large part of how commodities were locally consumed and there was a drastic increase in the consumption and hoarding of consumables subsequent to the imposition of the lockdown (as seen in the case of perishable consumables and medical supplies). The transportation had halted in numerous parts of the country, timely delivery of consumables was affected creating a gap in the supply and demand which was further aggravated by import barriers as neighboring states exercised their individual lockdowns(import of food products during May-2020 was reduced by 21% relative to that in May-2019). However, employment in the particular sector remained relatively secure and insulated. The onset of COVID-19 impacted the Machinery sector in the form of unavailability of input materials, decline in local and export sided demand. Multiple expansion projects in relation to increasing the electricity transmission network have also either been scraped or delayed.

The Transportation sector accounts for 12.89% of the GDP and 5.7% of the national labor force and whilst courier services remained functional though limited, passenger transportation had completely halted in most instances. Services such as metro had to cease their primary operations (incurring further losses of PKR 500 Billion) and it became increasingly difficult to source airplane tickets, which in some cases were selling at a premium of up to 40%. The civil aviation authority bore losses of up to PKR 19 billion during the period flights remained suspended. Railways too had to limit their operations in compliance with the lockdown and were burdened with a loss PKR 10 Billion. Petrol prices

were reduced by PKR 37/Liter over the period March-June and although there were attempts to create an artificial shortage on part of petrol pump owners to escape losses, Prime Minister Imran Khan has assured that such an activity shall not be tolerated and strict action be taken against offenders. Oil companies and authorities have been directed to ensure a smooth supply. The Textile sector contributes 8.5% to the total GDP and 56% to the total export basket and in most cases remains dependent on imports of raw materials from China (as in the case of MMF). Most mills were operating at maximum capacity when China drew out but as the global demand of textiles contracted (such is the case each time the consumer's purchase power gets constricted, expenditure related to clothing are one of the first to be controlled), exports declined and exportable inventory began to saturate warehouses. Exports from the textile group decreased by 36% for the period March-May 2020 compared to last year and APTMA has demanded that aid be allocated to the industry in form of working capital and utility bill credit provision if the losses on exports are to be recovered.

Small scale businesses are limited to resources that are adequate enough to sustain a months' worth of cash flow requirements at best in cases revenue is constricted, the majority of which were exhausted during the lock down. Reportedly, salaries of up to 50% were deducted in some instances in the private sector, capping the movement and purchase power of the consumer(especially in the consumption of luxury items).Commercial investment will be further hindered by the changing consumer sentiment which as a consequence will exert further stress on macroeconomic growth. The Ministry of planning has suggested that an approximate of 12.4-18.5 Million jobs are at a risk and has further assessed losses of up to PKR 1.2 Trillion during a lockdown situation.

The terms of the first lockdown were openly violated due to which the subsequent spike in positive cases was observed. As of 20th June, 171,666 active cases have been reported,144,192 of which pertain to the period after the first lockdown was lifted.3,382 patients have expired due to Covid-19 and WHO insists that a second much stricter lockdown be imposed to tackle the exacerbating situation. The state has been very active in their attempts to mitigate the spread of Covid-19 and has taken up multiple routes to educate the public.PM Imran Khan even went the extent to announce a relief package worth PKR 1.2 Trillion to facilitate the public ,disbursing PKR 131.8 Billion so far and serving 10.9 Million affectees. However, despite these efforts the final responsibility rests with the general public, as they play the most vital role when it

comes to flattening the curve .The importance of adhering to the guidelines mentioned at <http://covid.gov.pk/> cannot be stressed enough.

Fueled by our personal interests, we tend to ignore that we are all in the same boat, we tend to set aside the needs of the nation as a unit and focus over our individual needs. Surviving the pandemic requires a collective effort. It is high time that we embrace that it is decidedly unlikely that the situation will improve and we're looking at changes that might permanently be baked into our lives. Until a cure is formulated, we have to accept the current circumstances as the new norm.

The writer is a freelancer

Source: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/631160/covid-19-and-pakistans-economy/>

Economy in Distress | Editorial

THE Economic Survey released on Thursday paints a picture of an economy in deep distress. Since the period covered by the data includes mostly the first nine months of the fiscal year, meaning July 2019 to March 2020, much of what is portrayed cannot be attributed to the disruptions from Covid-19. The numbers betray troubling indicators deep inside the grooves of the economy, beyond the headline GDP growth figure, which is negative 0.38pc, a rare occurrence.

A slightly closer look shows some startling numbers. For example, credit to the private sector fell sharply from Rs554.7bn last year to Rs187.3bn this year in the July to March period. This is a marked decline and shows a sharp deceleration underway in private sector activity. The breakdown paints an even starker picture. Working capital loans, for example, dropped from Rs369bn last year to Rs28.8bn this year in the same period. Loans for fixed investment dropped from Rs83.1bn last year to negative Rs5.2bn this year, meaning on net there was negative investment in the country this fiscal year. At the same time, the amount of foregone revenue from tax exemptions jumped to Rs1.15tr this year. Only a few years ago, the figure was less than half this amount. The sharp increase in exemptions given to businesses over the two years that this government has been power has no doubt contributed to this picture.

What is noteworthy here is that despite a string of ‘incentives’ and ‘packages’ targeted at specific industries, there has been a sharp deceleration in the pace of economic activity in the country. The cost of these special incentive packages is evident at least partially in foregone revenue, but the benefits don’t show up in demand for working capital or investment. The assumption under which the government has repeatedly handed out incentives to the wealthy is that ultimately this will benefit the poor through increased employment and business activity. But it seems these wealthy investors prefer to retain much of the benefit from the packages for themselves, and very little actually reaches the poor. For the forthcoming fiscal year, the government should turn this approach on its head. Instead of the rich, it should put the poor at the centre of its economic policy agenda. Let the poor be the beneficiaries of the state’s largesse, and let the benefits trickle up rather than down. Putting money in the hands of the poor and unemployed means it will return to the economy in the form of demand, and that demand should be the signal for wealthy investors for where to invest. This

approach has the added benefit of giving us more durable and organic growth rooted in the needs of the people directly. The budget provides the opportunity to make this shift. Investing in the rich is providing meagre dividends.

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Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1562989/economy-in-distress>

Budget, The Economy and COVID-19 By M. Abbas Raza

The budget speech for FY 2020-21, followed by the press conference of the economic team needs a careful analysis to assess the manner in which the government intends to handle the post-COVID economic scenario. A cursory look at the budget reveals that it only attempts to balance the country's financial balance sheet with a colossal deficit of Rs3700 billion to be met through unknown and unrealistic resources. It lacks planning, policy intervention and strategic measures to revive the COVID-hit economy. Despite the fact that Pakistan registered a negative GDP growth, the global concern of the recession turning into depression after about a hundred years and the cautions by the World Bank and IMF, in this regard not a single word has been said on it in the speech. On the contrary, economic managers are taking pride in paying off the interest on foreign debts and reducing government expenditure.

The government's claim of the tax-free budget has to be perceived in the correct perspective. Implications of direct and indirect taxes and duties on domestic production is a source of revenue and is paid by the consumer, whereas adequate levy of taxes and duties on imported equivalents not only increases revenue but enables the domestic industry to utilise its idle installed capacity to an optimal level, reducing the per unit fixed cost, ensuring productivity and competitiveness.

A number of changes have been made in direct and indirect taxes. In the customs tariff structure, there has been a reduction in customs duties on ninety tariff lines from 11 percent to 3 percent and on two tariff lines from 11 percent to 0 percent. Moreover, the industries for which customs duty on some of the raw materials have also been reduced, inter alia, include butyl acetate, infusion sets, buttons, interlining/buckram, wire and rods, internet cables, beverage cans, and the food packaging manufacturing industry. Apart from the above, some changes have been made in regulatory duties for reducing the cost of doing business, the details on this account will surface with the commencement of the new fiscal year. Improving the level of protection/reducing the cost of doing business through levy/reduction of regulatory duties undermines economic principles and the functions of the NTC contained in Section 8 of the National Tariff Commission

Act, 2015. Dr Hafeez Shaikh's statement that tariff reductions are being made on thousands of tariff lines is incorrect and misleading, as the tariff changes have been made on an eight-digit level and not on the four-digit levels of the HS codes.

How these fiscal measures will impact and support the economy and trade and industry in particular, will only unfold with the passage of time. In the steel sector, the RD on the import of hot rolled coils (HRC) of iron and steel have been reduced from 12.5 percent and 17.5 percent to 6 percent and 11 percent respectively. This will indeed benefit the cold-rolled coil (CRC) processing industry but at the cost of reducing the economic value of Pakistan Steel Mills, which the government intends to privatise and which has the capacity to produce HRC. Secondly, it would increase the profitability of the CRC industry for which the consumers of the CRC will now have to pay more for locally produced CRC. In principle, if the government's intention was to benefit the engineering sector then the import duty on CRC should have also been reduced accordingly. If the tariff reductions and adjustments on other products are also done in the same manner, the exercise could be counterproductive, distorting protection levels and creating fiscal anomalies. In other words, tariff changes proposed in the budget can only be termed as routine budgetary measures and have no specific/explicit relevance to the post-COVID economic turmoil.

The response of the minister for commerce on the issue of developing the export strategy, in the post budgetary press conference, was even more naive, as reference could only be made to the Strategic Policy Framework, the visit to African countries along with a mention of anti-export bias and cascading of tariff structures, the study and the exercise conducted way back by the National Tariff Commission (NTC) in 2015.

It is quite astonishing to note that the budget speech placed the entire burden of the depreciating economy on COVID-19, yet there was not even a single policy intervention or strategic measure which could be attributed for rescuing/reviving trade and industry as such.

It is expedient that an economy revival board is constituted, with necessary statutory powers, at the national level with presidents of major trade and industrial chambers, Pakistan Business Council as permanent members, representatives of ministries' of commerce, textile, industries and finance, the

FBR and the NTC, not below the rank of BPS 21 with its secretariat at the Ministry of Commerce. Representatives of the respective trade and industrial associations should accordingly be co-opted. The board should act as a crisis management board. TORs of the board should, inter alia, include to (i) save the economy from recession which is inching towards depression, (ii) analysis of financial, economic and trade policy interventions by other similar economies being introduced to keep their industrial productivity and competitiveness intact, (iii) determine adequate level of tariff protection for achieving optimal level of capacity utilisation, (iv) revisit tariff bindings committed under the Multilateral Tariff Negotiations held in 1992-93 under the WTO regime and subsequent unilateral tariff bindings committed by Pakistan and contained in Article II – Schedule of Concessions, (v) assess the impact of poorly negotiated Free Trade Agreements adversely affecting the domestic industry, (vi) invoking safeguard measures contained in the WTO regime for emergency situations and governmental assistance for economic development. These measures should be taken on war footing to save the economy from crippling.

M Abbas Raza

The writer is former Chairman, the National Tariff Commission.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/16-Jun-2020/budget-the-economy-and-covid-19>

No New Taxes | Editorial

It has not been a good financial year. The coronavirus epidemic has taken a giant toll on the economy, not only with the lockdown and the drop in purchasing power of consumers but also with regards to the funds that the government has had to allocate to combat the pandemic. Perhaps even more disastrously, the swarm of locusts attacking crops in the country pose a greater threat to the economy than the lockdown. Moreover, Pakistan's debt is the highest it has been in years. This leaves the government with little fiscal space to make any substantial breakthroughs for the new financial year. The goal seems to be to allow our cash-strapped economy to survive, rather than to achieve quantum leaps.

The Federal budget for 2020 thus should be assessed with these considerations in mind. For the despondent reality the country is experiencing currently, the government seems to have produced a satisfactory enough budget. To provide relief to people, a large number of whom have been long-suffering due to increasing inflation, there is no new tax in the 2020-21 budget. There will be no tax on coronavirus and cancer diagnosis kits and the import taxes on children's food supplements and diet food have been abolished too. The downfall with that is the government has decided not to increase salaries and pensions of government servants – a development which will have an inimical impact on all wages.

