

# IAF

International Affairs Forum

July 2020



The  
**POST-  
PANDEMIC  
WORLD**



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# International Affairs Forum

Printed in the U.S.A.

A publication of the Center for International Relations  
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- We aim to publish a range of op-ed pieces, interviews, and short essays, alongside longer research and discussion articles that make a significant contribution to debates and offer wider insights on topics within the field;
- We aim to publish content spanning the mainstream political spectrum and from around the world;
- We aim to provide a platform where high quality student essays are published;
- We aim to provide submitting authors with feedback to help develop and strengthen their manuscripts for future consideration.

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# Development, Democratization and COVID-19

Interview with Professor Carles Boix  
Princeton University, United States

**You have written about historical causal relationships between development and democratization. Economic impacts of the pandemic are currently affecting many, and may continue to do so for an indeterminate period of time. Would you provide a brief summary of your research in hopes to better analyze patterns as they unfold in a post-pandemic world?**

Yes, I have examined the relationship between development and democratization quite extensively – particularly, in my book *Democracy and Redistribution*. In addition, I have just published the book [Democratic Capitalism at the Crossroads](#), which considers this problem from a different perspective, looking at the relationship between capitalism and democracy.

The central claim of my work about democracy and development is simple. For a full democracy to remain in place, all the parties in contention have to accept the outcome of an election. The losers should refrain from challenging the electoral results using force. The winners should avoid employing their power to dismantle all the institutional guarantees that ensure that the following elections will be contested in a fair manner. That mutual understanding (abiding by the result of elections) becomes hard to achieve when a potential defeat in an election is very costly to the party defeated at the polls. That is the case, for example, of political systems that are extremely polarized. Of countries with high levels of inequality. Or, of nations where winning power results in controlling a lot of wealth, which then makes elections something close to a life-or-death contest: the standard case would be an oil economy where the electoral winner can easily grab all the existing

wells, refineries, etc. The story of development over the last two centuries has been one of generalized growth – in 1820, 95 percent of the world population lived with \$2 per day; today, only about 10 percent do. Yet the story of development has also been one of equalization in the distribution of income, at least among the most advanced economies and until the 1980s. Those transformations have attenuated the level of political conflict and social tension of the past and reduced the value of the things at stake in an election.

**There are many concerns that the COVID-19 is expanding inequality. What effects could this have on democracies? Capitalism?**

I think that industrial capitalism has gone through three broadly construed periods. During the nineteenth century, the process of mechanization and the construction of factories resulted in the decline of artisanal jobs and the rapid growth of unskilled jobs. Manufacturing wages declined during the first decades of that century and then remained stagnant or rose very slowly afterwards. By contrast, capital did well. Overall, inequality grew. In that context, democracy and capitalism were incompatible and seen as such by everyone – from conservatives and liberal thinkers to Marx. Over time, the introduction of electricity and of the assembly line transformed the way things were produced. Twentieth-century capitalism, very much invented in Detroit, resulted in the expansion of semiskilled jobs, an unprecedented acceleration of labor productivity, and the equalization of incomes. That made it easier for democracy and capitalism to go together. In fact, democratic electorates voted for policies (such as universal education, unemployment benefits or, in Europe at least, universal health care) that resulted in the kind of literate, healthy

and satisfied workers that made capitalism even more productive and democracies more robust.

Since the 1980s, however, the forces of automation (induced by new information and communication technologies or ICTs) and globalization have reversed the equalizing trends of the past. For the last four decades, the wages of unskilled and semiskilled workers have hardly grown. By contrast, the incomes of highly educated individuals have risen quite rapidly, particularly in Anglo-American economies. In other advanced countries, the price of lower levels of inequality seems to have been little net employment growth in the private sector.

COVID-19 has revealed to many and in very stark terms the new economic trends and the new inequalities that have been building up over the last few decades. Highly educated workers, who have been able to work remotely, have been mostly shielded from the pandemic. By contrast, unskilled and semi-skilled workers have had to carry on in occupations where they were quite exposed to the virus or have been hit by extremely high levels of unemployment.

On the one hand, it is very difficult to forecast which will be the (medium- or long-run) consequences of the COVID-19 crisis. I am somewhat surprised by how many predictions have been made about our immediate future with so few data points and so little sound information. If anything, what this crisis has shown to us is that policymakers have had to make decisions under conditions of considerable, if not radical, uncertainty. On the other hand, however, COVID-19 has performed the function of an experiment in several dimensions. In the economic sphere, it has forced many companies to deploy ICTs to its full extent and, as a result, provided them (and us) the first (rough) benchmark of what a growingly automatized world may look like.

In the political sphere, it has reminded us of two lessons that we appeared to have forgotten during globalization. First, that national states continue to be extremely powerful. They have been able to confine us quite easily. They have centralized decisions without encountering any resistance (at least in a few European countries). And they have reasserted their power over international or transnational organizations from one day to the next: despite the fundamental principles of free

circulation of persons and capital on which the European Union is founded, European countries shut down borders, blocked the export of medical supplies, etc, unilaterally and unchallenged. Second, we have learned that national identities continue to be a fundamental force in politics: the nationals of each country have given priority to the needs and interests of their co-citizens over everyone else in the world. Cosmopolitanism has become a losing proposition, at least de facto.

*...deglobalization will hurt all the developing countries that benefited from the expansion of trade and investment. I worry about this the most.*

**Some believe the pandemic will trigger the end of globalization as we knew it before COVID-19 while others believe it will have a minimal impact. Your thoughts?**

At the political level, the most likely result is that COVID-19 will reinforce the electoral trends of the last years. Rightly or wrongly, many see COVID-19 as the epitome of unbridled globalization. Policymakers will probably push to develop national industrial policies, at least in some sectors deemed as strategic, in ways we had not seen for a long while. At the economic level, companies will reconsider whether they can sustain hyperglobalized supply chains. If they decide they cannot because there is too much uncertainty at the global level, they will either reshore jobs back to postindustrial economies or push to automatize their production processes even more.

In short, from an economic point of view, the pandemic has inflicted more pain on the voters of populist parties in advanced countries. But it has reinforced their political demands.

Last but not least, deglobalization will hurt all the developing countries that benefited from the expansion of trade and investment. I worry about this the most.

**The pandemic has raised questions about whether liberal democracies that have not responded well to the crisis can adequately protect their citizens while it has opened the door for some illiberal democracies to expand power. What are your thoughts about potential paths for liberal democracies to positively adjust moving forward? And possible effects on democracy in states that are illiberal?**

Automation (and globalization) seem to have had two effects: stagnant wages among low-income voters; and the concentration of income and wealth among top earners. To make sure that everybody has relatively equal life chances and to prevent those at the top of the income distribution to shape the political agenda and devalue democracy, we need at a minimum:

- Strong educational policies to give everyone skills that allow them to benefit from what seem to be unavoidable changes.
- Institutional and political reforms to make democracies work better: campaign finance reform (including the idea of introducing the so-called “electoral check”); stronger antitrust measures (applied to, among other, currently gigantic social media companies, etc.); a strong public debate about the ownership and use of all the information generated by and accumulated through ICTs.
- Raising electoral participation. Abstention, which use to be minimal in Europe, is now at about 30 percent or more, resulting in the disenfranchisement of many of those that are being hurt by technological change. The quality of democracy may depend on getting many alienated voters back into the polls.



**Carles Boix** is the Robert Garrett Professor of Politics and Public Affairs at Princeton University and Distinguished Researcher at the University of Barcelona, where he directs the Institutions and Political Economy Research Group. He teaches and does research on comparative political economy and democratic theory. He has published *Political Parties, Growth and Equality* (Cambridge University Press, 1998), *Democracy and Redistribution* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), *Political Order and Inequality* (Cambridge University Press, 2015) and, more recently, *Democratic Capitalism at the Crossroads: Information Technology and Its Impact on Employment, Wages and Politics* (Princeton University Press, 2019).

He was also the co-editor of the *Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics* (Oxford University Press, 2007) and published in leading journals such *American Political Science Review*, *American Journal of Political Science*, *British Journal of Political Science*, *Journal of Law, Economics and Organization*, *Journal of Politics*, *International Organization*, and *World Politics*. Before joining Princeton, he taught at the University of Chicago and the Ohio State University. He is also a Guggenheim fellow and a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Prof. Boix received his BA in Law and in History from the University of Barcelona and a PhD in Government from Harvard University.



# COVID-19 Pressures on Globalization and Politics

Interview with Professor Suzanne Berger  
Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), United States

## **What effects do you think the pandemic could have on modern globalization?**

Even before COVID-19, globalization was under attack from all sides of the political spectrum. In advanced economy countries, Left and Right parties blamed globalization for a host of social evils: massive job losses, sharp increases in inequality, no social mobility, the rise of monopoly firms, and the loss of competitive advantage to global rivals.

With COVID-19, an even more threatening prospect has emerged: that globalization endangers the survival needs of the population — survival needs in the form of masks, face shields, swabs, ventilators, and common drugs like acetaminophen. These simple, ordinary products all turn out to be manufactured somewhere else, mainly in China and India, and not in our own advanced economies. These products have not been readily available in our hour of need.

In the U.S., students in university “fab labs” worked night and day to figure out how to make face shields with simple 3D printers. In the early days of the pandemic, women in the traditional religious communities of the Amish in Ohio were recruited to sew masks. Etsy — a crafters’ online business — became a major site for coordinating the supply and demand of fabric masks. In a world in which we need to resort to something like artisanal production for a public health crisis, globalization is in deep trouble.

Suddenly, writing about globalization has focused on resilience. There’s powerful new demand to build resilient supply chains — short supply chains — not just the most low-cost and efficient ones. People want

essential goods like aspirin and swabs to be made at home. In France, for example, the government has just negotiated (perhaps pressured) four French pharmaceutical companies to make paracetamol (Tylenol) — hardly a very profitable line of business.

## **You’ve written about the effects of populism on globalization and democratic society. In light of the pandemic, what do you foresee for the future of populism?**

I think that, across the political spectrum, we will see programs that advocate the hardening up of national borders and protection enforced by tariffs and by state subsidies for national production of “essential goods.” And that list of “essential goods” will surely grow longer and longer. Students and scientists are now finding major barriers to crossing borders. Before the COVID restrictions on travel, my home university, MIT, was already facing strong pressures from the federal government to limit the entry of Chinese students. These pressures are mounting.

In the first week of July 2020, the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (I.C.E.) service suddenly announced that international students in universities with only online courses for the fall cannot remain in the United States. It’s a time in which we should expect the triumph of nationalist politics and a rhetoric that names and blames our trade rivals as if they were existential threats to survival. In the United States, we already see this scenario playing out. It’s basically the politics of Donald Trump, who now accuses the Chinese not only of unfair economic and trade dealings, but of failing to stop the coronavirus spread when they could have done so — perhaps even being responsible for it at the origin.

What's important to notice, however, is that this is not only the politics of populist parties, it's also the politics of a substantial part of the American Left, including of some of its most thoughtful intellectuals. Consider the case that Harvard economist Dani Rodrik makes for nationalism and then for national industrial policy. His argument builds on an analogy with the well-known Mundell-Fleming trilemma, which claims a country cannot have a fixed exchange rate, free capital mobility, and an independent monetary policy. It can only have two out of three. Rodrik's trilemma involves three terms: sovereignty, democracy, and globalization. Of these three states of the world, Rodrik says, we can only have two. States are not ready or likely to give up sovereignty. So, it is a choice between democracy and globalization. It follows that if we treasure democracy, we need to roll back globalization. Even many people who do not find the trilemma argument convincing nonetheless explain populism as a reaction to globalization. They see populism as so dangerous for democracy that they are willing to accept nationalist policies.