A budget is a reflection of the times – and the times are very grim indeed. A lot of the blame can be attributed to the pandemic, which has exacted an economic toll across the world – yet the government is also not completely blameless. It has not handled the fuel price fall well – the drop in fuel prices were not accompanied by a fall in inflation. It is also responsible for inculcating debt in the trillions without a conclusive plan, leaving it too limited to draft a more comprehensive budget.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/13-Jun-2020/no-new-taxes>

EDUCATION

COVID- 19 & Future of Schools By Rozina

Asif

WHILE growing up, we all heard common phrases such as ‘the world is shifting towards biological warfare instead of weapons and the coming time will highly be influenced by technology’ and indeed it is happening but are we prepared for such a drastic shift? Talking about how the Corona pandemic has led to the closure of schools and shifted the mode of education from interactive traditional classrooms to completely online, no one was prepared for that except a few educational institutions which had already inculcated the use of technology into their teaching methodology. It is high time to change the pedagogy and attitude not only regarding the schools’ curriculum to meet the expectations of online teaching and efficiently deliver the content but parents also need to play an effective role in providing a better online learning experience. These technologies cannot replace the classrooms; however, we need to adopt a blended approach when schools will reopen where both online and face-to-face methods will be used. Yet, virtual classes do not mean that schools will not exist in the future. No one can deny the importance of institutions/schools for the following reasons; our traditional classroom-style teaching provides and enhances their emotional and social engagement, structured curriculum, focused knowledge, guidance, teamwork, assessments and feedback. The efforts put in by the management and the faculty to groom the students’ academic and social skills cannot be substituted by online classes. We need institutions/schools as accreditation bodies that will vouch for student’s performance and take responsibility for transforming a set level of knowledge to different age groups according to the approved standards.

Internet is bombarded with so much of open and irrelevant knowledge that at times it is very confusing for a young mind (learner) to remain focused, while set curriculum which is developed over some time with lots of experience and experiments convey focused knowledge along with guidance by mentors or teachers. Institutions are important for co and extracurricular activities and

student's engagement in so many competitions to develop holistic personality, leadership qualities and management under proper training, guidance and counselling by coaches and mentors. Such a combination of academic and other activities under one roof cannot be provided on a virtual framework alone. 1.6 billion students are suffering due to the closure of schools in almost 188 countries. 28 million students in Pakistan alone are directly affected by this lockdown. In our country where 70% of schools are government operative, schools have failed to provide quality education via online classes either due to lack of resources or power failure or lack of stable internet connectivity in remote areas. Not only this but many underprivileged students do not have access to electronic gadgets or other means to access the online world. However, private schools comprise 30% of the education sector and they were quite effective in managing e-learning successfully. Education for all will never be achieved if our Government will not improve public-private partnership in the education sector. The government should support them to further enhance their capacity and support the public sector, revise the curriculum and train the faculty. No doubt private school curriculums are far better and up-to-date as compared to public schools' curriculum.

Soon, every President, CEO, Dean and Trustee will recognize that online education is one of the potential sources for generating revenue. Hence online education will be recognized as a core component for every school's plans for institutional resilience and academic endurance. Schools need to invest in online education and make it as a strategic priority. Although this isn't easy and schools may face hindrance. Schools need to update and develop their online resources as current resources available on the internet are not in line with our culture, norms, and requirements. As institutions, schools need to work on ways of online assessments where there will be less plagiarism and more room for research, critical thinking and they creativity. Parents are also confused as to whether their children are learning anything online like he used to in a traditional classroom or are they just sitting idle in front of computer screens and to a great extent, they are rightfully worried about everything. In a world where knowledge is just one click away, the role of educators must change too. Companies must take the decision very sensibly as they may face an increase in cost due to technology enhancement. However on the other hand laying off staff to balance this cost will result in demotivation, lack of critical thinking, creativity and ownership.

Teachers must be trained and digitally equipped, and in classrooms instead of giving lectures, they have to act more like facilitators to engage debates and discussions with learners for their academic and social development. Teaching life skills e.g. creativity, communication, collaboration alongside empathy and emotional intelligence will be their main role. They have to prepare learners to be able to work across demographic lines of differences to harness the power of the synergy through effective teamwork. We must all be prepared for the schools to look different when they re-open. We might not be able to get back to normal immediately hence we would have to consider the AM/PM schedule or call on alternative days to divide the students and still practise social distancing due to the strength of students in all the schools. They should provide alternative learning spaces for keeping students six feet away from each other. These spaces will include common rooms, music rooms, libraries, gym, conference rooms, etc. These spaces may be redesigned for classroom instructions as they provide space for students to social distance. Hence it is very important to understand these upcoming challenges and to take initiative to overcome them. The future of schools is still very bright because schools give hope and provide a platform where parents can have blind trust for their children's successful future.

—The writer is an educationist based in Islamabad.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/covid-19-future-of-schools/>

How to Reopen Educational Institutes By **Muhammad Asim Siddique**

Educational institutions are open in the countries most affected by the Corona virus, even in the Chinese province of Wuhan which was the place of origin and epicenter of COVID-19, then why Pakistani children are deprived of education?

Reopening schools carries the public health risk of viral resurgence. Parents and teachers are understandably wary.

Safely reopening the educational institutions will be an expensive and herculean task. However, it is impossible to compensate the educational loss of 50 million students due to the lockdown. Notably, 25 million Pakistani children are already deprived of their constitutional rights. With the addition of 50 million more children, a total of 75 million Pakistani children have been deprived of their constitutional right to get education. Sadly, more than 50% of them are girls!

Many factors need to be considered and worked out in partnership with health department before resuming the educational institutions. The nation's most vulnerable students will remain hardest hit losing valuable learning time, and vital social-emotional support.

Many questions remain as experts weigh options for getting students back into the classroom. Parents who have watched their children struggle with online learning since educational institutes across the country were closed in March are painfully aware that virtual classes are no substitute for face-to-face instruction. Even so, many of these parents worry that educational institutes might hastily reopen without taking the necessary precautions to shield children and everyone in the community from infection.

If this crisis of confidence continues to fester, millions of families could decide to keep their children home when educational institutes begin opening around the nation this fall. This would further harm the prospects of students who have already lost ground because of the pandemic and who are at risk of falling irretrievably behind.

Statistics reveal that six in ten parents say they are likely to continue home learning instead of sending their kids back to school this fall

If closures extend beyond the fall, this shortfall could be even greater, with negative consequences for individual students and society as a whole. If decision makers believe that their remote-learning offerings are effective and equitable enough to avoid learning shortfalls, then longer school closures may be feasible. However, an uneven rollout of remote learning represents lost learning for every day out of school.

UNESCO, UNICEF, WFP and World Bank issued new guidelines on the safe reopening of schools amidst ongoing closures affecting nearly 1.3 billion students worldwide. “While many students are falling behind in their learning journey because of prolonged educational institutes closure, the decision of when and how to reopen, while far from straightforward, should be a priority. Once there is a green light on the health front, a whole set of measures will need to be in place to ensure that no student is left behind. These guidelines provide all-round guidance for governments and partners to facilitate the reopening of schools for students, teachers and families. We share one goal: to protect and advance the right to education for every learner,” said UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay.

The guidelines include:

- * Safe operations
- * Compensating learning
- * Wellness and protection
- * Policy reform
- * Financing requirements
- * Reaching the most marginalized

“Once schools begin to reopen, the priority becomes reintegrating students into school settings safely and in ways that allow learning to pick up again, especially

for those who suffered the biggest learning losses. This is a critical moment as it is the launching pad for a new normal that should be more effective and equitable. To manage reopenings, schools will need to be logistically prepared with the teaching workforce ready. And they will need to have plans specifically for supporting learning recovery of the most disadvantaged students. The guidelines offer a framework for moving forward that the major UN agencies are aligned around,” said Jaime Saavedra, World Bank Global Director for Education.

Nevertheless, parental anxiety is strikingly evident in recent polls. Statistics reveal that six in ten parents say they are likely to continue home learning instead of sending their kids back to school this fall. One in five teachers say they are unlikely to return to their classrooms. And when parents and teachers are considered together, about four in 10 oppose returning to school at all until a corona virus vaccine is available in other words, possibly years from now.

One father and teacher among those surveyed spoke for many others: “The expectation of parents and society is we’re sending our children to be educated in a safe environment, and how we’re going to provide that safe environment is completely unknown.”

Moreover, teachers’ unions are rightly worried for the safety of their members. Apprehension is running high especially among employees over 50, an age group of people especially vulnerable to coronavirus infection.

Although the risk to students themselves appears relatively low, reopening schools will also expose teachers to risk-especially those who are older or immune-compromised-and might contribute to higher risk for the larger community. Children’s role in transmitting the novel coronavirus is still unclear, making it difficult to estimate the extent to which reopening schools might contribute to resurgence. Potentially relaxed confinement measures outside the education sector add to the uncertainty. Decision makers will therefore need to determine when to reopen schools in the context of reopening society at large.

Along with this, officials have deepened people’s anxiety over these problems by fixating more on resurrecting hotels and restaurants than on educational institutes. Over and over again, we’ve witnessed a laissez-faire approach to reopening that lets each locality go its own way. In private education sector, discussions on reopening educational institutes is being carried out behind

closed doors or without consulting parents' groups that clearly should have been involved from the beginning.

In other places, officials are whistling right past this volatile issue, mouthing vague platitudes about wearing masks and allowing a little more space among students' desks.

Timing of schools: Classes can be continued by maintaining social distance in shifts of 7am to 10am in the morning and 11am to 2pm in afternoon with maximum number of 25 students in each class/lab.

"The risk from the virus will not be zero until there's a vaccine or a treatment which is 100 percent effective."

The public health mandate that requires limiting student and staff interactions at educational institutes will require putting fewer students on buses and in classrooms. Without an infusion of new teachers to staff additional class even fewer students than might otherwise be allowable would be on hand in any one school building at a time. Under this hybrid schooling model, some students will study at home and some at school on certain days, and the groups then switch places.

School officials can handle instructional logistics. Education and Health departments need to take responsibility for the complex network of supports that educational institutes would need to stay open in the midst of a pandemic. Public health officials should decide a few crucial issues promptly, so that procedures and protocols could be made public.

The final consideration to weigh is school systems' ability to create and consistently follow effective health and safety measures to mitigate the risk of infection. School systems' infrastructure, budget, supply chains, policies, and culture all contribute to their ability to operate safely after reopening. For instance, a school with unused classroom space and enough classroom aides could stagger schedules, space desks at least six feet apart, and facilitate more but smaller classes. Conversely, schools with strapped budgets, overworked teachers, and crowded classes will have less flexibility. Furthermore, equipping or retrofitting schools for optimal hygiene and sanitation won't be effective if student behavior cannot or does not adhere to health and safety protocols.

How much testing will be needed to ensure protection of the thousands of students, staff and the vast number of families connected to them? Once a case has been diagnosed, how will health agencies track down and test people at risk of infection, particularly those in a poor and transient population? Will an educational institute need to shut down once someone in it tests positive for Covid-19? If so, for how long? How often will educational institutes be sanitized? Who will supply staff members and students with protective equipment? Who will pay for the inevitable lawsuits that arise when people sue, claiming they were infected at work?

There isn't one right set of answers to these questions. Infection rates fluctuate across communities, as does capacity of healthcare systems; education systems vary in both structure and performance; and different communities have distinct cultural values that inform decision making. Significantly, leaders will be making decisions based on limited and rapidly changing epidemiological evidence and will therefore be forced to make difficult trade-offs to reopen schools. Once schools are deemed safe for in-person instruction, addressing re-enrollment, academic remediation, and possible viral resurgence will require new capabilities.

The writer is web editor of Daily Times

Source: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/630613/how-to-reopen-educational-institutes/>

Higher Education and Universities By Syed Akhtar Ali Shah

Access to higher education world over tends to be very competitive and expensive. No wonder, only the most talented students make it to a university. The higher education institutions maintain a high set of standards that besides learning and teaching also include research and scholarship activities. Conventionally, such institutions impart education to students to prepare their mind and body for public service, to advance knowledge through research, and to develop leaders for various areas of public service. As societies undergo evolution, universities also respond to the changing needs, and equip the learners with the knowledge, skills, and ethical responsibilities which are needed by the needs of a society, and for better participation in the new integrated world economy. In terms of expectations from higher education institutions, Pakistan is no exception.

In the wake of such renewed demands, the promulgation of legal frameworks and education policies such as the Federal Universities Ordinance (FUO 2002) can be seen as an effort to enhance the quality of education to meet the dynamism of society and market demand. The avowed objective of the new legislative framework was to ensure that universities enjoyed autonomy while improving the governance and management in order to enhance the quality of higher education in the country. Like the federal government, the provinces more or less adopted the same pattern in their acts for the regulation of the universities, especially public sector universities. For instance, the preamble to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Universities Act 2012 highlighting the intent and purpose of the legislation, postulates to further improve the governance and management of the universities by ensuring accountability, transparency and giving due representation to all stakeholders in decision making, so as to enhance the quality of higher education in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The Higher Education Commission of Pakistan (HEC) in its mission statement claims to assist in the building of a modern, progressive and tolerant society that values the dignity of labour, craftsmanship, and the spirit of inquiry, critical and independent thought and public duty. The goal assigned to it is to mobilise financial, technical and social resources for enhancing the quality of educational

institutions and for facilitating the reform process initiated within these institutions.