My research on the first globalization (1870-1914) suggests, on the contrary, that it is possible to have both democracy and globalization. Those decades in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth were a period of democratic consolidation. Male suffrage became general in all the advanced economy countries. During those years, the income tax, limitations on the length of the working day, the first policies on unemployment, accident insurance, and pensions were voted into law in most industrial countries. It was also a time when barriers were lowered at the borders. By 1914, the flows of people, capital, and trade across borders reached levels that would not be seen again before the early 1980s.

The critical difference with our own times lies in our failure to conceive policies to compensate and assist the losers and, more generally, to spread the gains of globalization more broadly through society. Instead, the gains in income and wealth have been captured by a very small fraction of the population at the top of the income distribution.

**Throughout the pandemic, many have voiced concerns or dissatisfaction with the work of the United Nations and the WHO to control the spread of the virus. Do you think the pandemic will impact the functions or the level of power that international organizations hold in the future?**

If nationalism triumphs across the board, the role of international organizations will shrink. I believe, though, that a different scenario remains possible. This is a scenario which would start by recognizing that the existential problems of our times — pandemics, climate change, war and peace, and economic order — cannot be held at bay or resolved by nations within national boundaries.

It's national governments that citizens will turn to for greater security in health and employment and for greater fairness for the life opportunities of their children. But at the end of the day, the great menaces to life and our common future — pandemics, climate change, war and peace, and economic order — can only be addressed within an international order based on rules and norms.

These rules and norms will be ones negotiated by national governments and implemented both by national governments and by international institutions. International institutions like the World Health Organization

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and the World Trade Organization undoubtedly need profound reform and reconstruction, but they are institutions we need. We not only need rules of the road; we need actual cooperation — for example, in science, innovation, and production, to begin to meet the challenge of rebuilding economies to address global climate change. We need cooperation between the US, Europe, and China. And for advancing these existential challenges, nationalism is a killer.



**Suzanne Berger** is the inaugural John M. Deutch Institute Professor at MIT. Her current research focuses on politics and globalization. She recently co-chaired the MIT Production in the Innovation Economy project, and in September 2013 published *Making in America: From Innovation to Market*. She created the MIT International Science and Technology Initiative, and participated in the 1989 *Made in America* project at MIT. She wrote *Made By Hong Kong and Global Taiwan* (with Richard K. Lester). She is the author of *Notre Première Mondialisation* and *How We Compete*. Her earlier work focused on political development (*Peasants Against Politics*) and the organization of interests (*Dualism and Discontinuity in Industrial Societies* and *Organizing Interests in Western Europe*).



## The OIC World for a Safer Planet: The OIC and its Rapid Reaction Capacitation in Times of New Asymmetric Challenges

Ambassador Ali Goutali  
Tunisia

Professor Anis H. Bajrektarevic  
International Institute IFIMES, Austria

**A**ll throughout its history, our world witnessed either abrupt, radical changes or gradual shifts and adjustments of the World Order. Such recalibrations usually followed major crises, be it devastating wars or geopolitical transformations such as the end of Cold War.

Past the agricultural and industrial revolutions, numerous advances in knowledge, science and technology, as well as groundbreaking inventions, opened up new avenues for progress and prosperity of mankind. Subsequent scientific and technological revolution of our age, coupled with the relaxation of ideological confrontation and longing for cooperation and integration, led to the emergence of a politically and economically globalized World.

However, our current World Order of a fully interconnected planet has revealed some weaknesses and vulnerabilities, particularly in time of crises.

In the Era of Globalization, the worldwide interconnected financial and economic system can cause a financial crisis spill-over effect very rapidly – as we witnessed it decade ago. Similarly, a health crisis in one country can, owing to the same business interconnection and swift human mobility, spread at light speed to other countries and continents, engulfing the whole World.

Currently, the COVID-19 (C-19) pandemic is wreaking havoc across the

Globe, causing most countries to be primarily focused on solving the crisis and limiting its damage.

**L’avenir est comme le reste: Global opportunity – global exposure**

Though some breakthroughs have been achieved such as finding the genetic sequence of the virus and developing diagnostic tests, no confirmed vaccines or efficient treatments have been found yet. Moreover, many more clues remain to be gathered and understood, including the virus transmission and mutation dynamics, its potential re-emergence in waves, where did it come from, and whether environmental or seasonal factors impact its spread and severity.

In search for rapid and efficient solutions, countries (particularly developed ones) have been working restlessly but individually almost to no avail. This could be explained by an impulse of an “old spirit”; of geopolitical competition in the past – times when the narrow national interest was the main and only driver of any international conduct. The same lack of coordination among individual countries in dealing with this unprecedented crisis that encompasses almost every dimension including health, economic and financial aspects of life, has also been

*...in light of (...) shortfalls and given the future daunting challenges, this World Order needs to be updated and enriched.*

noticed at the level of political international organizations.

In fact, while the international economic and financial institutions seem to be well globalized and functioning efficiently, the political structure of the World looks like the one still based on the Nation-States competition and rivalry. The existing political international FORAs, made up of these States, seem to be too bureaucratic to react swiftly and efficiently in times of imminent crises.

The post-C-19 World Order will most likely remain the same, Westphalian and a globalized Order. However, in light of the aforementioned shortfalls and given the future daunting challenges, this World Order needs to be updated and enriched.

International violence has, over time, dropped significantly. Full-scale conventional wars do not exist anymore whereas small-scale ones have come to an all-time low.

It is true that there are still nuclear weapons in the World, enough to wipe out the entirety of Humankind multiple times over. However, the Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD) doctrine coupled with Wisdom have been, and will most likely remain, as a powerful deterrent to any nuclear war attempts.

Not so long ago, our World was on a brink of nuclear self-annihilation, but found enough wisdom to avoid it.

The same wisdom can be used in the face of the current and future threats of annihilation by terrifying viruses similar to or more dangerous than C-19, which is heralding a new age of threats to Humankind's existence, disruptions and partial or total lockdowns never seen or tested before.

To meet such challenges, the World should be more united and cooperative, set aside geostrategic competition, give way to humane-oriented and servant leadership, avoid narrow national interest-oriented

approaches, and put more focus on science and new technologies – of course, all under democratic control. This includes decisive investments in innovative technologies, particularly frontier technologies.

To meet those specific global and regional instruments, mechanisms to endorse and facilitate exchange for better joint political action and all-out scientific cooperation in time of crises should be also created.

### **OIC and the need for its RRC mechanism**

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the second largest intergovernmental multilateral mechanism to the U.N., places high value on Science and Technology in its daily works, and keenly promotes cooperation among its member States in this area. It was almost 40 years ago that the OIC set up its Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation (COMSTECH of 1981).

This functional entity of the OIC has been headquartered in Islamabad, with the President of Pakistan as its Chair. It's objective is to strengthen cooperation among OIC member states and enhance their capabilities in emerging technologies.

COMSTECH collaborates with numerous specialized international bodies (of technical mandates), including the World Health Organization (WHO), International Foundation for Science in Stockholm, and the World Academy of Sciences (TWAS), to name but a few.

In 2006, a new Institution was created within COMSTECH Secretariat in Islamabad, namely the Science, Technology and Innovation Centre (STI). This serves as a think-tank to provide all-advisory services to OIC member states on science-technology-innovation, conducts its own indigenous researches, and ensures capacity-building in this area for OIC members.

In 2017, a further step was taken towards fostering cooperation in Science and Technology among OIC States and making headway in this

area, as the first Summit on Science and Technology was held in Astana, Kazakhstan.

In view of the looming C-19 crisis and its devastating aftermath, OIC, currently pursuing a comprehensive reform Agenda, would benefit from considering even bolder new steps such as setting up an Instrument for policy coordination in times of crisis. Certainly, every crisis is a hardship, but it also brings opportunity and novel openings. Hence, it might be a Rapid Reaction Capacitation (RRC) in the event of new type/s of asymmetric challenges.

Such RRC will be embodied in a platform for the exchange of expertise among leading scientists in Islamic countries – notably, a Center for Epidemics Prevention and Management (EPM). Part of that RRC-capacitated EPM Center would be also a division for vaccine research and production, supported by one for applied AI (Artificial Intelligence). Since the capacity of early warning and rapid reaction would be essential, this Center and its divisions ought to be preferably situated physically closer to the OIC HQ.

By doing so, OIC would strengthen ties of cooperation in various fields, including scientific research within and among its Member States, but also with the variety of international and regional organizations as well as Specialized Agencies. Thus, the EPM Center would serve as a liaison between the OIC world and similar regional or national Epidemic Prevention and Vaccination centres. As the grand wiz of early European integrations, Jean Monnet, used to say: “Crises are the great unifier!”

Geographic, demographic, and geo-economic centrality of the OIC world makes it focally important for any planetary issue. OIC also represents an important voting block within the United Nations system (Bretton Woods institutions and the G-20, too). Therefore, the faster and better crisis responsive OIC clearly translates into the safer and brighter, sustainable world for our common future.



**Ambassador Ali Goutali**, Tunisian top diplomat, has served in numerous key posts on four continents. He is the former Head of the National Diplomatic Institute and is the author of several publications including a book on decision making in foreign policy. He is currently Director of the OIC General Secretariat in Jeddah, KSA.



**Anis H. Bajrektarevic** is professor and chair for international law and global political studies in Vienna, Austria. He is the author of 7 books on geopolitics, energy and technology including: *FB – Geopolitics of Technology* (Addleton Academic Publishers, NY); *Geopolitics – Europe 100 years later* (DB, Europe), *Geopolitics – Energy – Technology* (Germany, LAP), and *Europe and Africa – Security structures* (Nova, NY).



# From Growth to Basic Needs: Resetting Economic Priorities after the Pandemic

Professor Kenneth A. Reinert  
George Mason University, United States

Since the end of World War II, global economic priorities have been largely set in terms of economic growth. The pursuit of economic growth was enshrined in the articles of agreement of both the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. It was provided analytical validity by the Solow growth model and subsequent advances in growth theory and growth empirics. Economic growth was later tied to market liberalization and poverty reduction in the following logical sequence: market liberalization ==> growth ==> poverty reduction. In more recent years, “good governance” and “institutional quality” were added to the equation. Success among countries in achieving sustained growth, however, was always mixed.

Beginning with the year 1981, the World Bank began to compile systematic data on global poverty. These data indicate that the number of individuals living in extreme poverty (at or below \$1.90 per day) decreased from approximately two billion in 1981 to approximately 700 million in 2015. This was hailed as a great success and a vindication of the focus on growth via market liberalization. The fact that most of this reduction occurred in a globalizing and therefore liberalizing China further validated the growth model.

More expansive definitions of global poverty painted a less optimistic picture, however. For example, the number of people living on US\$ 5.50 or less per day increased to over 3 billion between 1981 and 2015. Nonetheless, the decrease in extreme poverty was used as an advertisement for the growth brand. Most influential economists agreed. The COVID-19 pandemic (both predictable and predicted) has

dramatically damaged the growth brand. The global breakdowns of market relationships in goods, services, remittances, and foreign direct investment have dramatically interrupted growth and poverty reduction. Initial estimates suggest, for example, that [poverty reduction will be set back by decades](#). Other estimates suggest that the number of malnourished people, already increasing since 2015, will rise dramatically. More specifically, [the number of individuals suffering from acute hunger will most likely double](#).