In a nutshell, the underlying purpose of all these statutory laws and policies is to enhance the quality of higher education. The obvious question is: why are universities in Pakistan, despite having such Acts and HEC guidelines, unable to achieve international benchmarks? Why has the University of Punjab, which is one of the oldest universities of the country, been ranked between 800-1000? Why is it that the ranking of six more universities is no better while the rest of the remaining chartered universities stand nowhere in the world rankings?

One of the major reasons is that the focus is only on quantity and mass production of degrees, ignoring quality altogether. While accessibility to higher education is a lofty ideal by opening new universities in every nook and corner, compromising standards of higher education defeat the very purpose as set in the preambles of the aforementioned Act and guidelines. Ideally, a new university should start with, not more than five departments by recruiting the entire required faculty. Having ensured the quality of those departments, only then can the university embark upon opening a new department but that too keeping in view the availability of required human and financial resources.

A survey of the best universities in the world revealed that such universities accord the highest priority to research, student's satisfaction, peer ratings, quality of library, impact factor journals and publication of books. This is why universities like Harvard and Oxford stand at the top of the pedestal. Universities in Pakistan are also required to set aside at least 10% of the institutional budget for research, but it is hardly done. Very few universities in Pakistan even have 'Y' category journals.

Although laws and policy guidelines for governing our universities are not poor when compared with the best universities of the world, the malaise stems from the disregard shown to the law, policy, best practices, conventions and ethical values. The vice chancellor is the nucleus of the university and upon his professional and administrative calibre depends the outcome of the institution. In this context, first and foremost is the careful selection of a vice chancellor. Unfortunately, at times, the vice chancellors are handpicked by the political elite. Once such a person is entrusted with authority, he or she ignores the law, merit and guidelines due to extraneous influences. Tied to the apron of the political

elite, the vice chancellor is unable to say no to unjust demands and consequently merit is the ultimate casualty.

The Syndicate and Senate act as autonomous bodies in order to ensure transparency and accountability with the aim of enhancing quality of education, but the selection of even independent members to these watchdog bodies is often manoeuvred by the vice chancellor. Such a situation leads to demoralisation, despondency, and groupings within the university staff which adversely affect provision of quality education. The situation therefore demands utmost care in the selection of vice chancellors and strict adherence to the University Act, guidelines of HEC and best practices.

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Struggles of Online Education in Pakistan By

Momina Raja

The much-debated online education in Pakistan has challenged the students, teachers and also exposed the lack of technology in Pakistan that is hindering the quality of online education. With the exponential increase of the novel coronavirus, the world has had to come up with novel strategies to address the issue. Lockdowns across the globe to contain the virus resulted in a shift from doing things traditionally. Due to the urgent lockdown, the country's educational institutions transitioned to a world of online learning. This was a timely decision taken by the government which not only safeguarded the lives of pupils but also protected a large number of individuals related to the education sector across the board. The goal was clear – to make sure that learning is not disrupted for students. While the goal may seem fruitful, a myriad of struggles have been associated with online education in Pakistan.

Online education stands to be a champion of minimising academic disruption. It is imperative to understand that online education brings forth the issue of the “haves and have nots” (Tikly). Globalisation has allowed technology to permeate however, it is still considered a luxury in many parts of Pakistan. A small percentage of the population has access to good quality internet connection or an internet connection at all. Online education exacerbated the inequalities in our society. Many students are not able to access their once accessible classrooms due to the lack of a stable internet connection. The recent trend on twitter by students under the name, “#WeRejectOnlineEducation” highlights the trajectory of this debate. Students from various cities came forth with the inequalities online education brought upon them. Many students from private and public institutions demanded the decision of schools going online be retracted, as they did not have the means or the infrastructure in their locality to set up a stable internet connection.

The transition to online education was a rather hasty one, which did not allow adequate training for teachers or students to comprehend the complexity of this new way of education. This quick shift to the new mode of education has highlighted the insufficient ATL skills (approaches towards learning) of teachers due to which students are unable to comprehend. The lack of training to equip

oneself to perform immaculately to this new approach to education has resulted in stunting learning. Many teachers do not have enough knowledge to counter pranks played by students on this virtual set up, neither do they have enough training to allow their classes to process smoothly if there is any connectivity error. Online education has brought forth the issue of the accessibility of cheating that teachers have a hard time tackling.

Another struggle of online education not just in Pakistan but around the globe is the loss of personal interaction. Schools are seen as the bridge from the private to public sphere. Other than the curriculum being taught, students learn from their real-life interactions and experiences that help them groom as a person altogether. Muneebur Rehman in his recent article suggests, “our non-disciplined lifestyle, and lack of focus during e-learning further the students from taking online classes.” The loss of an experience from going to one’s academic institution has made students feel demotivated on various fronts. Students find it difficult to routinise their lifestyles in order to accommodate online learning.

Pakistan has been struggling on various fronts in the education sector and this pandemic has added salt to the wound. The multiple education systems which further increase the class divide have not been quite fruitful in catering to the needs of the population as a whole. Previously, it was a struggle between Urdu-medium and English-medium only but now, virtual schooling has added a new unexpected twist to it. Adapting to these unforeseen circumstances will not be easy but by providing appropriate training and equipment to the teachers, the country can cope with some of the current education crisis.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/27-Jun-2020/struggles-of-online-education-in-pakistan>

WORLD

The The New Great Game in Asia? By Kamran Yousaf

At a time when the world is preoccupied with the coronavirus pandemic, China and India, the two most populous countries of the world that are nuclear-armed too, have locked horns in a military standoff. To understand the current spat, it is important to know the background of their acrimony

China and India share around 3,500km long border, most of which is not demarcated and thus called the Line of Actual Control (LAC). At the heart of the dispute is China's claim of some 90,000 square kilometres of territory in India's northeast, including the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh. India on the other hand insists China occupies 38,000 square kilometres of its territory in the Aksai Chin Plateau in the western Himalayas, including part of Ladakh region.

China and India went to a war in 1962 with the latter suffering a humiliating defeat but the border dispute remained unresolved. In 2017, the two countries had a 76-day-long military standoff at Doklam when India tried to stop China to build a road in the disputed area at the China-Bhutan border. The stalemate ended with both sides claiming victory.

The current standoff is, however, being seen as much more serious than the previous ones. On May 5, Indian and Chinese soldiers clashed at Ladakh's Galwan valley. They beat each other with fists and sticks, resulting in dozens getting injured on both sides. Similar incidents had been reported in other regions including Sikkim. Both sides have a different story to tell.

Indian officials claim that it all started when Chinese soldiers entered the disputed territory of Ladakh at three different points, erecting tents and guard posts. They said the Chinese soldiers ignored repeated verbal warnings to depart, triggering shouting matches, stone-throwing and fistfights.

The stalemate was, however, triggered by India's construction of roads and air strips in the region, with China strongly contesting. The question is: Will the situation de-escalate or lead to a larger conflict?

Both Beijing and New Delhi are, at least publically, trying to downplay the standoff. In fact, Indian response to the skirmishes was very guarded. Unlike PM Narendra Modi's aggressive posturing towards Pakistan, he is completely silent on the tension with China. He chaired a high-level meeting of three services chiefs and his national security adviser on the issue, but no official statement was issued after that. One of the reasons is China's superior defence capabilities as against those of India — standing at \$70 billion and \$260 billion, respectively.

There is a view that the current standoff between the two countries is much more than just a border issue. It is seen as a larger strategic game being played out in Asia. India, under Modi, has tried to change the status quo of territorial dispute not only with Pakistan but also with China.

The Indian move to revoke the special status of the disputed Jammu and Kashmir region angered China because it also altered the status of Ladakh, a region claimed by Beijing. China is also upset over India's continued opposition to CPEC as it claims the corridor passes through the disputed Gilgit-Baltistan region. It is believed that India is opposing BRI at the behest of the US, which views President Xi's initiative as a way to assert the Chinese authority over the region and the rest of the world.

But China, by flexing its military muscles along the Indian border, has apparently conveyed a message to India and its western allies that if they undermine its strategic interests, it has options at its disposal to hit back.

Under the circumstances, Pakistan must not remain oblivious to the changing strategic realities, and needs to adopt a proactive approach in order to protect its interests.

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Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2232580/6-new-great-game-asia/>

Rethinking Poverty | Editorial

It wasn't perfect, but until this year we had made great strides in reducing poverty across the world. Certainly some countries did it better than others and there were more than a few setbacks along the way. Even so, compared to where most of the world was at the beginning of the previous century, few can argue that more people could enjoy a better standard of living. The novel coronavirus has changed all that. And as the pandemic still rages on in most countries, no one knows how bad this change will be once the dust settles. Already, the gains in poverty reduction of the past are being upturned.

The closure of virtually all economic activities has resulted in massive layoffs, even in parts of the world that had been much better off. If predictions prove to be true, most of them will not have one to return to once normalcy resumes. Already many families that had long escaped the grip of poverty are finding themselves slipping back towards it. Once their safety nets and nest eggs deplete, many more will likely follow. More than the old, it is the young that are at risk of suffering the most. Many thinkpieces have been written on the millenials' misfortune of suffering not one but two great global recessions in the prime of their lives. Unicef and Save the Children also warn that by this year's end, another 86 million children will grow up in poverty.

Most governments may be in firefighting mode right now, but sooner or later, they would also need to grapple with the long-term effects of the pandemic and other extreme shocks to the economy. As we draw lessons and recalibrate our lifestyles on an individual level, it is crucial to do the same at national and global levels. Gains in poverty reduction may have removed some of the urgency before, but there is no doubt that the way the world's economy works is exploitative. If history proves anything, it's that too much exploitation will inevitably result in upheaval.

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Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2231986/6-rethinking-poverty/>

The Escalating US-China Tensions By Talat Masood

History bears witness that a reigning superpower would use every possible means to thwart an emerging challenger. In the most recent history, we witnessed how successive United States governments pursued policies to draw the former Soviet Union into conflicts in Europe, Latin America and Afghanistan. It engaged in a long-drawn arms race that hastened to bankrupt the Soviet economy, target its national cohesion and exploit its vulnerabilities. It eventually succeeded in being a major accelerator in its collapse.

Until a few years ago it seemed the world was witnessing a different model of co-existence with free-market economy incentivising cooperation and interdependence. This experiment had already transformed Europe as a model of economic and political cooperation with economies of 27 countries generally on a rising curve transforming the lives of millions.

Similar models of cooperation were pursued among ASEAN countries bringing about rapid growth and improving the living conditions of millions of its people.

Initially under the dynamic leadership of Deng Xiaoping and now in the able guidance of President Xi Jinping China's economy and strategic power has transformed to new heights and is seen as a prospective challenger to the US. China with over \$3 trillion reserves and sustained high growth, notwithstanding the recent downturn, increased its economic and political influence globally through the implementation of projects related to the Belt and Road Initiative and China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

Ever since President Trump assumed office, he has challenged the basis of US relationship with China and considers that it is heavily tilted in favour of Beijing and is unilaterally taking several measures to throttle its economy, political standing and global reputation.

President Trump is attacking China where it considers it vulnerable. Lately, the Covid-19 pandemic has come handy. Washington is sparing no effort in placing

all blame on China for spreading the virus globally. On the economic front it is rewriting some of the trade agreements with China.

It has found China's controversial policy to change Hong Kong's status and Human Rights record a convenient reason to step up pressure on the political front. In this it has the support of several Western countries.

It is, however, quite normal for a superpower or major powers to conveniently coexist with the same failings when it suits them without a blink or remorse. It promotes dictators and monarchies when these align with its policies and national interests. Pakistan was a pariah state when General Zia executed ZA Bhutto but became its favourite when it joined the US against the erstwhile USSR. A similar reversal in policy was witnessed during General Musharraf's military rule.

That was the past. The challenge that faces Pakistan now is how to navigate the current rivalry between the US and China while remaining committed to its strategic, economic and political leanings toward the latter.

The US-India strategic partnership is another critical factor that gives an added impetus to Pakistan-China relationship. Despite its heavy leaning toward China, Pakistan highly values its relations with Washington. Apart from its global clout, the US is an important destination of Pakistan's exports, a most sought-after destination of students for acquiring quality education and developing awareness of technological progress.