In the short term, and probably beyond that, global policy priorities need to be quickly recast. The growth paradigm must be temporarily put aside to be perhaps taken up again in more propitious times. A new focus on *basic needs* must take center stage. By default, national governments are currently scrambling to prioritize “essential services.” However, the essential services concept is an imperfect way of prioritizing basic needs and the basic goods and services that address these needs. The satisfaction of basic human needs is both a practical imperative, as well as an issue of [subsistence rights](#).

The COVID-19 pandemic has now laid bare the weaknesses of our abilities to meet basic needs. The forecasted increase in poverty and hunger in low- and middle-income countries is one manifestation of this. But significant issues are emerging even in high-income countries. To take but one example, in the United States, roughly [one in five households are now food insecure](#).

To avoid catastrophe, we must adopt a more systematic approach. We

We need to focus on ensuring the universal provision of nutritious food, clean water, sanitation services, health services, education services, housing, electricity, and human security services.

need to develop a clear sense of what basic needs are, the basic goods and services required to meet them, and the current provision challenges for each of them. We need to focus on ensuring the *universal provision* of nutritious food, clean water, sanitation services, health services, education services, housing, electricity, and human security services. These are the real ingredients of well-being that eventual growth can provide. But for now, we must ensure they are delivered in the absence of growth. In most instances, their provision will *support growth* in the long run.

The basic needs agenda is enough to keep the global policy community engaged for the foreseeable future. It is also both more important and more realizable than the 169 targets of the overly aspirational Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that currently preoccupy the United Nations. Fulfilling basic needs will necessitate multiple and simultaneous pursuits: numerous efforts in agroecology around the world; the installation of countless water purification and storage systems of all sizes; scalable sanitation systems tailored to specific communities; substantially expanded primary healthcare systems; radically improved education quality; safe and affordable housing; distributed electricity generation based primarily on renewable sources; and the sustained prevention of violence in the face of global dislocations.

Retreating from globalization is not the panacea that [some suggest](#). International trade and global value chains are critical elements in making sure that medical supplies and food are widely available. For example, trade restrictions put in place during the 2007-2008 food crisis made things worse, not better. This is [a lesson we need to keep in mind now](#) and into the future, particularly in the realm of health supplies. Diversifying global supply lines makes long-term sense but restricting

them now would be completely counterproductive. Multinational cooperation will be much more fruitful than nationalist posturing.

Satisfying basic needs cannot wait until growth eventually returns. The basic needs agenda was already sadly neglected in many cases before the COVID-19 pandemic. Now this agenda is a question of survival for an increasing number of millions. We cannot afford to fail.



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# Changes for the European Union in the Pandemic Aftermath?

Interview with Stefan Lehne  
Carnegie Europe, Belgium

**The COVID-19 pandemic has wreaked havoc on EU countries as it has worldwide. Chancellor Merkel has called the pandemic the greatest challenge in the history of the EU. Will the EU survive this crisis?**

Whenever the EU goes through a serious crisis, there are two types of responses. The first predicts the imminent decline and disintegration of the EU. The second asserts that the EU always emerges strengthened from every crisis – this is the way people inside the Brussels bubble reassure each other.

If you consider the historical record, both approaches are flawed. The “doom and gloom” faction underestimates the resilience of the bloc. The internal market remains an indispensable foundation of the European economy and the common currency, in spite of its considerable shortcomings, would be extremely difficult and costly to unwind. So, the EU is likely to survive much worse shocks than the current pandemic.

The alternative optimistic view, however, is equally dubious. It is true that moments of crisis have sometimes prompted the EU to tackle necessary reforms which had been politically impossible during calmer times. This had been the case during the financial crisis, when significant reforms of monetary unions, such as the European Stability Mechanism and the first steps towards a Banking Union, were undertaken. But this had not happened following the refugee crisis of 2015/16. On the contrary, this crisis resulted in deep divisions over solidarity and burden-sharing, which

could not be overcome and continue to hamper cooperation among member states.

I am thus confident that the EU will survive the pandemic, but the jury is out on whether it ends up weakened or strengthened by this experience.

**What has the crisis revealed – and/or magnified – about EU strengths and weaknesses?**

The EU institutions performed badly during the early stages of the crisis. Practically, the entire crisis management was handled by individual national governments without much coordination. The closure of national borders upended the Schengen system and hampered the functioning of the internal market. Member states competed against each other in the international markets for supplies of protective equipment. The countries and regions most affected by the crisis, particularly Italy and Spain, with some justification, felt left alone by their partners.

The lead role of the individual states was inevitable, as the key competencies for health and economic policy remain with the member states and only national governments had the political and legal authority to impose lockdowns. Now, a few weeks later, the Commission has

*The real test for the EU now is whether it succeeds in supporting the economic recovery fairly and effectively.*



been able to ensure a higher degree of coordination, though it is still the member states that take the key decisions on lifting the quarantine and easing border controls.

The real test for the EU now is whether it succeeds in supporting the economic recovery fairly and effectively. Once again, the European Central Bank has proved itself as the EU's foremost crisis manager by launching a €750B bond buying program to ensure the stability of the financial system. But the Council too has adopted a significant first package of measures including ESM credit lines and a scheme to support unemployment benefits.

The main discussion at the moment concerns a French-German proposal for a well-endowed recovery fund designed to benefit primarily the most affected regions in the South. As it would provide for grants rather than loans based on collective debts raised by the European Commission, it would give real expression to the solidarity between EU countries and help heal the rift between the North and the South. If it were to be adopted – and there is a lot of resistance – it could put the Eurozone and the EU as such on a more solid basis and one might be able to say that the EU has emerged strengthened from the crisis.

### **How should the EU better prepare for potential crises like COVID-19 in the future, ones that have significant regional and global breadth?**

While scientists and a few far-sighted individuals have long been warning about the risk of pandemics, the EU and its member states did very little in terms of concrete preparations. This clearly must change now. The main responsibility for the health systems will remain with the member states. But it would make sense to give the EU Commission more of a role in dealing with pandemics. There could be added value in creating a common capacity for early-warning, in collective measures to ensure the production and stockpiling of protective equipment and other medical supplies, and in enhanced programs to support medical research. Doing all this on a national basis would be wasteful and less effective than doing it on the EU-level.

### **Recent polls in Italy show an increased dissatisfaction with the EU. Do you have any major concerns about the stability and continued development of the EU in a post-pandemic time?**

Italians used to be one of the most pro-European populations in the EU. But this positive attitude has been decisively weakened by three crises in succession (financial, refugee, Corona), during each of which Italians felt insufficiently supported by their richer partners in the North of the EU.

Not all Italian complaints about the EU are justified, and a considerable part of their economic troubles in recent years was homemade. But it is true that the existing arrangements regarding the internal market and the Euro benefit the strongest economic actors disproportionately, and that the measures to support countries in difficulty are relatively weak.

As Italy has been hurt particularly badly by the Corona crisis, there is a risk that it would lose even more ground in terms of economic performance. Given Italy's size and importance, over time, this could threaten the stability of the Eurozone. This is why it is so important that the EU provides enough assistance to boost Italy's chances of an early recovery.

### **In general, how has the appeal of populism fared in Europe during the pandemic?**

The “rallying around” effect of the acute crisis initially benefitted nearly all incumbent governments regardless of whether they were made up of mainstream or populist parties. But, the crisis did bring about a return to fact-based politics. Political leaders surrounded themselves with virologists and epidemiologists, who gave their decisions additional authority. It is unclear, however, how long this period of relatively rational politics will last. If there is a second wave of the virus and if economic suffering worsens and no recovery is in sight, populists certainly will stage a comeback exploiting the high degree of dissatisfaction in the population. Already, conspiracy theories proliferate and social media are full of fake news and misinformation.

**Some are concerned that effects of the crisis will drive migration from developing countries into Europe, much like that of the Syrian refugees. Should that occur, how well are member states equipped to handle a similar situation again?**

There have been few signs of a new migration wave driven by the Corona crisis. The overall number of illegal border crossings into the EU this year has been roughly on the same level as last year.

Overall, recent years have seen a considerable hardening of EU attitudes towards refugees and migrants. In February 2020, the Turkish government, dissatisfied by the level of support received from the EU, “opened its borders” and encouraged refugees and migrants to move to the EU. The most affected countries, Bulgaria and Greece, immediately blocked the borders and used considerable force to keep the refugees out. Athens even temporarily suspended the right to claim asylum. The EU institutions broadly backed these repressive policies but also offered new talks with Turkey about assistance.

The economic recession resulting from the pandemic and the fear of additional risks of infection are likely to contribute to even more restrictive asylum and migration policies during the coming months and years. As a result of the crisis, the concept of “fortress Europe” has gained attractiveness in the eyes of many Europeans.

**Do you envision any possible impacts to EU foreign policy as a result of the pandemic?**

The new EU leadership team that came into office in November 2019 started with high ambitions for the EU’s foreign and security policy. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and High Representative Josep Borrell declared that Europe would now finally learn the “language of power,” turn itself into a geopolitical actor, and take the lead on critical policy issues such as climate, cyber, and Africa. The COVID-19 crisis hit the EU just as the new leaders were about to start their work. The ambitions are still there, but the crisis will be a

massive distraction. Beating the virus and ensuring economic recovery are now at the top of the agenda crowding out all other concerns. Also, the EU’s vision of attaining “strategic autonomy” will be more difficult to achieve, as the resources available for strengthening military capacity will be diminished. But the current crisis has clearly worsened the geopolitical competition between the US and China and could further destabilize the regions surrounding the EU. Foreign and security challenges are therefore likely to return to the EU’s agenda soon.



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# Governance of the Global Environmental Crisis Post-COVID-19

Dr. Peter J.S. Jones and Professor Mark Maslin  
University College London (UCL), United Kingdom

**A**round the world, more and more people are calling for a better, healthier, and safer world post-pandemic. This is despite the neoliberal call to get workers back to work despite the risk to their health and lives. But the genie is out of the bottle and citizens all around the world have been shown that there can be a different relationship among government, industry, and civil society—a relationship where health and well-being is put before economic gain for a country or a small minority of individuals.

The response to the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us many things about how we can govern our societies (Camargo, 2020). When society faces a real crisis that needs strong coordinated action, it looks to the state and scientific experts, combined with civil society cooperation supported by health professionals, police, and the military. The private sector plays an important role, such as ensuring food supplies in the face of panic buying or retooling to produce essential medical supplies. But many companies simply look to the state for loans and bailouts. Some libertarians complain that it's all an excuse for state control of our lives, but this is only taken seriously in countries where there is no safety net provided for citizens, as the COVID-19 crisis threatens all our well-being. We also recognize the need for cooperation among countries to provide for coordinated international action (UN, 2020) as well as cooperation and mutual support among people in society (Kinna and Swann, 2020).

When things return to “normal” there will be the inevitable calls to resume the shrinking of the state, ignore so-called experts, revert to national isolationism, recognize “that there is no such thing as society,” and, of course, recognize that “markets know best.” We must, however, remember that governments were central to dealing with the COVID-19

crisis and they will be central to dealing with the climate change and biodiversity loss crises.

In response to the COVID-19 crisis, normal governance has been replaced by strong government coordination based on achieving the common good by managing the rate of new infections through social isolation measures in this severe pandemic, as well as keeping people supplied with food and medication. International cooperation and coordination have also been essential to reduce the spread of the pandemic, along with the sharing of COVID-19 epidemiological and research data. This switch in governance model has not been smooth or quick enough in some countries, with a delayed response in the UK and libertarian resistance in the USA and Brazil, which are being counted in bodies (Roser et al., 2020). Recognition of the weakness of some government responses to address the pandemic demonstrates that the majority of people look to governments and, increasingly, the experts that advise them to address this crisis (Roser et al., 2020).

It is becoming clear that one of the reasons that COVID-19 is such a severe and even fatal respiratory disease is that it is a zoonotic virus, with a genetic signature unknown to our immune systems, delaying our ability to develop antibodies that can fight the infection. It seems increasingly likely that the illegal trade in endangered animals, such as bats and pangolins, through inhumane “wet markets” in China and Southeast Asia is the vector for such transmissions between species and for ultimately crossing over to infect humans. The extremely high risks of such zoonotic viral outbreaks were indicated by previous outbreaks, such as highly pathogenic avian influenza related to the HN51 virus in 1996. The related extreme risks posed by the wildlife trade for a future coronavirus

*At this stage, the emphasis should be on ensuring commitment to a long-term ban on the wildlife trade through a coordinated and strategic approach...*

outbreak, particularly associated with wet markets in southern China, were warned of as a “time-bomb” over ten years ago, and were seen by many as a facet of global threats to ecosystems and biodiversity (UNEP, 2020). The Chinese government banned all such wet markets and related wildlife trades after the initial outbreak, but given official recognition of the cultural and economic importance of the wild animal trade in many rural communities, the Chinese government has already stated that the initial ban will be relaxed in the future, as it was after the 2002-2003 SARS outbreak (Wittemyer, 2020). There are also concerns that a continued ban could drive this illegal wildlife trade underground, where much related trade is already conducted.

In hindsight, a better governance approach by the Chinese government would have been to heed these zoonotic virus warnings from experts and take a strategic approach to reducing wildlife trade through proactive measures such as promoting cultural change, along with gradual regulatory restrictions. At this stage, the emphasis should be on ensuring commitment to a long-term ban on the wildlife trade through a coordinated and strategic approach, especially given the global impacts on many rare species of growing demand to feed the wildlife trade. The very health and safety of many people will rely on changing our relationship with nature and ensuring protection of biodiversity and the unique ecosystems around the world.

Looking to the future, one consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to be a deep and prolonged economic recession. It seems likely that a return to Keynesian state intervention in markets, including the rebuilding of the welfare state and a new spirit of international

cooperation will be as necessary, as it was after the 1929 crash and the Second World War. More recently, a lack of state regulation of markets was widely accepted as a key cause of the 2008 economic crash, but it seems a major international pandemic crisis was needed to recognize the importance of the state and of international cooperation in achieving a stable economy and societal well-being. Indeed, there have been optimistic calls to seize this opportunity to rebuild our relationship with nature and put climate change and biodiversity at the top of the agenda through cooperation among the international community of United Nations.

There are less optimistic assessments of potential post-pandemic scenarios (Bordoff, 2020), with arguments such as: (1) the collective action of citizens and nations for shut-downs and social isolation to address the pandemic achieved through cooperation and, for non-cooperative free-riders, enforcement, cannot be replicated for climate change because there is no institution to enforce freeriding nations to comply; (2) the high degree and extent of public and international acceptance of the immediate risks of COVID-19 do not follow through to acceptance of the long-term risks of climate change, particularly given the overriding priority of economic recovery; and (3) the link between economic contraction and carbon emission reductions witnessed during this and other recessions shows that we have failed to decouple economic development and carbon emissions. The steep rebound economic recovery from the COVID-19 crisis may also lead to rapid carbon emission increases even if recent trends to increasingly decouple economic growth from carbon emissions continue. It could be counter argued that such critical views represent a very US-centric neoliberal analysis of despair, but there is clearly not a consensus that this moment in history represents an opportunity to better address environmental crises in the light of lessons learned from the pandemic.

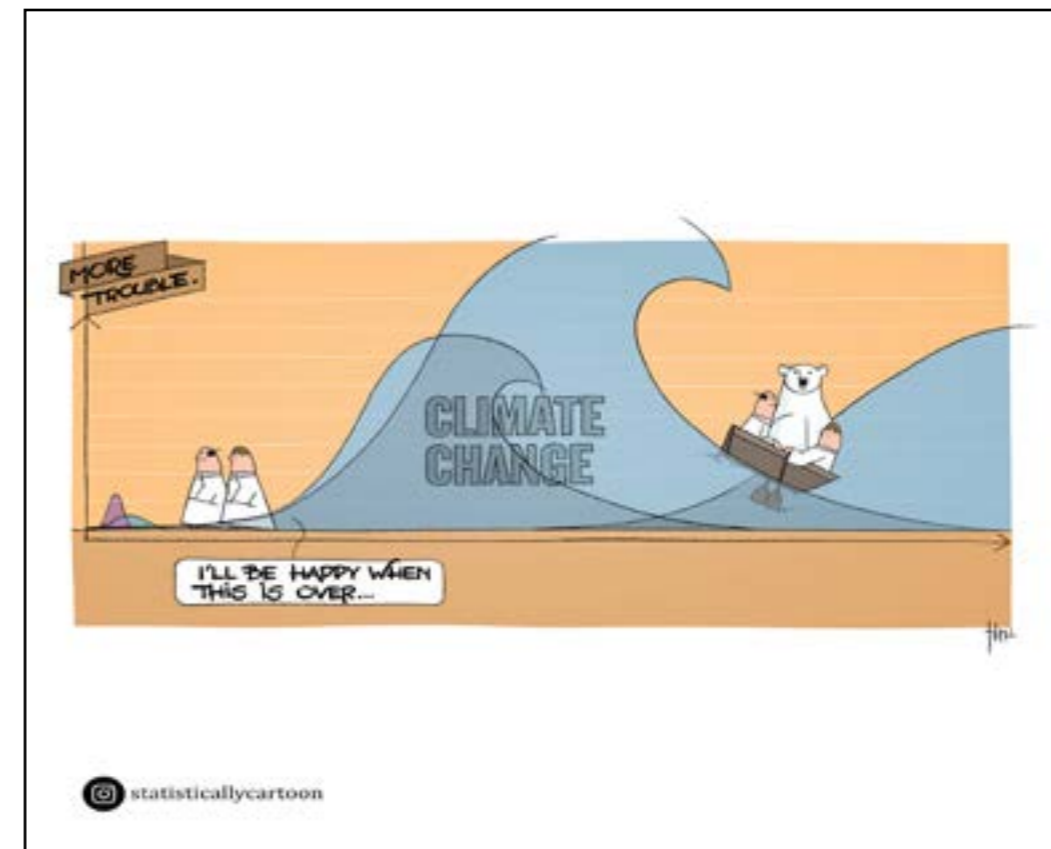
While the shutdown of many sectors of the economy will have environmental benefits in terms of carbon emissions and biodiversity loss,

few would argue that the socio-economic cost can be justified. Moreover, it seems that the global lockdown will only have a minimal effect on our carbon emissions. A recent study suggests a drop of just four to seven percent in carbon emissions for 2020 (Le Quéré, et al., 2020), so ceasing almost all flying and car journeys has had only a small impact on total greenhouse gas pollution. In fact, in the worst case scenario, 2020 global carbon emissions will be the same as 2006. This is because there has been very little change to energy production during the pandemic. It is clear that green solutions are needed for economic recovery if we are to avoid the greater threat of climate change.

The concept of community has also resurfaced in much of Western society, with a resurgence of community-level cooperation and mutual “tend and befriend” behavior (Dowthwaite, 2020). Government policies to support smaller, local businesses could provide a more targeted economic stimulus to those in need than the pursuit of corporate economic growth. Alongside enabling national and international policies, community and local-level collaborations, decisions, and actions can also support climate and biodiversity friendly policies. Indeed, there have been calls for Universal Basic Income (UBI), a policy that would guarantee a financial payment to every citizen, unconditionally, without any obligation to work, at a level above their subsistence needs. Small-scale trials of UBI show that educational attainment is higher, healthcare costs go down, and entrepreneurship levels both in numbers of people and success rates go up, as does self-reported happiness (Painter and Thong, 2015). UBI would support citizens during national and reactive local lockdowns to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and other pandemics. UBI also breaks the link between work and consumption—reducing carbon and resource footprints and protecting wildlife, which is no longer needed as a source of income.

The Convention on Biological Diversity also highlights the need for protected areas to be equitably governed by a broad spectrum of stakeholders and for local community knowledge and participation

to be key, with equitable sharing of costs and benefits through local communities (CBD, 2020). Furthermore, the IPCC recognizes that even limiting warming to 1.5°C would have disproportionate effects on the poorest countries and the poorest in society (IPCC, 2018). The economic safety net enacted by many global governments with respect to COVID-19 could be maintained and potentially enhanced if local communities are the priority for economic recovery following the pandemic. Such an approach could create a less ecologically destructive economic model and ensure socio-economic security for those who have been most affected by COVID-19 and are also likely to be most affected by climate change.



Whether you adopt an optimistic or pessimistic outlook, there are still some key lessons that should be remembered. When things return to normal and calls for neoliberal economics resume, just remember what



*Given the long-term challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss, and repeat pandemics, we should see that the major lesson from COVID-19 is the failure of neoliberal free markets to protect us.*

we relied on to address this major crisis. We have renewed recognition that governments have a critical central role in maintaining our health and safety. Government incentives, policies, nudges, taxation, regulation, and enforcement are vital to shaping society and to ensure the best outcomes in dealing with short and long-term threats. But they work best in combination with local governance through collaborations with communities to build capacity for mutual support and cooperation among people.

Remember these pandemic times when we again start to hear arguments such as: climate change is best addressed through private sector action, experts can't be trusted, we do not need a nanny-state, and societal behavior can't be changed overnight. In the Marvel movie *Iron Man 3*, Tony Stark triumphantly claims, "I did you a favor: I have successfully privatized world peace." One of the many lessons from this pandemic is that when we really face a crisis, we look to the state for concerted action and we look to the people and civil society for cooperation and mutual support, rather than a corporate Iron Man. Given the long-term challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss, and repeat pandemics, we should see that the major lesson from COVID-19 is the failure of neoliberal free markets to protect us. Instead, state intervention guided by experts, incorporating and valuing



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**Prof. Mark A Maslin FRGS, FRSA** is a Professor of Environmental Sciences at University College London. He is a leading scientist with particular expertise in global and regional climatic change and has published over 165 papers in journals such as *Science*, *Nature*, and *The Lancet*. His areas of scientific expertise include causes of climate change and its effects on the global carbon cycle, biodiversity, rainforests, and human evolution. He also works on monitoring land carbon sinks using remote sensing and ecological models and international and national climate change policies.