But President Trump's unilateral policies of so-called "America First" have seriously eroded the world order with its impact on Pakistan as well. His contempt for globalisation has undermined functioning of international organisations and international treaties that form the bedrock of global stability and order.

His unwarranted contempt and disassociation from the World Health Organization (WHO) at a time when the world needs a focal point and leadership to maximise cooperation among nations is inexplicable. He may have a genuine point that WHO was not very intrusive in investigating the origins of the Covid-19 virus. As the major financial contributor, he would not tolerate anything less than complete subservience of global organisations. This decision has become an

additional point of discord with China. The Federation of American Scientists also disagreed strongly with the Trump administration's announcement to withdraw the US from the WHO. They maintain, "WHO's role in providing assistance, setting health standards, and collecting data are instrumental in the global fight against the disease."

President Trump's earlier decision to unilaterally abandon the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, known commonly as the Iran nuclear deal reached in Vienna in 2015 between Iran and the P5+1 together with the European Union, was another manifestation of his disregard for international agreements. The imposition of severe economic sanctions and extreme hostility of the Trump administration toward Iran creates serious political and economic problems for Pakistan. Iran is an important neighbour with whom it shares a long border. Notwithstanding chronic border problems Pakistan has close cultural, religious and historical bonds. Moreover, with relations with India and Afghanistan so hostile, Pakistan strives to maintain a cooperative relationship with Iran.

It has tried to allay any misgivings that CPEC and the development of Gwadar port will undermine the importance of Chahbahar.

The US wants China to participate in the negotiations on the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START), which is due to expire in 2021. China, as expected, refuses to be a party to the negotiations.

In recent months the trade disputes between the US and China have taken a turn for the worse. With elections in the US due in a few months, it suits President Trump to act tough and project as a leader who protects national interests. Sanctions on China that the Trump administration is imposing will have a global fallout.

Western powers — Britain, France, and Australia — support the US in keeping the pressure on China.

Meanwhile, China will take all possible measures to counter US moves. It may have lesser cards to manipulate, but still can damage US interests.

At present, no other country can be a substitute to China in being an economic partner of the US. The volume of trade, the broad range of products that it manufactures or the economy to buy sophisticated US products place China in a unique position.

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China and India on the Edge By Imtiaz Rafi Butt

CHINA and India have locked horns in the Himalayas, moving towards a military conflict at 14,000 ft above sea level. The border between China and India is over 3400Kms long. It is called the LAC (Line of Actual Control). The history of the LAC goes back to the colonial era of the British when the Qing Dynasty negotiated a vague area border between China and the Indian region. Even today, the border dispute has not been resolved. After repeated diplomatic failures and disagreements, skirmishes and exchange of minor hostilities are a routine matter in the region of Ladakh along the Pangong Lake. But the year 2020, has brought with it the winds of change. On 05 May, there was a hot engagement between the troops of both countries. In a heated exchange of fighting, pelting and inflicted injuries, a standoff began which has not subsided even after a month. Will this lead to all out war? What would be the consequences? And why this is happening now? These are the questions that are perplexing military and economic strategists all over the world. A war between China and India is the only probable incident that could be more disastrous than Covid-19 pandemic.

The border between China and India is 3400Kms long. It is a tri-juncture with rights being claimed by India, China and Bhutan. India favours Bhutan in the dispute. China and India are both giants and together they are around one third of all human population on the planet. Both are nuclear powers but China is far more superior in defence budget and military technology. The quantum of military budget of China is four times that of India. In 1962, there was a war between the two which ended with humiliation and massive casualties for India. There is no misconception that the result would be the same if a war breaks out now. It will be devastating for India but the benefit will go to the economic opponents of China and its attention will be diverted. With being bogged down in Xinjiang, Hong Kong and a cold war with the US, a confrontation with India is not what the Chinese would want at this time.

Apparently, it seems as if the border dispute was the reason for the military clash and stand-off but matters in diplomacy are always complex. In August 2019, India altered the disputed status of India-occupied Kashmir and began

construction of ambitious infrastructure and military projects in the area. Without consultation, China has taken the construction of air bases and roads connecting military installation as a threat. Safeguarding the borders and physical territory of China is one of the primary manifestos of the PLA (People's Liberation Army). Further, Indian state media and political circles have stressed the need to conduct a military operation, and to capture Pakistan-administered (Azad Kashmir). Not only does China considers this a threat to a close ally Pakistan but also perceives it as a threat to the One Belt One Road Project. China has based its future progress, prosperity and a foothold in International trade through Pakistan in the shape of Gwadar. Any plan to thwart the "CPEC" or "OBOR" is a major challenge to Chinese aims. A military stand-off in the Ladakh region would move the focus of the Indian Army from any intervention into Azad Kashmir and towards the Dolkham Plateau and the Pangong Lake area. In a twenty plus day military build up, India is clear that it needs to review its military intelligence and strategy in the region. The changing of the status of disputed territory and warming up to US, Japan and Australia is going to have consequences. On the other hands, CPEC and OBOR gives China access to the Arabian Sea, a dream that will unlock limitless possibilities for China and Pakistan.

After the 5th May incident, the Chinese Army has moved into over 50 Kms of area which was previously under Indian control. Both armies have been mobilizing. On the Chinese side, over 2500 troops have been brought in. Heavy military equipment, artillery and surveillance technology is being deployed. Such a kind of military formation has not been observed in many decades. The disputes and skirmishes that occurred in the previous years would be resolved through local military commanders but this time the call for military personnel and equipment has come from the highest echelons of the Chinese Army. China is dealing with multiple fronts at the moment. There is the unrest in Hong Kong, the economic slow down from corona pandemic, the cold war with the US and now this military stand-off at 14,000 ft with India. It appears that China is prepared for all kinds of scenarios. It is wary of the fact that India under the fascist leadership of Modi is capable of making aggressive moves. It is also considering the fact that this is the time when India has to decide whether it will take a neutral role or lean towards the American Government when a cold war is on the horizon. If the latter is the case, China could engage India in a hostile border dispute which would weaken the economy to the brink that India is no longer a threat, or it can develop a deterrence that if India participates in any anti-China activities under the leadership of the United States, the military front would be the first of many

factors that India would have to consider. Also, in the event of India siding with the US against China, would result in cutting of trade ties between India and China which would be a serious blow to an already shaken economy because of the Covid pandemic. Although, it is India that has prompted the stand-off, China seems to be determined to use it to its advantage.

The LAC is a loose border with no clear boundaries and vague protocols. If diplomatic means fail, the military options can be catastrophic for the region and for India. It must be kept in mind that if China enters the region along the Pangong Lake and captures the roads built by India to connect Ladakh to IOK, then the grip of the Indian Army in the whole region will be halved. The stakes are high for both countries. With Pakistan moving closer to China with every new step in CPEC and OBOR and India entering military alliances with the United States, a cold war of superpowers can frantically turn into a full blown all out combat. Although, China is keeping a deterrent strategy at the moment, it certainly has the might and the means to initiate and win this fight, only this time with much more sophisticated armaments and strategies compared to those available in 1962. Donald Trump is marching towards the blame game and accusing China of hijacking WHO and the UN, blatantly vilifying Chinese interests in Hong Kong and Taiwan, trying to change the international narrative towards BeiJeing, perhaps it is through Ladakh that the Chinese Government will show their display of military power instead of the soft power they have communicated western world for so many decades.

—The writer is Chairman, Jinnah Rafi Foundation, based in Lahore.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/china-and-india-on-the-edge/>

The Pandemic and Political Order By

Francis Fukuyama

Major crises have major consequences, usually unforeseen. The Great Depression spurred isolationism, nationalism, fascism, and World War II—but also led to the New Deal, the rise of the United States as a global superpower, and eventually decolonization. The 9/11 attacks produced two failed American interventions, the rise of Iran, and new forms of Islamic radicalism. The 2008 financial crisis generated a surge in antiestablishment populism that replaced leaders across the globe. Future historians will trace comparably large effects to the current coronavirus pandemic; the challenge is figuring them out ahead of time.

It is already clear why some countries have done better than others in dealing with the crisis so far, and there is every reason to think those trends will continue. It is not a matter of regime type. Some democracies have performed well, but others have not, and the same is true for autocracies. The factors responsible for successful pandemic responses have been state capacity, social trust, and leadership. Countries with all three—a competent state apparatus, a government that citizens trust and listen to, and effective leaders—have performed impressively, limiting the damage they have suffered. Countries with dysfunctional states, polarized societies, or poor leadership have done badly, leaving their citizens and economies exposed and vulnerable.

The more that is learned about COVID-19, the disease caused by the novel coronavirus, the more it seems the crisis will be protracted, measured in years rather than quarters. The virus appears less deadly than feared, but very contagious and often transmitted asymptotically. Ebola is highly lethal but hard to catch; victims die quickly, before they can pass it on. COVID-19 is the opposite, which means that people tend not to take it as seriously as they should, and so it has, and will continue to, spread widely across the globe, causing vast numbers of deaths. There will be no moment when countries will be able to declare victory over the disease; rather, economies will open up slowly and tentatively, with progress slowed by subsequent waves of infections. Hopes for a V-shaped recovery appear wildly optimistic. More likely is an L with a long tail

curving upward or a series of Ws. The world economy will not go back to anything like its pre-COVID state anytime soon.

Economically, a protracted crisis will mean more business failures and devastation for industries such as shopping malls, retail chains, and travel. Levels of market concentration in the U.S. economy had been rising steadily for decades, and the pandemic will push the trend still further. Only large companies with deep pockets will be able to ride out the storm, with the technology giants gaining most of all, as digital interactions become ever more important.

The political consequences could be even more significant. Populations can be summoned to heroic acts of collective self-sacrifice for a while, but not forever. A lingering epidemic combined with deep job losses, a prolonged recession, and an unprecedented debt burden will inevitably create tensions that turn into a political backlash—but against whom is as yet unclear.

The United States has bungled its response badly and seen its prestige slip enormously.

The global distribution of power will continue to shift eastward, since East Asia has done better at managing the situation than Europe or the United States. Even though the pandemic originated in China and Beijing initially covered it up and allowed it to spread, China will benefit from the crisis, at least in relative terms. As it happened, other governments at first performed poorly and tried to cover it up, too, more visibly and with even deadlier consequences for their citizens. And at least Beijing has been able to regain control of the situation and is moving on to the next challenge, getting its economy back up to speed quickly and sustainably.

The United States, in contrast, has bungled its response badly and seen its prestige slip enormously. The country has vast potential state capacity and had built an impressive track record over previous epidemiological crises, but its current highly polarized society and incompetent leader blocked the state from functioning effectively. The president stoked division rather than promoting unity, politicized the distribution of aid, pushed responsibility onto governors for making key decisions while encouraging protests against them for protecting public health, and attacked international institutions rather than galvanizing them. The

world can watch TV, too, and has stood by in amazement, with China quick to make the comparison clear.

Over the years to come, the pandemic could lead to the United States' relative decline, the continued erosion of the liberal international order, and a resurgence of fascism around the globe. It could also lead to a rebirth of liberal democracy, a system that has confounded skeptics many times, showing remarkable powers of resilience and renewal. Elements of both visions will emerge, in different places. Unfortunately, unless current trends change dramatically, the general forecast is gloomy.

RISING FASCISM?

Pessimistic outcomes are easy to imagine. Nationalism, isolationism, xenophobia, and attacks on the liberal world order have been increasing for years, and that trend will only be accelerated by the pandemic. Governments in Hungary and the Philippines have used the crisis to give themselves emergency powers, moving them still further away from democracy. Many other countries, including China, El Salvador, and Uganda, have taken similar measures. Barriers to the movement of people have appeared everywhere, including within the heart of Europe; rather than cooperate constructively for their common benefit, countries have turned inward, bickered with one another, and made their rivals political scapegoats for their own failures.

The rise of nationalism will increase the possibility of international conflict. Leaders may see fights with foreigners as useful domestic political distractions, or they may be tempted by the weakness or preoccupation of their opponents and take advantage of the pandemic to destabilize favorite targets or create new facts on the ground. Still, given the continued stabilizing force of nuclear weapons and the common challenges facing all major players, international turbulence is less likely than domestic turbulence.