# Potential Impacts on Foreign Aid

Interview with Professor Nitsan Chorev  
Brown University, United States

**Foreign aid effectiveness is a contentious topic that is written extensively about, including your book, [Give and Take: Developmental Foreign Aid and the Pharmaceutical Industry in East Africa](#). What potential challenges and pitfalls to foreign aid effectiveness do you foresee – and/or should be monitored closely – as we look to move ahead from the COVID-19 pandemic crisis?**

The coronavirus initially settled and spread rapidly in high-income countries – “hot spots” included Italy, Spain and the United States. (In the US and elsewhere, COVID-19 hit the working poor and communities of color particularly hard, however.) For a while, reports suggested that the coronavirus pandemic would spare low- and middle-income countries. This is no longer the case. As of June, Brazil is the second hardest-hit country after the US, and the pandemic is accelerating in other countries in the global South. In Africa, it took 98 days to reach 100,000 cases but, by early June, only 18 days to move to 200,000 cases. Even by May, the World Health Organization (WHO) estimated that up to 190,000 people could die of COVID-19 in Africa if the virus was not controlled.

We should have seen it coming, and we should all be alarmed. Many conditions in low- and middle-income countries – such as inadequate access to water sources – make it easy for the virus to spread, which means that the numbers we already see are likely to keep on growing. Given the inadequate health care infrastructure in many countries, even a relatively small number of cases would devastate their systems. As elsewhere, the impact would not only be felt by those with COVID-19, but by anyone who requires medical care. This demands a rapid and effective

response to contain the virus in sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere.

Can foreign aid be part of a rapid and effective response? In my recent book, *Give and Take: Developmental Foreign Aid and the Pharmaceutical Industry in East Africa* (Princeton University Press, 2020), I develop a new perspective on foreign aid. I avoid sweeping statements about whether or not foreign aid is effective, which are common in the literature, and consider instead the type of foreign aid that could be effective. To find out what actually works, I studied local drug production in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda, and identified what it was that made foreign aid useful in these cases.

What did I learn about pharmaceutical production in East Africa? I learned that to be effective, foreign aid should welcome recipients as active partners rather than passive beneficiaries. Only then could short-term support lead to permanent change. In order to improve access to medicine in poor countries, it was important to invest in local pharmaceutical production (LPP) in addition to (still-crucial) drug donation programs. To promote local production of drugs, some of the aid that was normally spent on purchasing imported drugs was made available for the procurement of locally-made medicine. To promote local production of high-quality drugs, only drugs that met international quality standards were purchased. Additionally, technology transfer provided local manufacturers the know-how necessary to produce new types of drugs and to follow international manufacturing practices. In the book, I refer to these practices as markets, monitoring, and mentoring, respectively.

So how can foreign aid be of use for COVID-19? Following the lessons of markets, monitoring, and mentoring, and extending these lessons from local manufacturing to the distribution of goods, I suggest the following.

1. *Listen and learn.* The global scientific community still knows very little about the SARS-CoV-2 virus, but we learn more and become more confident with what we know every day. We do know, for example, that washing hands, keeping physical distance, and wearing masks are essential for reducing risk of infection. Yet, countries and communities may need different approaches to implement these strategies in ways that are locally suitable – just as strategies that work in Sweden might not have the same effect in England, strategies employed in Kenya might not be appropriate for Egypt. Recipient countries and local communities have to be involved in formulating and implementing strategies. That’s the only way to develop appropriate, and therefore effective, solutions.

2. *Give.* We know that products – masks, testing kits, and respirators – are essential for stopping the spread of the virus and for caring for those infected. Donor countries should pay for or directly provide these goods to countries that cannot afford them.

3. *Do not impose conditionalities, but do consider performance standards and technical support.* The only conditions attached to donations should be for the purpose of encouraging and ensuring effective and fair use. It is reasonable to insist on performance standards that, for example, ensure that masks are distributed competently and fairly and that they are distributed based on the community’s needs.

4. *If and when appropriate, combine with economic opportunities.* In addition to giving, donors should consider purchasing locally-manufactured goods when possible. An obvious example is that of masks. To support the local manufacturing of other goods, such as ventilators, monitoring and mentoring should also be employed.

5. *Act ethically.* Always. Locally-informed and appropriate solutions are exactly the opposite of discriminatory treatment. One recent example that got media attention is that of clinical trials – people in poor countries should not be used as ‘guinea pigs.’ The same ethical procedures should apply independently of where trials are conducted. The same ethical principles should apply independently of how poor people are.

When the COVID-19 pandemic crisis is eventually behind us, the uneven distributions of wealth and good health will continue. The same lessons I describe above should continue to apply as well.

**The World Health Organization has been one of the center points of criticism throughout the crisis. How would you critique their performance? Would you discuss any issues/constraints, if any, that have hampered the organization’s effectiveness?**

In the wake of previous epidemics – including the Zika virus, Ebola, MERS and SARS – the COVID-19 pandemic has been yet another test of WHO’s ability to be a reliable guide. Criticisms of WHO’s response – especially the Organization’s early response – have been numerous, but none more vocal or consequential than the accusations made by President Trump.

My book, [\*The World Health Organization between North and South\*](#) (Cornell University Press, 2012), may help us understand the WHO today. As the title suggests, the book analyzes the WHO as an organization that is often torn between competing interests and demands of member states. The WHO is dependent on all members states but the organizational structure of UN specialized agencies – including a one-country-one-vote rule and mandatory contributions calculated based on a country’s wealth and population – means that while some countries only have the power of their vote (and the vote of their allies), others may also have the power of their purse. In addition to having to adhere to member states with competing interests and uneven level of influence,

WHO officials attempt to pursue their own organizational and normative goals. In adhering to some countries' demands, therefore, WHO officials often seek ways to do so without alienating other member states and while minimizing negative effects on the mission of the WHO as a *health* organization.

The book covers political debates between countries in the global "North" and countries in the global "South," from the 1970s to the 2000s. I describe the political struggles and strategies that led to the WHO's "Health for All by the Year 2000" vision, as called for by poor countries, in the 1970s/1980s. And I describe the political struggles and strategies that led to policy and institutional reforms as demanded by rich countries in the 1990s/2000s. These later institutional reforms, I now suggest, planted the seeds that led to the WHO's challenges in responding to recent pandemics.

Starting already in the 1980s, the WHO has seen its financial position and organizational status greatly compromised. Over time, due to changes forced by the US and some European countries, the WHO came to heavily rely on voluntary (and earmarked) contributions rather than mandatory contributions. Over time, the WHO has also been incrementally stripped of responsibilities, as rich countries (and private foundations) have chosen to establish global public-private health partnerships that competed with the WHO for both authority and resources. In the book, I show the various ways in which the WHO was able to successfully adapt to those changes. For example, to echo neoliberal economic principles, the WHO abandoned its traditional assertion that health was an issue that should be addressed in its own right and accepted the focus on economic growth as the main – or even only – goal. Following the logic promoted by the World Bank, the WHO also shifted its priorities from diseases impacting those "most in need" to programs that promised cost-effective interventions. However, through strategic adaptation, the WHO was able to preserve core principles and programs. For example, the WHO was able to justify investment in health

and to focus on the three deadliest diseases, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria. Still, under reorganized finances and priorities, the WHO's pandemic preparedness was compromised, as was most clearly revealed in the 2014–16 outbreak of Ebola in West Africa. This tells us that WHO's failed responses to pandemics are, at least in part, the result of steps taken by the US and other high-income member states, which weakened the WHO's financial position and its ability to determine priorities.

**Regarding foreign aid, some advocate a more bottom up approach to aid, while others call for a more top down approach to achieve effectiveness. What is your view on this? Do you think recovery from the pandemic will have any effects on the model?**

Based on my book, *Give and Take*, I would like to advocate a nuanced approach – one in which foreign aid and other interventions rely on global technological and scientific knowledge, but in a way that is responsive to the needs and preferences of aid recipients. Global health issues make it particularly clear how urgent such a synthesis of approaches is. During the Ebola epidemic, for instance, foreign health workers were attacked rather than welcomed because of a failure to communicate their actions to the local population. We can only hope that aid in the context of COVID-19 would not repeat the same mistake – so that it can show that a "bottom up" orientation is not an obstacle but a necessary condition for effective aid.

**The aftermath of the pandemic will provide an opportunity to reflect on institutions like WHO and the United Nations. What changes,**

*...we need to appreciate the unique governance structure of the WHO and cherish its importance – as a UN specialized agency it is practically the only international health entity that follows a one-country, one-vote rule.*

**if any, would you like to see to strengthen these and other major global organizations?**

To begin with, we need to appreciate the unique governance structure of the WHO and cherish its importance – as a UN specialized agency it is practically the only international health entity that follows a one-country, one-vote rule. In line with my comments on foreign aid, it is only by incorporating all governments (as well as other local stakeholders) in the process of decision making that we can make the appropriate decisions. Yes, it makes the WHO bureaucratic and its decisions, at times, “politicized.” But it also makes the WHO one of the only settings in which poor countries enjoy formal (if not substantive) equality and can make their voices heard.

To avoid over-politicization, in turn, it is imperative that most contributions to the WHO would be mandatory rather than voluntary. This would strengthen WHO’s relative autonomy from members. It would allow decisions to be made based on consensus or majority vote rather than the power of the purse. For the same reason, countries should stop earmarking voluntary contributions.

**How important do you view international cooperation in facilitating foreign aid to developing countries in a post-pandemic world? Would you share your thoughts about key success factors for achieving better cooperation?**

This is where China comes in. So far, I discussed the geopolitical field in which the WHO operates as if it is made of rich Western countries and poor countries in the global South. But, of course, the rise of BRIC – Brazil, Russia, India and China – is central to today’s international negotiations and possible cooperation, including facilitating foreign aid.

Much has been discussed and debated in regard to China’s *bilateral* approach to aid, including through the Belt and Road Initiative,

especially in regard to African countries. Critics have lamented China’s disregard of government human rights abuses or considered China’s aid to be exploitation by other means. Supporters celebrated the lack of conditionalities through which other donor countries imposed drastic reforms on desperate governments. China’s aid to Africa continued also in the context of COVID-19. China has sent African countries millions of masks and testing kits. This was at the same time that the Trump Administration reportedly disallowed recipient countries to use U.S. funding for COVID-19 to buy medical masks and gloves without specific approval. China contributed \$50 million to the WHO’s COVID-19 Response Fund, compared to the \$30 million given by the U.S. China, which is Africa’s largest single-state creditor, also made a few commitments for debt relief. China, however, has not escaped criticisms, especially in regard to the discriminatory treatment of Africans residing in China.

One could argue, then, that international assistance to African countries in the context of COVID-19 resembles the existing pattern: China’s increasing presence and a diminishing role for the United States. But there’s another element here that we should pay attention to, which is China’s increasing involvement and investment in international governmental organizations, including the WHO. Indeed, this is exactly the source of President Trump’s frustration with the WHO – the concern that the WHO is becoming too close to and too deferential to China, possibly at the expense of the U.S.’ influence. But we may want to consider this development in a broader context in which China was for a long time criticized for ignoring and dismissing multilateral channels in favor of bilateral negotiations. Would growing investment in multilateral organizations constrain China’s actions or, on the contrary, provide it with even greater influence? In my work, I find that multilateral organizations do have the capacity to “tame” unilateral actors. No doubt, some countries are more influential than others and these countries have greater influence over policies and the trajectory of the organization as a whole. But this influence, as I show in my books, is still constrained by



the countervailing power of other member states and the organization itself. Having China become more involved in the WHO might, therefore, be positive rather than alarming news, if not to the US then certainly to other countries.



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Her first book, [\*Remaking U.S. Trade Policy: From Protectionism to Globalization\*](#) (Cornell University Press, 2007), looks at globalization as a political, rather than a merely economic, project and investigates what political conditions made globalization possible. The book offers a detailed history of trade policy in the United States since the 1930s.

Her second book, [\*The World Health Organization between North and South\*](#) (Cornell University Press, 2012) looks at the transformation of international health policies from the 1970s to the present.

Her most recent book, [\*Give and Take: Developmental Foreign Aid and the Pharmaceutical Industry in East Africa\*](#), looks at local drug manufacturing in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda, from the early 1980s to the present, to understand the impact of foreign aid on industrial development.

# Poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa

Zachary Donnefeld

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In 2015, the international community made a bold commitment to eliminate extreme poverty—defined as people surviving on less than US\$1.90 per day and hereafter referred to simply as poverty—by 2030. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, the world was forecast to come up shy of that target by a few hundred million people, the vast majority of them projected to live in sub-Saharan Africa.

As COVID-19 permeates the globe, it is increasingly clear that, in developed and developing countries alike, the virus is disproportionately affecting the most vulnerable and exacerbating existing inequalities. Among the hardest hit will be those living at or near the poverty line. In April 2020, the World Bank estimated that the short-term impact of COVID-19 could push an additional 40–60 million people into poverty by the end of 2021. However, as more data become available, estimates are broadly being revised upwards. In June, the World Bank adjusted its forecast to 70–100 million people.

Each country faces its own challenges when confronting COVID-19, but sub-Saharan Africa is home to several factors that are, if not unique, more exaggerated than in other parts of the world. For one, the pace and unplanned nature of urbanization could have serious implications for the spread of COVID-19. Kibera, Kenya and Khayelitsha, South Africa are two informal settlements that are more accurately described as cities, with populations reaching well into the hundreds of thousands, and possibly millions.

One reason that this rapid urbanization presents a challenge to COVID-19 containment efforts is the widespread lack of access to basic infrastructure. According to the latest data (2017) from the WHO/

UNICEF Joint Monitoring Project, more than 40% of people (415 million) in sub-Saharan Africa do not have reliable access to safe hygiene (i.e. handwashing) facilities, with another 33% (350 million) having limited access.

Even in urban communities across Africa, nearly 140 million people live without access to adequate hygiene facilities. In short, if there is an outbreak in one of these communities, it will be incredibly difficult to contain.

Furthermore, it remains to be seen how COVID-19 will interact with other comorbidities that are prevalent in these communities, such as malaria, tuberculosis, and HIV. Until more is known about these interactions, it's difficult to anticipate how COVID-19 will impact Africa's long-term disease burden. While the African Center for Disease Control and Prevention has extensive experience handling pandemics, the extraordinary transmission rate of COVID-19 presents challenges that viruses like HIV and Ebola did not. Establishing community-based emergency healthcare centers can help, but won't provide essential infrastructure for hundreds of millions of people, so it is vital to prevent outbreaks in these communities.

Along with lack of access to infrastructure and high levels of immunocompromised individuals, another factor that Africa must grapple with is the magnitude of the informal labor sector. The International Labour Organization estimates that almost 90% of sub-Saharan Africa's labor force works informally. Not only do lockdowns cut off the only source of income for most households, but delivering unemployment benefits to people that occupy informal jobs brings additional challenges beyond long-term budget considerations.

This tradeoff has been painfully evident in South Africa, the African country most significantly impacted by COVID-19 to date. In March, the country implemented an extremely harsh nationwide lockdown, forbidding people to leave their homes except for medical care, grocery shopping, and collecting grant payments. While food distribution lines extending for miles received wide coverage, the country's success in keeping the virus out of vulnerable communities has garnered less attention but was not entirely unnoticed.

The New England Journal of Medicine published a detailed account of South Africa's response that documents several successful policies, including how the country sent 28,000 health workers to conduct house-to-house testing in high-risk communities. South Africa is also using a mobile phone application where "data for each household are uploaded, along with mobile-phone coordinates, to a centralized database to map screening coverage." These policies have helped limit the damage of COVID-19 for the time being, but the extreme economic consequences of the lockdown are forcing the government to lift restrictions before a substantive decline in new cases. A better approach would have been to allow more freedom of movement and economic activity while mandating—and educating the public about the value of—strict social distancing and PPE guidelines.

South Africa has shown that acting quickly and decisively, deploying resources to vulnerable communities, and leveraging Africa's high dependence on mobile technology are broadly applicable policies that other African countries can explore. But South Africa has also shown that lockdowns, especially severely restrictive ones, have dire consequences for the most vulnerable, especially those that have difficulty regularly accessing nutritious food and clean water.

*In its current forecast, World Data Lab projects that 22 African countries will be unable to fully eliminate poverty by 2030 and, more shocking still, poverty will actually rise in 22 other African countries.*

In part because of these factors, the long-term projections for poverty in sub-Saharan Africa are grim. A pre-pandemic forecast from World Data Lab projected global poverty at around 450 million people at the twilight of the SDGs, with sub-Saharan Africa accounting for more than 80% of that total. At the time of writing, the revised estimate is almost 600 million, with no perceptible change for Africa.

In its current forecast, World Data Lab projects that 22 African countries will be unable to fully eliminate poverty by 2030 and, more shocking still, poverty will actually rise in 22 other African countries. A dozen countries on the continent are projected to have more than 10 million people living in poverty in 2030.

Short-term policy responses will ultimately determine the long-term implications of COVID-19 on the global economy. The IMF and World Bank agree that, at least in 2020, COVID-19 is likely to dampen growth more in the developed world than in the developing world. But, that may not hold indefinitely. Not only are Europe and the US important trading partners for Africa, but large contractions in those economies are likely to dampen foreign aid flows in the coming years, which will have particularly negative consequences for already fragile healthcare systems.

While the rest of the Global South can help buttress Africa's response and recovery, it is unlikely to completely absorb the blow from contractions in the West. The extent of economic damage in Europe and the US, and how political leadership in those countries respond, will remain a perpetual obstacle for African policymakers to negotiate during this already complex and evolving crisis. Sub-Saharan Africa can expect a less sudden but more prolonged contraction than elsewhere.

This article has sidestepped many issues. For one, it ignores important concepts like multidimensional poverty and relative deprivation that offer more nuance than the absolute definition of poverty used here. It has also avoided the important discussion of the implications for violence—particularly domestic violence but also organized social conflict—that may arise from harsh lockdowns or the inability of government to effectively distribute assistance to the most vulnerable.

Uncomfortable as it is, what we know about COVID-19 is greatly outweighed by what we don't. That notwithstanding, COVID-19 has all but completely derailed the world's ability to eliminate poverty on schedule. The word 'unprecedented' barely scrapes the surface of the effort that would be required to achieve that goal now. The international community was unlikely to achieve the goal of eliminating poverty by the end of the decade anyway, but the short-term effects of COVID-19 suggest that poverty in sub-Saharan Africa in 2030 will look remarkably like it does today.



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# The COVID-19 Crisis: A Moment of Truth for Inequality

Interview with Professor Alf Gunvald Nilsen  
University of Pretoria, South Africa

**You've written that World Bank poverty metrics showing an overall world decline in poverty don't actually present a complete picture – particularly, as they relate to the global South. Would you expand on this view?**

Let's start with the basics – the World Bank has been actively involved for a number of years now in the production of what I call a “glad tidings” narrative about global poverty, and at the heart of that narrative is the message that extreme poverty is decreasing to such an extent that it is now at the lowest level ever recorded in human history. I think it's very important to take note of the fact that this narrative is one that does very crucial ideological work, because the message at its core – the message that extreme poverty has never been lower – implicitly (and indeed sometimes also explicitly) tells us that the political and economic system that the World Bank has been instrumental in putting in place over the last forty years – neoliberal capitalism – is working out quite well for the vast majority of the world's population.

Now, my argument is this: the World Bank's “glad tidings” narrative is fundamentally false because the poverty estimates that it is based on are entirely meaningless. The World Bank defines extreme poverty as living on less than \$1.90 dollars a day, and that, in my view, basically amounts to playing with a loaded dice, as it is pretty much impossible to sustain secure and dignified human life with such an utterly paltry income. Indeed, if anything, setting the poverty line at such a level arguably tells us a lot about how incredibly low we set the bar for what we consider to be acceptable living standards for people in the global South – and that,

of course, should be cause for introspection, not just for the World Bank, but also for anyone who buys into their “glad tidings” narrative. If we think further about how we measure poverty, it is incredibly important to be aware of the fact that as soon as we start using slightly more generous poverty lines – \$2.50 a day or \$5.50 a day – there's much less to be happy about, and – as LSE anthropologist Jason Hickel has pointed out in his excellent book *The Divide* – if we set the global poverty line at \$10, which isn't really very generous at all, some 80% of the world's population live in poverty and the number of poor people in the world has increased significantly since the early 1980s, which, incidentally, was the point at which the neoliberal restructuring of capitalism really began to pick up steam.

To be fair, the World Bank has, in one of its most recent reports, proposed new and revised global poverty lines. But this, in my view, is much too little much too late from an institution that has spent so many years investing so much energy and effort into producing an entirely false narrative about a political and economic system which quite simply is not fit for the purpose of providing secure and dignified lives and livelihoods for the vast majority of people on our planet. Just think of the fact that the vast majority of poor people in the world – some 70% when measured at \$2.50 a day, according to economist Andy Sumner - live in what the World Bank refers to as middle-income countries. What this means is that the economic growth which has resulted from countries in the global South being inserted into world markets through global value chains – a development strategy which the World Bank has touted since the 1980s – has failed to substantially to improve the lives of the poor in the global



South. And we know the reason for this – and that’s inequality. The vast amount of value that is produced in the global economy ends up in very few pockets – the pockets of the global 1%, to put it very simply – while the labor share of income – that is, the part of national income that workers receive as wages – has been declining in both the global South and the global North since – again! – the 1980s.

If we want a meaningful conversation and meaningful action on how we create a different kind of future for ordinary people, we need something the World Bank’s poverty metrics and “glad tidings” narrative doesn’t offer us – namely a clear understanding of the power structures that have made neoliberal capitalism such a perversely unequal political and economic system, and an equally clear idea of how we can fundamentally transform those power structures once and for all.

*I think the global COVID-19 pandemic is a moment of truth. It has revealed more clearly than ever just how unfit for human life our current political and economic order is in so many ways.*

**In your view, what has been the effect of the pandemic on inequality in the global South? What about in comparison to the global North?**

Well, most fundamentally, I think the global COVID-19 pandemic is a moment of truth. It has revealed more clearly than ever just how unfit for human life our current political and economic order is in so many ways. And an important part of this is of course also the fact that the pandemic has revealed how extremely hollow the “we-are-all-in-this-together” narrative that has been the soundtrack of our lives during the past months actually is, precisely because of how the impacts of the pandemic have been shaped by inequality.

To me, one of the clearest examples of this is provided by Narendra Modi’s India, where migrant workers – that is, the workers whose cheap

labor and disposable lives have fuelled India’s so-called growth miracle – took to interstate highways in desperate attempts to return to their villages as the Modi regime declared a national lockdown with four hours notice. What this scenario showed us was of course the consequences of the world’s largest democracy having consistently failed to extend social rights to its poorest and most vulnerable citizens for a very long time. India is not the only example of this – we see similar kinds of dynamics elsewhere, across both the global South and the global North, including in South Africa, where I live and work.