Poor countries with crowded cities and weak public health systems will be hit hard. Not just social distancing but even simple hygiene such as hand washing is extremely difficult in countries where many citizens have no regular access to clean water. And governments have often made matters worse rather than better—whether by design, by inciting communal tensions and undermining social cohesion, or by simple incompetence. India, for example, increased its vulnerability by declaring a sudden nationwide shutdown without thinking through

the consequences for the tens of millions of migrant laborers who crowd into every large city. Many went to their rural homes, spreading the disease throughout the country; once the government reversed its position and began to restrict movement, a large number found themselves trapped in cities without work, shelter, or care.

Displacement caused by climate change was already a slow-moving crisis brewing in the global South. The pandemic will compound its effects, bringing large populations in developing countries ever closer to the edge of subsistence. And the crisis has crushed the hopes of hundreds of millions of people in poor countries who have been the beneficiaries of two decades of sustained economic growth. Popular outrage will grow, and dashing citizens' rising expectations is ultimately a classic recipe for revolution. The desperate will seek to migrate, demagogic leaders will exploit the situation to seize power, corrupt politicians will take the opportunity to steal what they can, and many governments will clamp down or collapse. A new wave of attempted migration from the global South to the North, meanwhile, would be met with even less sympathy and more resistance this time around, since migrants could be accused more credibly now of bringing disease and chaos.

Finally, the appearances of so-called black swans are by definition unpredictable but increasingly likely the further out one looks. Past pandemics have fostered apocalyptic visions, cults, and new religions growing up around the extreme anxieties caused by prolonged hardship. Fascism, in fact, could be seen as one such cult, emerging from the violence and dislocation engendered by World War I and its aftermath. Conspiracy theories used to flourish in places such as the Middle East, where ordinary people were disempowered and felt they lacked agency. Today, they have spread widely throughout rich countries, as well, thanks in part to a fractured media environment caused by the Internet and social media, and sustained suffering is likely to provide rich material for populist demagogues to exploit.

OR RESILIENT DEMOCRACY?

Nevertheless, just as the Great Depression not only produced fascism but also reinvigorated liberal democracy, so the pandemic may produce some positive political outcomes, too. It has often taken just such a huge external shock to break sclerotic political systems out of their stasis and create the conditions for

long-overdue structural reform, and that pattern is likely to play out again, at least in some places.

The practical realities of handling the pandemic favor professionalism and expertise; demagoguery and incompetence are readily exposed. This should ultimately create a beneficial selection effect, rewarding politicians and governments that do well and penalizing those that do poorly. Brazil's Jair Bolsonaro, who has steadily hollowed out his country's democratic institutions in recent years, tried to bluff his way through the crisis and is now floundering and presiding over a health disaster. Russia's Vladimir Putin tried to play down the importance of the pandemic at first, then claimed that Russia had it under control, and will have to change his tune yet again as COVID-19 spreads throughout the country. Putin's legitimacy was already weakening before the crisis, and that process may have accelerated.

The pandemic has shone a bright light on existing institutions everywhere, revealing their inadequacies and weaknesses. The gap between the rich and the poor, both people and countries, has been deepened by the crisis and will increase further during a prolonged economic stagnation. But along with the problems, the crisis has also revealed government's ability to provide solutions, drawing on collective resources in the process. A lingering sense of "alone together" could boost social solidarity and drive the development of more generous social protections down the road, just as the common national sufferings of World War I and the Depression stimulated the growth of welfare states in the 1920s and 1930s.

Police at an anti-lockdown protest in London, the United Kingdom, May 2020

Police at an anti-lockdown protest in London, the United Kingdom, May 2020

Pierre Alozie / eyevine / Redux

This might put to rest the extreme forms of neoliberalism, the free-market ideology pioneered by University of Chicago economists such as Gary Becker, Milton Friedman, and George Stigler. During the 1980s, the Chicago school provided intellectual justification for the policies of U.S. President Ronald Reagan and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, who considered large, intrusive government to be an obstacle to economic growth and human progress. At the time, there were good reasons to cut back many forms of government ownership and regulation. But the arguments hardened into a libertarian religion, embedding

hostility to state action in a generation of conservative intellectuals, particularly in the United States.

Given the importance of strong state action to slow the pandemic, it will be hard to argue, as Reagan did in his first inaugural address, that “government is not the solution to our problem; government is the problem.” Nor will anybody be able to make a plausible case that the private sector and philanthropy can substitute for a competent state during a national emergency. In April, Jack Dorsey, the CEO of Twitter, announced that he would contribute \$1 billion to COVID-19 relief, an extraordinary act of charity. That same month, the U.S. Congress appropriated \$2.3 trillion to sustain businesses and individuals hurt by the pandemic. Antistatism may linger among the lockdown protesters, but polls suggest that a large majority of Americans trust the advice of government medical experts in dealing with the crisis. This could increase support for government interventions to address other major social problems.

And the crisis may ultimately spur renewed international cooperation. While national leaders play the blame game, scientists and public health officials around the world are deepening their networks and connections. If the breakdown of international cooperation leads to disaster and is judged a failure, the era after that could see a renewed commitment to working multilaterally to advance common interests.

DON'T GET YOUR HOPES UP

The pandemic has been a global political stress test. Countries with capable, legitimate governments will come through relatively well and may embrace reforms that make them even stronger and more resilient, thus facilitating their future outperformance. Countries with weak state capacity or poor leadership will be in trouble, set for stagnation, if not impoverishment and instability. The problem is that the second group greatly outnumbers the first.

Unfortunately, the stress test has been so hard that very few are likely to pass. To handle the initial stages of the crisis successfully, countries needed not only capable states and adequate resources but also a great deal of social consensus and competent leaders who inspired trust. This need was met by South Korea, which delegated management of the epidemic to a professional health bureaucracy, and by Angela Merkel's Germany. Far more common have been governments that have fallen short in one way or another. And since the rest of

the crisis will also be hard to manage, these national trends are likely to continue, making broader optimism difficult.

Another reason for pessimism is that the positive scenarios assume some sort of rational public discourse and social learning. Yet the link between technocratic expertise and public policy is weaker today than in the past, when elites held more power. The democratization of authority spurred by the digital revolution has flattened cognitive hierarchies along with other hierarchies, and political decision-making is now driven by often weaponized babble. That is hardly an ideal environment for constructive, collective self-examination, and some polities may remain irrational longer than they can remain solvent.

The biggest variable is the United States. It was the country's singular misfortune to have the most incompetent and divisive leader in its modern history at the helm when the crisis hit, and his mode of governance did not change under pressure. Having spent his term at war with the state he heads, he was unable to deploy it effectively when the situation demanded. Having judged that his political fortunes were best served by confrontation and rancor rather than national unity, he has used the crisis to pick fights and increase social cleavages. American underperformance during the pandemic has several causes, but the most significant has been a national leader who has failed to lead.

The link between technocratic expertise and public policy is weaker today than in the past, when elites held more power.

If the president is given a second term in November, the chances for a broader resurgence of democracy or of the liberal international order will drop. Whatever the election result, however, the United States' deep polarization is likely to remain. Holding an election during a pandemic will be tough, and there will be incentives for the disgruntled losers to challenge its legitimacy. Even should the Democrats take the White House and both houses of Congress, they would inherit a country on its knees. Demands for action will meet mountains of debt and die-hard resistance from a rump opposition. National and international institutions will be weak and reeling after years of abuse, and it will take years to rebuild them—if it is still possible at all.

With the most urgent and tragic phase of the crisis past, the world is moving into a long, depressing slog. It will come out of it eventually, some parts faster than

others. Violent global convulsions are unlikely, and democracy, capitalism, and the United States have all proved capable of transformation and adaptation before. But they will need to pull a rabbit out of the hat once again.

Source: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/world/2020-06-09/pandemic-and-political-order>

A Nuclear Iran | Editorial

The International Atomic Energy Agency has blamed Iran for violating all restrictions of the 2015 nuclear deal that was unceremoniously abandoned by US President Donald Trump in 2018. Even after that, Tehran continued to abide by the rules set by the international community regarding its nuclear programme. However, over the past few months, particularly since January 2020, when senior Iranian military leader Qasem Soleimani was killed in a US airstrike at Baghdad airport, the Trump administration has turned up the pressure on Iran. Through hard-hitting economic sanctions and a complete blockade of the country, Trump has brought the Iranian economy to its knees. Almost all sectors of the Iranian financial system are crumbling under pressure from Washington.

If that was not enough, the Covid-19 health crisis has crushed Iran's infrastructure. Under these circumstances, ordinary Iranians are suffering. They are increasingly frustrated and helpless. This also triggered several minor uprisings in Iran, which were mostly crushed or were never reported. With public discontent rising and the regime struggling for its survival, the only option for the clerics is to ensure they have a nuclear programme that is running and capable of producing a weapon at some point. Even if they are unable to produce a weapon, the mere fact that Iran is enriching uranium to a purity of up to 4.5%, higher than the 3.67% allowed under the nuclear deal called JCPOA, indicates that Iran is inching closer to abandoning the nuclear pact.

The survival of the regime in Tehran now depends on acquiring a nuclear weapon that will serve as a bargaining chip. The message from Tehran is clear: If the world is unwilling to negotiate, Tehran is unwilling to give up on its nuclear ambitions. Sooner or later, once the US recovers from its internal leadership crisis, it will realise that the policy of maximum pressure is pushing Iran to acquire a nuclear weapon — sooner than expected.

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Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2239259/6-a-nuclear-iran/>

Sino-US Ties at a Crossroads By Maleeha Lodhi

THE confrontation instigated by the United States with China continues to intensify. The pandemic has escalated tensions between them that were already at a record high before the Covid outbreak. This fraught situation has variously been described as a new Cold War, end of the post-1979 era, a geopolitical turning point and less seriously, a 'scold war'.

What does this mean for the world's most consequential relationship? Is this a transformative moment from where ties will have to be completely redefined rather than reset? Will the two global powers arrive at a modus vivendi or will their stand-off become an enduring feature of the international landscape? How much of China-bashing in the US reflects campaign politics in an election year? Is the friction an inevitable result of a global power's response to the rise of another that can challenge its predominant position — a classic phenomenon witnessed throughout history when power dynamics shift fundamentally?

Is economic decoupling between the two inescapable? Or will present hostilities eventually give way to a restructuring of ties in which relations may end up being fiercely competitive and selectively cooperative but with overtones of hostility?

Clearer answers will emerge over time. But a key factor that could shape future relations will be the US presidential election in November when the next occupant of the White House will have to decide how to manage relations with China: to stabilise the relationship on new terms, or embark on a course of drawn-out confrontation. In both eventualities, a return to engagement that previously characterised relations with China is unlikely.

The future course of Sino-US ties will have far-reaching consequences for the world.

This is because the political consensus and public opinion that has emerged in the US — fanned by President Donald Trump's actions and rhetoric — sees China as an adversary that has exploited the US on trade and poses a strategic challenge that needs to be countered and contained, not engaged. Many foreign

policy advisers of the Democratic contender for the presidency, Joe Biden, also happen to be hawks on China. Therefore, whoever wins the election will likely follow a tough line on China.

Beijing's interest lies in de-escalating tensions and steady relations. But it is up against the weight of US-led Western opinion that has become increasingly sceptical and hostile towards China. The European Union which has strong economic equities in ties with China is being assiduously courted by Beijing to encourage it to follow an independent path from Washington. But developments in Hong Kong have added to European suspicions of China.

In the face of Trump's provocative statements and actions during the pandemic, China has generally kept its cool, reacting sharply only when Washington crossed certain red lines or when Trump's patently misleading narrative needed to be countered. But top US officials led by Trump have continued virulent criticism of China. This provoked China's foreign minister Wang Yi to warn that the US was pushing China to the brink of a new Cold War. But he also stressed that both countries had a major responsibility for "world peace and development", and that "China and the US stand to gain from cooperation, and lose from confrontation".

There are limits though to China's forbearance in the face of offensive US actions. There is fresh thinking in Beijing about how to deal with a more antagonistic Washington and growing nationalist sentiment that their country should push back against Western criticism and US bullying. This sentiment is already driving a more assertive Chinese policy in Asia.

China is expected to emerge as the world's largest economy in a decade. This should itself persuade the US and its Western allies that engagement is necessary in their own interest with a country that will be pivotal to achieving post-pandemic global economic revival and addressing a host of other international challenges. However, this rational calculation and also the fact that China remains Washington's biggest lender may not be enough to overcome US apprehensions about the challenge posed to America's global position by China's rise.

A report titled United States Strategic Approach to the People's Republic of China, submitted by the White House to Congress last month, lays bare these

wide-ranging concerns. It says that US National Security Strategy demands that Washington “rethink the failed policies of the past two decades — policies based on the assumption that engagement with rivals and their inclusion in international institutions and global commerce would turn them into benign actors and trustworthy partners”. The future approach should be based on “tolerance of greater bilateral friction”.

The report says that America is in strategic competition with China and enumerates the economic and security challenges posed by Beijing. The tone is of a power anxious to counter a strategic challenger whose economic strength and reach have already eroded America’s global pre-eminence. More explicitly, US Defence Secretary Mark Asper declared in February that China is top of the Pentagon’s list of potential adversaries.

In one of the most influential books on Sino-US relations published in 2017, Harvard scholar Graham Allison invoked the ancient Greek historian Thucydides’ depiction of the dangerous trap that emerges when one great power challenges or is poised to displace another. The historian had pointed to the inevitability of war when the fear of the rise of another power determined the established power’s actions. Allison recalled that in 12 of 16 cases in history this dynamic between the two led to conflict.

The need to avoid the Thucydides’ Trap has not only been Allison’s advice but that of several thinkers and policymakers, most notably Henry Kissinger. Allison often quotes Kissinger as saying, “The Thucydides’ Trap is the best lens for looking through the noise and news of the day to the underlying dynamic driving the relationship between the US and China.” Kissinger has also frequently warned of the devastating consequences of falling into this trap and urged the need to place relations on a stable and peaceful course.

The key question is whether the present era’s most significant bilateral relationship will be managed responsibly to avert a complete breakdown, even conflict. After all the future course of Sino-US relations will be a game changer for the world, with far-reaching consequences for the global economy and international peace and security.

Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1563597/sino-us-ties-at-a-crossroads>

When the System Fails By Stewart Patrick

The chaotic global response to the coronavirus pandemic has tested the faith of even the most ardent internationalists. Most nations, including the world's most powerful, have turned inward, adopting travel bans, implementing export controls, hoarding or obscuring information, and marginalizing the World Health Organization (WHO) and other multilateral institutions. The pandemic seems to have exposed the liberal order and the international community as mirages, even as it demonstrates the terrible consequences of faltering global cooperation.

A century ago, when pandemic influenza struck a war-torn world, few multilateral institutions existed. Countries fought their common microbial enemy alone. Today, an array of multilateral mechanisms exists to confront global public health emergencies and address their associated economic, social, and political effects. But the existence of such mechanisms has not stopped most states from taking a unilateral approach.

It is tempting to conclude that multilateral institutions—ostensibly foundational to the rules-based international system—are, at best, less effective than advertised and, at worst, doomed to fail when they are needed most. But that conclusion goes too far. Weak international cooperation is a choice, not an inevitability.

The dismal multilateral response to the pandemic reflects, in part, the decisions of specific leaders, especially Chinese President Xi Jinping and U.S. President Donald Trump. Their behavior helps explain why the WHO struggled in the initial stages of the outbreak and why forums for multilateral coordination, such as the G-7, the G-20, and the UN Security Council, failed to rise to the occasion.

Just as important is the unique cooperation challenge that the novel coronavirus represents—and the distinctive weakness of the particular institution most central to addressing it. The WHO has a mandate that exceeds its capabilities. Member states have assigned it more and more tasks while limiting its independence and resources, setting the organization up for failure. To the extent that global health governance has failed, it has failed by design, reflecting the ambivalence of states torn between their desire for effective international institutions and their insistence on independent action.

The pandemic has revealed both the limits of the existing multilateral system and the horrific costs of the system's failure. If the current crisis causes policymakers to conclude that multilateralism is doomed and convinces them to provoke its unraveling, they will be setting humanity up for even more costly calamities. If the crisis instead serves as a wake-up call—a spur to invest in a more effective multilateral system—the world will be far better prepared when the next global pandemic strikes, increasing the likelihood that the imperatives of cooperation will win out over the pressures of competition.

MISSING IN ACTION

When the so-called Spanish flu ravaged the world in 1918, global health governance was still in its infancy. Public health had been a national or local matter until the mid-nineteenth century, when revolutions in transport deepened global integration to an unprecedented degree. In 1851, European countries hosted the first International Sanitary Conference, devoted to managing cholera. Over the next six decades, governments would hold 11 more such conferences, negotiate multilateral treaties on infectious disease, and establish new international organizations, including the Pan American Sanitary Bureau and the Office International d'Hygiène Publique.

Yet these arrangements, focused as they were on sanitation, were no match for the Spanish flu. The lack of meaningful international coordination to combat the pandemic left each government to fend for itself. The outbreak quickly became the deadliest public health emergency in modern times, killing an estimated 50 million people worldwide.

It was not until the decades after World War II that countries created a robust infrastructure to manage international public health emergencies. They established hundreds of multilateral organizations and signed thousands of treaties to manage the shared dilemmas of rising interdependence. Among the most prominent of the new instruments was the WHO, which was created as a specialized UN agency in 1948.

Since 2000, the organization has risen markedly in importance, as various new and reemerging infectious diseases have threatened global health and security. The agency managed the global responses to the SARS epidemic in 2003, the H1N1 flu pandemic in 2009, the Ebola epidemic in 2014–16, and the Zika epidemic in 2015–16. In the wake of SARS, the World Health Assembly, the

WHO's governing body, strengthened the International Health Regulations, the core legal prescriptions governing state conduct with respect to infectious disease. The new IHR gave the WHO's director general the authority to declare a "public health emergency of international concern" and required member states to increase their pandemic-response capacities.

Meanwhile, an entire multilateral ecosystem of global public health arrangements blossomed alongside the WHO and its IHR, including the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (now called GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance), the Global Health Security Agenda, the World Bank's Pandemic Emergency Financing Facility, and the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The result is a global health infrastructure beyond the wildest dreams of the national leaders who confronted the 1918 influenza pandemic alone.

Amid the current pandemic, however, governments have repeatedly forsaken opportunities for consultation, joint planning, and collaboration, opting instead to adopt nationalist stances that have put them at odds with one another and with the WHO. The result has been a near-total lack of global policy coherence.

Governments have repeatedly forsaken opportunities for consultation, joint planning, and collaboration.

In China, the initial epicenter of the coronavirus pandemic, Xi's government was slow to report the outbreak to the WHO, and it resisted full transparency thereafter. What's more, Beijing initially rebuffed offers from the WHO and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to provide desperately needed scientific expertise in epidemiology and molecular virology. China was also slow to share transmission data and biological samples with the WHO.

Outside China, many countries responded to the novel coronavirus by implementing international travel restrictions. On January 31, Trump ordered the United States closed to foreigners who had recently traveled to China. On March 11, without consulting U.S. allies, he abruptly suspended air travel from Europe to the United States. Brazil, India, Israel, and Russia also implemented pandemic-related border restrictions that month. Other countries, such as France and Germany, either banned or imposed limits on the export of protective medical equipment.

Particularly disappointing on the global stage was the lack of concerted action by the G-7, the G-20, and the UN Security Council. The leaders of the G-7, representing the world's biggest advanced market democracies, failed to meet until early March. Even then, they did little more than highlight their respective border closures. Later that month, a meeting of G-7 foreign ministers dissolved into acrimony when U.S. partners rejected Washington's demand that the final communiqué refer to the virus as "the Wuhan coronavirus," after the Chinese city where it was first discovered.

The G-20, which comprises the world's most important established and emerging economies, operated on a similar timeline, convening to discuss the pandemic for the first time in late March, nearly three months into the outbreak. At their virtual summit, the parties rejected requests from the International Monetary Fund to double its resources and suspend the debt obligations of poor nations. (They have since suspended low-income countries' debt service payments.)

Finally, the Security Council remained missing in action. China, which held the rotating presidency of the Security Council in March, blocked it from considering any resolution about the pandemic, arguing that public health matters fell outside the council's "geopolitical" ambit. (This is plainly untrue: in 2014, for instance, the body passed Resolution 2177, designating the West African Ebola epidemic a "threat to international peace and security.")

The most promising multilateral initiative was the most underresourced. On March 25, UN Secretary-General António Guterres launched a humanitarian response plan to mitigate the effects of the coronavirus on fragile and war-torn states, which are home to approximately a billion people and a majority of the world's poor, as well as most of its 70 million refugees and internally displaced people. Yet with a budget of just \$2 billion in UN funds, this plan had funding that was less than one-1,000th of what the United States had dedicated to its domestic response by early May.

PRIMAL INSTINCTS

Such shortcomings have prompted observers to conclude that failure is inevitable—that in times of crisis, citizens will look to their own leaders, and governments will care for their own citizens at the expense of global concerns. But the record of other crises in recent years, especially the last global financial crisis, suggests that sovereign states are quite capable of coordinated responses

to shared global challenges, provided that their leaders take an enlightened view of their countries' long-term national interests.

In 2008–9, first U.S. President George W. Bush and then President Barack Obama spearheaded a cooperative international response to the global credit crunch, helping prevent the world's descent into another Great Depression. Bush convened the first-ever meeting of the leaders of the G-20 in November 2008. The group met twice more in 2009, Obama's first year in office, coordinating massive stimulus packages to restore global liquidity, expanding the resources and mandates of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, and avoiding the type of discriminatory trade and monetary policies that had fragmented and weakened the world economy in the early 1930s. The lesson is clear: multilateral institutions are what states and their leaders make of them.

The late Richard Holbrooke, during his tenure as U.S. ambassador to the UN, made a similar point in criticizing the lazy habit of chastising the UN for failures of multilateralism. Such criticism, Holbrooke said, was akin to “blaming Madison Square Garden when the Knicks lose.” Even during crises, international institutions do not spring autonomously into action. They need to be spurred by their member states, who invariably hold the whip hand. The secretariats of multilateral organizations can take some initiative, but they always do so within constraints, as agents of their sovereign principals. To the degree that global governance exists, states—especially major powers—remain the true governors.

Unfortunately, powerful countries such as the United States and China have failed to play that vital leadership role during the coronavirus crisis. In keeping with his past rhetoric and actions, Trump has followed his “America first” instincts and adopted a nationalist response to the pandemic, framing COVID-19, the disease caused by the new coronavirus, not as a threat to global public health but as an assault on the sovereignty of the United States and the safety of its citizens. As when he addresses the issue of immigrants and refugees, his first impulse was to harden U.S. borders against what he insisted on calling a “foreign” or “Chinese” virus. There was no sense in Trump's reaction that the United States had any responsibility to launch or even participate in a collective global response.

Chinese leaders, meanwhile, have refused to cooperate with their counterparts at the G-20 and the UN because they fear exposure and embarrassment.

Deliberations in the UN Security Council, in particular, would have uncovered China's lack of transparency in handling the initial outbreak, as well as its campaign of misinformation regarding the virus's origins, sharpening international criticism and frustrating the Chinese Communist Party's geopolitical designs. China's desire to avoid those outcomes and the United States' preoccupation with exposing Chinese mendacity prevented the Security Council from passing a powerful resolution on the coronavirus, one that would have had the binding force of international law, allowing it to cut through political obstacles to cooperation.

In a more cosmopolitan world, other leaders might have filled the vacuum left by Washington's delinquency and Beijing's obfuscation. But that is not the world in which the crisis took shape. Over the past dozen years, great-power competition has waxed, and democracy's fortunes have waned. Ascendant populism and nationalism have weakened the domestic foundations for multilateral cooperation by empowering authoritarian despots and weakening public support for liberal internationalism. Global public health, long insulated from geopolitical rivalry and nationalist demagoguery, has suddenly become a terrain of political combat, crippling the world's response to the pandemic.

Epidemiological dynamics have also stymied cooperation. Unlike the global financial crisis, which struck most countries at about the same time, the virus has spread gradually and unevenly. The WHO declared the coronavirus a pandemic on March 11, but even today, the contagion's spread and effects vary widely from country to country. This has frustrated policy coordination, as national and subnational authorities have responded to the outbreak's ever-shifting epicenter by adopting policies reflecting very different short-term threat assessments.

Infectious diseases evoke far more fear than most other international threats, reinforcing primal instincts to impose barriers and withdraw into smaller groups, thus militating against multilateral responses. Pandemics may be transnational, but they are fought in the first instance within national jurisdictions, by local communities seeking to protect themselves.

RULES AND REGULATIONS

The persistent weakness of the WHO has been a particular impediment to effective multilateral mobilization against the coronavirus. The WHO is an invaluable repository of scientific expertise, a focal point for global disease

surveillance, and a champion of the human right to health. It has helped eradicate several diseases—most notably smallpox—and has put others, such as polio, on the ropes. It has also highlighted the growing threat from noncommunicable diseases of relative affluence, such as obesity and diabetes.