Now, to be more specific, the most recent research we have access to tells us very clearly that middle-income countries in the global South – recall, these are the countries where 70% of the world’s poor live – are set to be hit by dramatic increases in poverty. Researchers at King’s College in London estimate that, at a poverty line of \$1.90 a day, we might see 400 million new poor. And if we adjust the poverty line slightly upwards to \$3.20 and \$5.50, some 500 million more people might be pushed into poverty as a result of the pandemic. They also show that the global income shortfall below each of these poverty lines might increase by as much as 60 per cent. There’s a real possibility that daily income losses could amount to \$350m among those living on less than \$1.90 dollars a day and as much as \$200 million for those who have recently fallen into extreme poverty. The researchers are clear that these dramatic numbers are directly related to extreme precarity among the working poor in middle-income countries.

Now, this is happening at the same time as the global 1% have been enriching themselves during the pandemic. Just think of the fact that American billionaires – Mark Zuckerberg and Jeff Bezos stand out as cases in point – have collectively boosted their net worth by some \$434 billion while the pandemic has ripped through the world. This is perverse and enraging in many ways, but also entirely par for the course in the context of the political and economic system that we live under. And in my view, what it shows us is the absolute necessity of fundamentally transforming the political and economic structures that make it possible for the global 1% to amass such wealth at the same time as precarious workers are being pushed further into poverty.

**How much of a setback do you think the pandemic has had on efforts aimed at combatting inequality? What challenges must be overcome?**

This is an interesting question because it begs another question in response: what are the efforts that have been made to combat inequality over the past twelve years – that is, since the outbreak of the global financial crisis in 2008, which brought the issue of inequality squarely to the center of debates in the public sphere?

If we ask that question in terms of what the powers that be have done, the answer to that question, in my opinion, is this: nothing at all. I say this because that's what the evidence tells us. *The World Inequality Report*, published in 2018 by Thomas Piketty and his colleagues, for example, shows that income inequality, which has been on the rise from the 1980s onwards, has also kept increasing since 2008. We know why this has happened - it has happened because the response to the crisis of 2008 was economic austerity. Now, austerity policies are basically just neoliberalism on steroids. They're not designed to ameliorate inequality in any way whatsoever. They do, however, work very well to impoverish the poor and enrich the rich, and that is precisely what they have done over the past 12 years.

This is why I think that, if we want to talk about efforts to combat inequality, we have to look elsewhere than to the powers that be. We have to look to the streets, where ordinary people have been organizing and mobilizing in protest against inequality. As much as it's now hard to recall a time before the pandemic, it's nevertheless the case that 2019 was recognized even by a business-friendly newspaper such as Financial Times as the year of street protest. And as we of course know very well, those protests are continuing even in the midst of the pandemic – I'm talking here, among other things, of the Black Lives Matter protests that have shook America and the world recently, and I do so because these protests are not just about police violence. Inequality is also part and parcel of the structural racism that these protests are calling time on. And we also know that, in contexts where governments have often failed dismally to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic in ways that address the

needs of their most vulnerable citizens, ordinary people have organized the most amazing self-help initiatives to do what those in power either can't do or – I suspect – don't want to do.

So when we talk about overcoming challenges, I think we need to look to these protest movements. We need to realize that protests are not bringing disorder and violence – they are bringing necessary social change to a political and economic system that is in itself very violent in its consequences. And these movements are doing that by engaging in what socialist feminists like Tithi Bhattacharya and Susan Ferguson refer to as life-making work – work that, in sharp contrast to capitalist profit-making, nurtures human life.

**Populism has had a surge in recent years around the world. As many countries have turned inward during the pandemic, what do you foresee as its impact, if any, on populism?**

I think that populists will do with the pandemic what they do with social problems and challenges more generally – that is, rather than responding with the kind of competence and solidarity that is actually needed, they will weaponize the pandemic for their own political purposes.

I say this because this is what is already happening. Over the past few months, we have seen populist rulers – Trump, Bolsonaro, and Modi are cases in point here – use the pandemic to further bolster the us-and-them narratives that are their political currency. Witness, for example, how the Modi government has tried to scapegoat India's Muslim minority for the spread of the pandemic, all the while handling the crisis with an incompetence that simply beggars belief. The denial of and disregard for scientific expertise that we have seen in the cases of Trump and Bolsonaro share a similar logic, as it works to fuel the warped image of people and elite that sustain them politically. And, as Naomi Klein has pointed out, COVID-19 has provided populists with an opportunity to practice disaster capitalism – in other words, turning a public health crisis into an opportunity for corporations to boost profits. Trump's proposed stimulus package – essentially austerity for ordinary people and bailouts for the corporate sector – is one example of this. Modi follows closely

behind with initiatives to slash labor laws and opening up new sectors of the economy to private investment, all the while leaving the working poor to fend for themselves as their livelihoods vanish and a life-threatening virus spreads like wildfire.

Whether or not these strategies will boost or break these populist rulers remains to be seen. But it is profoundly encouraging, in this respect, to see the kind of advances that the Black Lives Matter movement has made in this context. This is so *both* in terms of increased public support for their activism *and* in terms of the headway that the demand for defunding the police – a crucial aspect of any strategy for meaningful social change towards a society that nurtures human life – has made in a very short time. It brings home the point again, that prospects for a liveable future are to be found in the social movements that are busy trying to change the world.

**The COVID-19 crisis has also put strains on democracies worldwide. What impact, if any, do you think the pandemic will have on democracies as it continues?**

I think the current situation is one of great risk and great hope all at once. On the one hand, we have seen that the Corona-pandemic has provided governments with an opportunity to crack down on dissent and protest. One obvious example here is China, which has cracked down severely on protestors in Hong Kong in recent weeks. But equally disconcerting is the fact that India – supposedly the world’s largest democracy – has used the national lockdown to further pursue a war on dissent that has been ongoing since Narendra Modi took power in 2014. More specifically, the regime has arrested several activists that were involved in the large-scale protests against anti-Muslim citizenship laws from early December 2019 through to late March 2020. And in addition to that, the authorities have persisted in keeping civil rights activists like Sudha Bharadwaj, Gautam Navlakha, and Anand Teltumbde locked up while the virus is spreading in Indian prisons. More generally, there is also every reason to be concerned about how the use of emergency powers and surveillance tools will impact on democratic rights. Just like COVID-19 has amplified already existing inequalities, there is no doubt that it is also providing

opportunities to governments – and especially authoritarian populist governments – to further intensify the ongoing onslaught on basic democratic principles.

But there’s also hope, and here I return once again to the social movements that are currently engaging in the hard but necessary work of transforming our world. These movements are on the frontline in the pushback against authoritarian populism – in fact, they are the frontline! And, what is more, they are also expanding the meaning of what democracy looks like. There are some, of course, who don’t see it that way – prominent scholars, for example, have bemoaned the “mob rule” of crowds tearing down statues of slave traders in British cities. But what such observers fail to understand is that democracy is about much more than the elections and the parliamentary proceedings that they tend to study. Democracy is – as Angela Davis has said about freedom – always a constant struggle. And that struggle has the potential to fundamentally deepen democracy. And I would add here that refusing, through collective public action, to accept that city spaces should pay homage to those who battered themselves by holding human beings in bondage is, in my opinion, democracy working at its very finest.

**Some are of the view that effects from the pandemic can actually be leveraged for positive change. In your opinion, what types of realistic changes in the global South are possible in a post-pandemic world?**

Well, I think the most important thing by far is to work, through collective action, to transform what we think of as realistic changes in the global South. This follows from my criticism of how World Bank poverty estimates speak volumes about how incredibly low we set the bar for what we consider to be acceptable living standards for people in the global South. To be more specific, I think that it’s important to insist that economic policies that basically say that countries and workers in the global South should be content with obtaining a position in global value chains that allow for some very incremental and ultimately very limited progress up the poverty ladder are way past their sell-by dates, and need to be discarded. I also think it’s necessary to insist that middle-income

countries can do far more to expand necessary social protection for the working poor and for vulnerable citizens, and that this will be a driving force in any substantial attempt to root out poverty.

But to do so, we need to understand something very fundamental, which is that changes such as these will not result from those currently in power making the “correct” choices on the basis of shared moral concerns and neutral expertise. Rather, changes such as these will result from struggles that have to be waged and won against vested interests. This is one thing that the post-pandemic world shares with the pre-pandemic world, namely that human development can only happen if we break with neoliberal capitalism, which is something that by necessity means going up against the determined opposition of those that profit from this system.

*Interview by Sheritha Brace*



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# Poverty and Widening Inequality in Nigeria

Dr. Oludayo Tade  
University of Ibadan, Nigeria

**H**ow can we use poverty and inequality gaps to understand the issues of governance, insecurity, and evolving social problems in Nigeria? In this piece, I attempt to show why it is important to reduce poverty rates and inequality in Nigeria, and the consequences of widening inequality in post-colonial Nigeria.

Since the return to democratic governance in 1999, Nigeria has continued to witness a widening gulf between the minority haves and the majority have-nots. The populous Black nation of Nigeria has not been able to convert her numerical strength into the development amongst the leading nations of the world. Worsening poverty and inequality have reshaped the landscape of governance and social relations, and inflicted deadly blows to national security. Recognizing these impacts on realizing the Sustainable Development Goals, Nigeria listed poverty and inequality as national security threats in her 2019 National Security Strategy (NSS, 2019).

The 2019/2020 Nigerian Living Standards Survey (NLSS) released by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) shows that 82.9 million (40.1%) Nigerians are poor. Disaggregating this data further unveils how poverty has burrowed into the spaces where most Nigerians domicile — the rural area. A majority of Nigerians live in rural areas while slightly above 40% live in urban centers. While the national poverty headcount rate is 40.1%, rural areas have a 52.1% poverty rate against the urban 18.04% headcount rate. Furthermore, the survey shows that there is significant geographical inequality in poverty spread. More people are poor in the Northern part of Nigeria compared to the Southern part. Of these, the Northeastern part of the country returned more poverty indices. Adamawa (75.4%), Yobe (72.3%), Sokoto (87.7%), Taraba (87.7%), Zamfara

(72.3%), and Jigawa (87.2%) all have percentages of poor people far above the national average. The southern part of the country mostly returned percentages of poor people below the national average while the southwest recorded the lowest number of poor people. Lagos, the commercial nerve center of the country, returned 4.5%, Ogun (9.3%), Ondo (12.5%), and Oyo (9.83%) with Ekiti State (28.4%) returning the highest figure of endemic poverty in the region.

Beyond geographic distributions, women are the most impacted by poverty and inequality in post-colonial Nigeria. This affects their contribution to national development and their role in nurturing pro-social beings for society. In terms of access and undertaking formal education, men are more privileged than women. Only about 5.6% of women are able to undergo post-secondary education as against the 18.3% of men who have the same opportunity. Education translates to job opportunities available to each gender. For example, Nigeria had a 23.1% unemployment rate as of 2018 while underemployment stood at 20.1%. Of these, males are privileged with a 20.3% unemployment rate and a 15.4% underemployment rate while females experienced 26.6% unemployment and 25.9% underemployment. Unemployment and underemployment statistics again favor the urban over those living in rural areas. Poverty explains the disparities between male and female and urban and rural dwellers in Nigeria concerning power, economic opportunities, and positionality within the entire Nigerian society. It explains those likely to be exploited and the potential exploiters. How does age fare in poverty and inequality? Those of active age (15-34) suffer disproportionately in relation to poverty and inequality than those above this age category. According to the National Bureau of Statistics, this demographic group 55% suffers from a combined unemployment



and underemployment rate of 55.4%, with about 13.1 million unemployed and 11.3 million underemployed. The implication is that those willing and unable to secure gainful employment may deviate and embrace anti-social behaviors.