Yet the WHO remains deeply flawed, beset by multiple institutional shortcomings that hamstringing its ability to coordinate a pandemic response. Blame rests partly with the WHO's largest funders, including the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, and Japan, as well as large charities, such as the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, which have pressed the organization to expand its agenda without providing commensurate resources, all the while earmarking a growing share of its budget to address select diseases rather than to support robust public health capacities in member states. Bureaucratic impediments—such as a weak chain of command, an indecisive senior leadership, and a lack of accountability—have also undercut the organization's performance.

The WHO's weakness has been a particular impediment to effective multilateral mobilization against the coronavirus.

The WHO's bungled response to the Ebola outbreak in West Africa in 2014 revealed many of these shortcomings. An independent review panel attributed the WHO's poor performance to crippling budget cuts, a paucity of deployable personnel and logistical capacity, and a failure to cultivate relationships with other UN agencies, the private sector, and nongovernmental organizations. Hoping to correct some of those flaws, the World Health Assembly authorized the creation of a new global health emergency workforce and a small contingency fund for rapid response. Neither reform resolved the WHO's deeper structural problems, which the coronavirus has again laid bare.

The biggest impediment to the WHO's success is the failure of its member states to comply fully with the IHR. Following the SARS crisis, in which China and other countries either refused or neglected to report epidemic data in a timely and transparent manner, the World Health Assembly revised the IHR. The new regulations bolstered the WHO's surveillance capacities, empowered its director general to declare an emergency, and required all member states to develop and maintain minimum core capabilities to prevent, detect, and respond to disease outbreaks.

The coronavirus pandemic has revealed how resistant member states remain to implementing their commitments and how little leverage the WHO has to ensure that they do so. Fifteen years after the IHR were revised, fewer than half of all countries are in compliance, and many nations still lack even rudimentary surveillance and laboratory capacities to detect outbreaks. Since national governments are permitted to self-assess and self-report their progress in implementing the regulations, accountability is minimal.

Even more troubling, the revised IHR include a huge loophole that allows states to defect during emergencies. Countries can impose emergency measures that diverge from WHO guidelines if they believe these will produce superior results, provided they report their plans within 48 hours of implementation. In their early responses to the coronavirus, governments repeatedly used this clause to impose border closures, travel bans, visa restrictions, and quarantines on healthy visitors, regardless of whether these measures had WHO endorsement or any basis in science. Many did not even bother to inform the WHO, forcing it to glean information from media sources and obligating its director general, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, to dispatch letters reminding member states of their obligations.

The pandemic has also underscored flaws in the WHO's process for declaring an emergency. It was not until January 30 that the WHO finally designated the spread of the new coronavirus as a global emergency, after many countries had shut their borders and grounded commercial aircraft. On top of criticizing the agency's delay, commentators disparaged the WHO's binary, all-or-nothing approach to warnings, calling for a more nuanced spectrum of alerts.

More important, the coronavirus crisis has exposed the lack of protocols to ensure that all nations have access to vaccines. In past outbreaks, such wealthy countries as Australia, Canada, and the United States have hoarded vaccines for domestic use. This continues today. In March, Trump attempted and failed to obtain exclusive U.S. access to a potential coronavirus vaccine that is under development in Germany. Even if governments do not hoard vaccines, there will be widespread disparities in access and distributional capacity.

Finally, the pandemic has raised the specter that some nations may decline to share virus samples, using the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-Sharing as their justification. The protocol, an international agreement that was adopted

in 2010 and that has been ratified by more than 120 countries, serves a worthwhile function: granting nations sovereignty over their biological resources. But its application to human pathogens is an obvious perversion of that objective. During the 2005–7 avian influenza pandemic, Indonesia resisted sharing virus samples, citing the misguided concept of “viral sovereignty.” The Nagoya Protocol increases the likelihood that countries will act similarly today, risking unacceptable delays in scientific analysis of novel viruses and in the development of lifesaving vaccines to stop pandemics.

BOWING TO REALITY

In the wake of this pandemic, one anticipates growing calls to renegotiate the IHR, to strengthen the authority of the WHO, and to increase the obligations of the organization’s member states. Doing so in the current populist climate would be risky, however. Governments might seize the opportunity to claw back even more sovereign prerogatives, weakening the legal foundations for a coordinated global response to a public health emergency.

Throughout the pandemic, the WHO has bent over backward to curry favor with important but difficult partners—no surprise given the power asymmetry between the agency and major donor states. Reliant on Chinese data and cooperation to stem the pandemic, Tedros went to extraordinary lengths early this year to ingratiate himself with Xi and to assuage Chinese sensibilities.

“Let me be clear: this declaration [of an emergency] is not a vote of no confidence in China,” the director general insisted on January 30. “In many ways, China is actually setting a new standard for outbreak response,” he said, gushing. “It’s not an exaggeration.” It was in fact a gross exaggeration, given how China mismanaged the early stages of the epidemic. Multiple critics have taken Tedros to task, labeling him Beijing’s “enabler.”

The WHO’s servility has not been limited to its approach to China, however. The agency has also largely avoided direct criticism of the United States, its largest donor. The reverse, needless to say, has not been true. At an April 7 news conference, Trump took aim at the WHO to deflect attention from his administration’s own poor response to the outbreak. He falsely accused the agency of stating in January that the coronavirus was “no big deal,” and he promised to “put a hold” on U.S. financial support for the international organization. Tedros pushed back, but ever so gently and obliquely, urging all

WHO member states to avoid “politicizing” the coronavirus response. He did not directly refer to either Trump or the United States. For international institutions, it seems, kowtowing is just another way of bowing to reality.

GIVE AND YOU SHALL RECEIVE

In the ensuing months, the WHO and other multilateral institutions have taken some meaningful steps to contain the pandemic and cushion its economic blows. The WHO has served as a leading source of expertise on the virus, sent teams to affected countries, helped poor nations build up their health capacities, advanced worldwide scientific collaboration, combated misinformation, and continued to promote the IHR. Simultaneously, it has shaped the responses of dozens of other UN agencies and affiliated organizations, including the International Civil Aviation Organization, the World Tourism Organization, the UN Refugee Agency, the UN Development Program, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and many, many more.

But a truly empowered WHO could have done more. With enhanced political powers and a more flexible budget, the agency might have spearheaded a coherent multilateral response to the pandemic, persuaded nations to harmonize their border closures and travel restrictions, shamed laggards into fulfilling their binding treaty commitments under the IHR, and deployed significant resources and personnel to the shifting epicenter of the pandemic. The main obstacle to this outcome, and the reason for the haphazard global response, was the persistent ambivalence that all countries, particularly great powers, feel toward global health governance. All governments share a fundamental interest in a multilateral system that can respond quickly and effectively to stop potential pandemics in their tracks. They are less enthusiastic about delegating any of their sovereignty to the WHO, allowing it to circumscribe their freedom of action, or granting it the authorities and capabilities it needs to coordinate a pandemic response.

One lesson that will emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic is that multilateral cooperation can seem awfully abstract, until you actually need it—whether you rely on it to flatten the curve of an epidemic, ensure the safety of airline travel, protect displaced people, or prevent another global economic meltdown. Another, harder lesson is that the multilateral system is not a self-regulating, autonomous machine that springs into action whenever needed. No amount of technocratic expertise or institutional reform can compensate for the current lack of political

direction and sustained leadership in that system. Prominent member states must be wise benefactors to the multilateral system if they want to be its beneficiaries.

Source: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/world/2020-06-09/when-system-fails>

Why Donald Trump Can't Win in North Korea

By Robert E. Kelly

Yet again, North Korea has expressed its displeasure over inter-Korean relations. This week it destroyed a facility wherein inter-Korean meetings occurred. Ostensibly this was to protest leafletting by anti-North Korean groups in South Korea. These groups place leaflets and flashkeys into balloons to float into the North. But this seems like a disproportionate response. The North Korean government's recent rhetoric has been so over-the-top that the South Korean government felt compelled to issue a warning against North Korean military action.

The tough North Korean rhetoric and action likely stem from the larger context of failed diplomacy in the last few years. In 2017, North Korea achieved the major breakthrough of an intercontinental ballistic missile that could reach the United States. It was also a sizeable nuclear weapon. After decades of effort, North Korea had finally achieved direct nuclear deterrence against the United States. With that nuclear missile shield in place at least, North Korean supreme leader Kim Jong-un could suddenly turn toward diplomacy.

In President Donald Trump and South Korean President Moon Jae-in, Kim found interested partners. On North Korea, Moon is the most dovish president in the history of South Korea. Trump, too, in practice, is the most dovish U.S. president when it comes to North Korea. After threatening war in 2017, Trump swung toward negotiation. Multiple summits among the three leaders followed. Trump even walked around inside North Korea.

But the actual negotiations stalled almost from the start. Moon could do little on his own, a source of constant North Korean bitterness and vituperation. Moon the dove very much wants to reach out to the North. His government and coalition want inter-Korean exchanges, demilitarization along the border, the re-opening of a joint industrial zone in Kaesong, North Korea, and so on.

But North Korea is under wide-ranging sanctions at the global and national levels. Internationally, UN sanctions are in place because of the North's missile and nuclear programs. There are further national sanctions against it from

partners such as the United States and Japan. And there are South Korea's own sanctions too. All of this has dramatically reduced Moon's room to act. The dominant narrative on the left (Moon's coalition) here is that sanctions destroyed the opportunity for peace which the Moon government opened up.

Moon could act unilaterally, but that would provoke major disruptions with the South's partners, most obviously the United States. The U.S. alliance is very popular in South Korea; the domestic political cost to Moon of such a course would be very high.

Trump, too, sought to engage the North but far more haphazardly and sporadically. Trump's primary interest seems to have been the photo-ops and symbolism. He has given no serious policy reorientation speech about North Korea nor committed much to the bureaucratic tussle necessary to move Congress and the U.S. foreign policy community in that direction. In the end, Trump seems to have lost interest in North Korea, and the North recently said the personal relationship between Trump and Kim is now irrelevant.

The facility demolition probably channels all the disappointment over this series of events. North Korea seemed to have a good hand in 2018 and two interested counter-parties. And yet two and a half years later, nothing has changed.

The core problem is, as it has long been, that neither side is making serious concessions while also demanding extraordinary counter-concessions. Trump went into his meetings with Kim demanding the complete, verifiable, irreversible disarmament of the Northern nuclear and missile program. The U.S. counter-concession, only vaguely articulated, would be some sort of rolling sanctions removal and development aid. Even before Trump's first meeting with Kim two years ago this month, the analyst community said that it was extremely unlikely that he would achieve his desired result.

North Korea similarly offered little while demanding a lot. It offered, at the second summit, to shut down one aging nuclear reactor site in exchange for lifting sanctions. This too was a grossly disproportionate swap. The Trump team was so incensed by this request that it simply walked away from the table at Hanoi in 2018.

Moon, constrained legally by sanctions and politically by the wide public support in South Korea for the U.S. alliance, could do little but watch. Since the collapse of the Trump effort, North Korea has bullied him to act unilaterally. As he has not—likely due to the aforementioned constraints rather than personal choice—the North Koreans have been increasingly defaming him personally as a national traitor and toady to the Americans. The facility destruction was a part of that hate campaign.

Given the long history of enmity between the United States and North Korea, a big bang deal—nukes and missiles for sanctions, recognition, and a lot of money—was pretty unlikely. There is so little trust. Trump obviously carries some blame but his erratic, public relations-driven commitment to engagement should have been no surprise. Trump has shown similarly little concentration on high-profile domestic issues like health care and infrastructure. He is simply too scattershot to do any heavy lifting.

But Moon really should have known better. He has been thinking about North Korea for decades, devoting much of his career to détente. Yet at no point did he counsel an easier, more doable track of cumulative, smaller bargains: each building and expanding on previous deals in order to generate tangible, widening changes on the ground. If he, Trump, and Kim had lowered their sights and took the lower-hanging fruit, then they might now be in the midst of a rolling series of engagements tackling progressively tougher issues, and some normalization. Instead, almost nothing has changed.

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Refugee Problem | Editorial

The world ought to be very concerned about the latest warning from the United Nations Refugee Agency that an unprecedented 79.5 million people across the world were displaced as of the end of 2019. It is also a very big problem that except for one, all countries in the top five hosts of refugees have rather average or small economies, like Turkey, Columbia, Pakistan and Uganda. This number represents almost one percent of the entire world's population, which is unprecedented in all the years of the UN's recordkeeping. Since these figures are till the end of last year, a very large number of them are Syrian refugees or people fleeing appalling living conditions in countries like Venezuela. And figures that take into account all the people that are reduced to refugee status because of the economic devastation caused by the coronavirus will no doubt be worse.

It is moments like these that should make all nations, especially developed ones, hang their heads in shame. The Syrian problem, for example, is indicative of what can happen when rich governments join hands with big arms companies and bring death and devastation to the world in the quest of their own political and financial gains. Also, these numbers seem to reflect the forced movement of people across borders only, though someone should also be made to answer for all the misery brought to people in places like Yemen, where they have been tossed all around within the borders because of the cruel war imposed on the country. It is simply unacceptable that in the 21st century, when mankind has advanced so much, such issues continue to dog us. And they might only be statistics for a lot of people at the end of the day, but each number represents a life torn apart or a family ruined forever.

Perhaps, as the world emerges from the fight against the coronavirus, there will be an overwhelming realisation that in the hunt for money and power all of us forget the real value of life. It is very possible with all the resources that have been created in this day and age for all the world to live in peace and harmony. Yet so far the world as a whole has chosen a very different route. Lately, much of the world has also become xenophobic, so it is not really surprising that many of the biggest and richest countries have routinely turned away even the most vulnerable refugees. This trend must change, or the whole world will suffer for it.

Source: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/628674/refugee-problem/>

A Crisis Is Brewing Between India and China. But This Time There Is a Big Difference By Arif Rafiq

It isn't entirely clear what is taking place along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) that separates Chinese and Indian-controlled territory along the Himalayas. However, the more credible voices in the Indian commentariat contend that in May, China made a series of incursions along the undemarcated, disputed "line" and have assumed control of roughly 60-square kilometers in the Ladakh region claimed by New Delhi, including a strategically-important region near a nearly-completed highway that serves as a vital line of communication to its frontiers with China and Pakistan. And there are unconfirmed reports this morning of renewed clashes near the LAC that have left three Indian soldiers dead and maybe even dozens captured.

Assuming that these contentions are true and that this is no spontaneous border standoff between China and India, one must ask what Beijing's motivations are. The initial reaction, particularly from China-watchers in the United States, has been to tie Beijing's moves along the LAC to a broader set of assertive measures, including recent measures to further erode Hong Kong's autonomy. Beijing, they argue, is exploiting a leadership vacuum in Asia as the United States reels from the coronavirus pandemic, signaling to its neighbors that it is emerging as the region's dominant power.

But it may be a mistake to reflexively link Beijing's moves along the LAC to a broader policy of Chinese aggression. In fact, there are indications that China is responding in part to U.S.-backed Indian unilateral measures made last year.

Last August, the Indian government revoked the nominal autonomy of the broader Jammu and Kashmir region, annexing the disputed region which had the status of a state according to the Indian constitution. New Delhi then divided the former "state" into two separate territories: "Jammu and Kashmir" and "Ladakh," the latter being both the location of recent Chinese incursions and home to territory claimed by Beijing. Earlier this month, Chinese scholar Wang Shida, writing on the state-run China Economic Net website, seemed to tie India's

annexation of Kashmir to the recent LAC activity, arguing that New Delhi “forced China into the Kashmir dispute” and “dramatically increased the difficulty in resolving the border issue between China and India.” As Wang notes, Beijing’s official response to New Delhi’s Kashmir moves was indeed quite strong—though many observers seemed to interpret them as merely symbolic measures to placate ally Islamabad.

Indeed, it appears that both New Delhi and Washington have severely miscalculated how Beijing would respond to the annexation of Kashmir last year. While many U.S. analysts viewed New Delhi’s moves as an attempt to formalize the status quo, they ignored statements by Indian officials, including Interior Minister Amit Shah, suggesting that India would extend its writ to portions of Kashmir under the control of China and Pakistan. Additionally, the United States, and the State Department, in particular, offered its tacit endorsement of India’s annexation of Kashmir, suggesting that the move could promote economic prosperity in the area and deflecting congressional scrutiny over the draconian lockdown imposed by India over the region. And while President Donald Trump offered on several occasions to mediate between India and Pakistan on Kashmir, the bureaucracy, including the then-top U.S. diplomat for South Asia, Alice Wells, consistently sought to water down that offer.

The United States has provided cover for India as it has sought to create facts on the ground in Kashmir. And so it is unsurprising that China is now trying to create its own facts on the ground. Indeed, by endorsing New Delhi’s unilateralism and attempting to prop it up as a regional hegemon, Washington may be inadvertently facilitating Beijing’s rise as a power in South Asia.

Pakistan is not the sole regional state that fears Indian aggression. In 2015, India imposed a blockade on Nepal, just months after the country was hit by a devastating earthquake. Since then, Nepal, long dominated by India, has been veering into China’s orbit.

In 2017, Nepal joined the Belt and Road Initiative and is reducing its economic dependence on India. A growing partnership with China has given Nepal greater resolve in standing up to India. This month, the lower house of Nepal’s parliament approved a new official map that includes areas claimed by India, after New Delhi inaugurated a road that passes through territory claimed by Kathmandu.

Washington, however, continues to amplify New Delhi's influence in the region, despite the obvious anxiety it causes for smaller states in the region. It sees India as the locus of regional economic integration. A U.S. grant-funded electric power line project in Nepal became controversial because political forces there perceive to be tied to an American strategy to prop up India and contain China.

Similarly, Sri Lanka has a complicated history with India. While Chinese lending has triggered accusations of "debt-trap diplomacy," political factions in Sri Lanka still court Beijing as an alternative to New Delhi, which has interfered in Sri Lankan politics. India, for example, trained and armed the Sri Lankan Tamil Tigers terrorist group.

South Asian states, including Pakistan, may come to regret their economic embrace of China as their trade deficits and loan balances grow. But the United States is also making a strategic error by enabling India's worst instincts. U.S. policymakers see India as a benign power in South Asia and view its extraterritorial actions and unilateralism in recent decades as exceptions to a policy of restraint. But that view is not shared by many of India's neighbors who have a historical memory of Indian aggression. As a result, they are turning to China to balance India.

With decent relations with both India and Pakistan, the United States is positioned to offer meaningful assistance to both countries toward a negotiated settlement to the Kashmir dispute. But not only did the unelected bureaucracy work to obstruct Trump's mediation offer, but it also pushed U.S. policy into a new direction by effectively endorsing Indian revisionism. As a result, America not only lost a potentially historic opportunity to bring peace to the region and grow its soft power, but it also inserted itself deeper into the China-India-Pakistan triangle, altering the shape of the regional order, pushing it toward a bipolar one with Beijing and Islamabad on one side and New Delhi and, to some extent, itself on the other.

Indian officials often speak of a two-front war with China and Pakistan. And though such a scenario is presently unlikely, India's Hindu nationalist government, emboldened by the United States, risks veering into one in the years ahead should it fail to revisit its current regional policy. New Delhi would not be able to walk the walk, given the conventional power disparity between it

and Beijing and the growing synergies between China and Pakistan. India and the United States do not view one another as allies. And so it would be a mistake for New Delhi to count on Washington's support. China's inroads along the LAC provide an opportunity for both India and the United States to assess the second-order effects of their policies in South Asia. That reassessment must begin with Kashmir.

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India, China, the United States and us By

Syed Mohammad Ali

The recent confrontation between India and China has been noted around the world with concern. India's decision to revoke Article 370 and its ongoing atrocities in Kashmir may not have led to serious consequences within the global community, but the implications of this move have created an unanticipated backlash in the form of its recent brutal skirmish with China.

Given its growing strategic partnership with India, the US administration is blaming China for an alleged incursion into Indian territory. President Trump also made an unsolicited offer to help mediate this dispute in the same manner that he had offered to mediate the Kashmir dispute, a statement which his administration had subsequently tried to walk back from. Such theatrics aside, however, many international relations experts are pointing out how New Delhi's deepening alliance with Washington is at least partially responsible for intensified border tensions between Asia's two major powers.

While there are certainly other factors at play here, the growing US-China rivalry is making its impact felt around the world. In our part of the world, China has long allied itself with Pakistan, in part due to its desire to keep India in check. India has subsequently turned to the US in the bid to become a counterbalancing power to China. With Pakistan's growing reliance on CPEC due to its distancing by the US and increasing Indian cooperation with China's traditional rivals in what is known as the strategic quadrilateral, the ground for escalating contestations in the region remain rife.

Writing for Foreign Policy, Michael Hirsh, recently made an interesting assertion by arguing that Kissinger's approach to the US-China détente needs a revisit. Kissinger's record is tainted by his push for a spike in violence near the end of the war in Vietnam, due to his reaction to the Chilean coup and even to West Pakistan's brutality in what is now Bangladesh. Yet, his most astute decision was that the US and China could find means to accommodate each other. The US and China even used Pakistan's help to communicate with each other during the early sensitive phase of negotiations.

Whether Kissinger's suggestion for the US-China rapprochement was consciously timed or not is not known. Nonetheless, this diplomatic manoeuvre certainly occurred at just the right time. Kissinger orchestrated the Nixon-Mao/Zhou Enlai encounter around the time when the US was otherwise in disarray. The US was contending with the lingering war in Vietnam, experiencing unrest sparked by the civil rights movement and anti-war protesters, and domestic politics was in turmoil due to the Watergate scandal, as well as the economic stagflation of the 1970s.

Much of what is happening in the US today with the failure of interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, the Covid-induced economic shock, civil unrest unleashed by the Black Lives Matter protests, and domestic political divisiveness are analogous to the time when Kissinger convinced Nixon to break the ice with China. This may be a ripe time for Washington to try and turn great-power rivalry into a stable and peaceable modus vivendi.

Yet, diplomatic and trade tensions with China keep mounting under the Trump administration. Even presidential candidate, Joe Biden, is also not realising the evident opportunity here as he criticises Trump for his praise for Xi Jinping. Having cast Bernie Sanders aside as being too radical, the Democrats, perhaps in the bid to woo more voters are now also mimicking populist critiques of entities like the World Trade Organization, not because of the global inequalities in the world trade system but because of the prevailing sense of grievance that the WTO has been exploited by China to the disadvantage of blue collar and middle-class Americans.

One hopes that the Democrats will be able to transcend the maximalist stance towards China, especially if Biden manages to come to power. Otherwise, much of the world, especially our region, will continue to feel the escalating friction caused by the rivalry between the US and China.

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Protecting The Environment | Editorial

EVEN though the novel coronavirus pandemic has put many burning issues on the back-burner, it still presents an opportunity to reflect on the direction the world had been moving towards in recent decades, and to course correct. Of course, the dream of a better world cannot come to fruition until we change our basic value systems. Since today marks World Environment Day, it is a good time to reflect on our attitudes towards the natural world, as we battle disaster on multiple fronts. While much of modern civilisation has been forced to pause, the effects of climate change — largely the consequence of decades of human recklessness — can still be felt. In Bangladesh, a cyclone has left thousands in need of humanitarian support. While cyclones and flooding are not out-of-the-ordinary occurrences in Bangladesh, they have intensified in recent years. But an even greater calamity may have unfolded had the government there not acted as quickly as it did to ensure 10,500 more shelters were available for those affected, along with overseeing a 70,000-strong volunteer force to mitigate the disaster. Additionally, sanitisers, masks, soap and water were made available to them, while social distancing methods were reportedly implemented. In a world that seems to be falling apart, with much of its leadership missing, in denial, or shifting blame, this is a shining example of the power of collective action and a government taking charge. Imagine if similar preventive measures were applied to the environment, keeping the long-term view in mind.

Five years ago, the Paris Agreement was drafted with the goal of reducing global greenhouse gas emissions. Five years later, global greenhouse gas emissions are said to have gone down, but primarily because of circumstances few could have predicted, rather than through human will and the formulation and implementation of environment-friendly policies. To curtail the rapid spread of the coronavirus, governments around the world had to enforce lockdowns, disrupting economic activities and travel. However, these lockdowns deeply hurt the poorest sections of society, amid much suffering and death — so there is little cause to celebrate. Scientists and experts are also sceptical of how long these changes will last, given the trends in recent history.

Then there is the fear that perhaps it is already too late: a recent study in Nature Climate Change says that, even if global greenhouse gas emissions were to be drastically reduced, the world's oceans may still continue to heat up in the latter

half of this century, further unsettling the already endangered marine biodiversity. But what feels like the end of times sometimes turns out to be a period of transition. Change is in motion: for the first time in more than 130 years, renewable energy sources have surpassed coal in the United States.

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