*The widening gap of poverty and inequality in Nigeria explains why it may be a tall order for the populous Black country to meet the Sustainable Development Goals of eradicating unemployment, extreme poverty, and hunger.*

What are the consequences of these statistics on Nigeria? The Northern part of the country is disproportionately represented with heavy poverty figures. With poverty, insecurity is birthed and nurtured. Apart from the porous border, poverty, and widening insecurity; I argue that endemic poverty and entrenched inequalities have created openings for criminality and other forms of deviant behavior in Northern Nigeria while the entire country bears these costs on growth and development. The entire North grapples with Boko Haram insurgency, banditry, kidnapping, and pastoralist and herder violence. While other parts of the country have their insecurity challenges such as armed robbery, violent gangs, and kidnapping, these are insignificant when compared to the contributions of Northern Nigeria to national insecurity. With rising unrest, there is food insecurity since most of the violence leads to displacements that affect many farming communities.

Governance has also encouraged insecurity to thrive. Since the ascendancy of President Muhammadu Buhari to power in 2015, budgetary allocation to education has nosedived to about 6% of the national budget. Conversely, every year more funds are being allocated to security due to rising insecurity and unemployment. With poor publicly funded education, access is limited for the children of the majority have-nots whose parents receive 30,000 (\$77.53) naira minimum wage per month.

The widening gap of poverty and inequality in Nigeria explains why it may be a tall order for the populous Black country to meet the Sustainable Development Goals of eradicating unemployment, extreme poverty, and hunger. The privileged class holding the levers of power do not see the growing danger of an army of unemployed, distressed, and disconnected – those who will fight the very system which has failed to cater to it.

To turn the tide, Nigeria needs to invest in publicly funded education, close the gap of inequality, and actively engage youths in productive economy. Beyond the role of the national government, state governments must localise development policy to capture the unmet needs of the poor.

*Interview by Sheritha Brace*



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He is a Media Consultant and social safeguard specialist. He is an associate member of the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR). He holds a certificate in policy research communications. Dr Tade was a recipient of the University of Ibadan Postgraduate School Scholar Award in 2008-2010. He was a grantee of the Institute for Money, Technology and Financial Inclusion (IMTFI), University of California, Irvine, United States of America in 2013 and 2015. He provides insights into issues in Nigeria through media writings. He is presently exploring Diaspora and Transnational studies.

# The Pandemic's Squeeze on International Trade

Interview with Dr. Seema Gahlaut  
The Henry L. Stimson Center, United States

**With global trade expected to fall this year to levels at least as low as during the years of the financial crisis, some are predicting gloomy forecasts for globalization. What are your thoughts about the future of globalization in a post-pandemic world?**

Throughout human history, globalization(s) have been characterized by increased trade and travel, and infectious diseases have hitched rides on people, commodities, and modes of transport across continents. This pandemic is the latest manifestation of that trend, though it has been boosted by the pursuit of ever faster and “freer” trade and travel among high density population centers. Yet, as in the past, globalization survived initial public backlash, populism, and protectionism. This time, too, one can expect that the need to cooperate and coordinate responses to the pandemic and to shore up national and regional economies will eventually soften the hard anti-globalization rhetoric and policies.

One must, however, remember that populism and protectionism have been a product of globalization, which produces winners and losers in every economy. Those who have benefitted from the current phase of globalization are on notice: those who have not benefitted or have lost are growing in number and are not willing to wait for benefits to trickle down. Pandemic has intensified these trends by providing visible and undeniable proof to anti-globalization groups that dense linkages with the outside world cause not just economic but also health problems, which, in turn, have taken away their ability to work even in low-paying jobs.

But globalization is not going away. Growing populations around the world have to be fed, clothed, and housed, and insular economic systems will not be up to the challenge. In the developed and emerging market

economies, consumers have continually growing expectations about the availability of goods and services at “reasonable” prices. In the developing world, images of life in developed economies have created expectations that such lifestyles should be made possible at home or can be accessible if one migrates. None of these expectations can be fulfilled either via prolonged protectionist measures, or abnegation of capitalism and free trade — the two drivers of globalization. But the next phase of globalization will be marked by some restrictions on unfettered capitalism and trade, thus far based largely on profits and ROIs. Businesses will have to re-orient their supply chains based on how governments re-categorize friends and foes in different regions and “disabuse” their shareholders of unrealistic growth expectations.

**Foreign Direct Investment is also expected to incur a severe decline this year. What impacts do you expect because of this?**

According to UNCTAD's World Investment Report 2020, global foreign direct investment (FDI) flows are forecasted to decrease by up to 40% in 2020 from their 2019 value of \$1.54 trillion, and projected to decrease by a further 5–10% in 2021 and to initiate a recovery in 2022. Developing economies that rely on extractive industries or tourism will be the hardest hit, with stoppage in production now and falling demand in the months ahead. Transition economies will face the prospect of no new investments and reductions in cross-border mergers and acquisitions in the near to mid-term. But as the global economy recovers in late 2021, investors will look for re-orientation of value chains that are more resilient. This might mean divestment in some countries or sectors and new or renewed investment in the more promising sectors. We might even see competition amongst Western and Chinese investors in some countries

that both assess as profitable.

There will also be a parallel trend where more countries may institute restrictions on foreign investment in certain sectors, mostly based on national security concerns. Health, IT, and telecommunications sectors are most likely to be the focus of such restrictions. While most of such restrictions will not target any particular investment-source in policy documents, it is highly likely that the scrutiny will single out investments from specific countries of concern to the recipient country. In the United States, Canada, India, South Africa, Australia, and parts of the EU, such scrutiny will be focused on investments from China and Russia, and possibly from some political allies with dubious records on terrorism, proliferation financing, and money laundering. In other countries in the Global South, these restrictive policies might just be a means to keep certain sectors of the economy reserved for nationalized enterprises or monopoly companies owned by the political elite or to allow for better bargains from the investors. Regardless of the motivation, the legal restrictions on FDI are likely to grow in the post-pandemic world.

**Some countries are exhibiting nationalist trade policies by restricting exports, with talk about contracting supply chains within a country and/or regionally. By doing so, what implications and challenges would you foresee?**

We are likely to see globalization with a few new characteristics: more focus on intra-regional trade, relatively shorter supply chains for some products, and more state-directed and supported production and procurement of some commodities that are identified as crucial for either health security or national security.

Even before the pandemic, another pattern had become visible and explains much of the protectionist rhetoric during this time. In the developed economies, most of the high-paying jobs are technical or technology-related. At the other end are the far more numerous but

low-paying service sector jobs. This model has squeezed out middle-income jobs and hollowed out manufacturing capability for day-to-day items. To the extent that manufacturing capability exists, robots and machines are likely to replace humans — to increase productivity and reduce costs — because machines do not need to be paid social security, health insurance, pension, or paid leave, and do not require as much effort in training/re-training about production processes or management mandates. Humans needed for maintenance of such machines will be fewer in number and would have to be technologically savvy. But machines do not vote. Politicians and policymakers have to respond to the concerns of this “middle” class. The initial “nationalist” responses have already begun to converge around calls for domestic production of some basic items. The demand has always been there, but the pandemic has provided a platform for piggy-backing long-standing and real grievances.

The challenge to domestic production, however, will be two-fold. First, manufacturing still remains an environmentally dirty business and will require lowering of standards. “Clean” manufacturing of most goods is still not going to be clean enough. At the same time, mechanisms will be needed to prevent a race to the bottom on this issue. Second, for production to be sustainable at home, large initial subsidies may be necessary, along with lower-than-expected wages, in order to compete with the alternate manufacturing locations in the developing world. Consumers, too, will have to be prepared for higher prices. And all of these changes will need electoral blessing. Politicians, therefore, will have to develop platforms that explain what sacrifices will need to be made to achieve this “post-pandemic” economy. The last, I believe, will

*Decline in international trade due to the pandemic will cause major economic pain for the next few years.*

be the hardest to undertake in democracies, because there are very few examples of “power speaking truth” to the powerless.

### **What scenarios may developing nations face with declines in international trade?**

Decline in international trade due to the pandemic will cause major economic pain for the next few years. However, developing nations had begun to face the challenges of rising expectations and growing gaps between the rich and the poor even before the pandemic. A major consequence of the pandemic-induced economic loss, combined with more aggressive Chinese actions in Asia and Africa, is the emergence of a focal point for blame: anti-China sentiment across much of the developing world. There are growing calls to boycott Chinese goods, increased public criticisms of their governments for allowing unfettered Chinese investments in the country, and critical analyses of the economic and social consequences of Belt and Road investments. Governments are facing growing clamor that they need to distance national economies from China, and wherever possible, offer themselves as alternative sites for manufacturing and services for the Western markets. If Western companies intensify their efforts to lessen their dependence on China, many developing countries may benefit from such re-shaping of the global value chains in the medium- to long-term in the post-pandemic world.

These countries may see their production capability grow, at the expense of China, as Western and East Asian companies re-orient their supply chains. While the developed economies settle their own domestic debates about the kinds of commodities that are better produced at home, and what sacrifices would be politically and environmentally acceptable in order to do so, developing economies will see more interest and investment from Western (U.S., U.K., Canada, Australia, E.U.) and Eastern (Japan, India, South Korea) industry. The developing countries, however, will need to augment their own capacity to absorb this demand

while maintaining a cordial economic relationship with China, until the changed trade orientation of Western economies solidifies.

### **What policies or actions would you prescribe to invigorate international trade, post-pandemic?**

Approximately \$10 trillion support from central banks, mostly in the developed economies, has helped to sustain the global economy against the worst impacts of the pandemic thus far, avoiding an endless free fall. However, developing countries cannot find their way back into the global value chains unless they can manage the health risks to their populations and reassure their overseas customers.

The first order of priority for the international community, which is currently focused on economic recovery and re-invigorating international trade, should be to provide assistance to developing countries on healthcare — not just in the distribution of vaccines (whenever they become available), but shoring up basic healthcare infrastructure that allows for COVID-19 tracking, testing, and treatments, and medicines for non-COVID-19 conditions that make populations vulnerable to COVID-19. This need not be conceived as charity projects. Developing countries can provide immense amounts of data on the characteristics of the virus (e.g., genetics, replication, co-morbidities, and transmission pathways). Their best scientific brains and low-cost manufacturing capacities can be harnessed for developing response strategies, including vaccines and treatments that are globally useful.

Second, policies that lessen the impact of rising debt in developing economies would be needed to shore up political stability, rather than the usual prescriptive belt-tightening measures. No amount of temporary debt-service suspension, for example, will help if the target countries descend into political chaos and allow extremist anti-trade ideologues to come to power. Third, to the extent possible, domestic producers and foreign investors should be incentivized to invest in digital technologies

and IT infrastructure in both developed and developing economies to enable remote working for certain segments of the workforce that would reduce large concentrations of persons, ultimately minimizing the spread of this and subsequent viruses.

*Interview by Alexandra Gilliard*



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For over a decade, Gahlaut has trained government officials, legislators, industry and the academia on issues relating to implementation and enforcement of technology security and trade controls over WMD-relevant technologies. Gahlaut is a founding member of the Export Control Experts Group in the WMD Working Group of the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP).



# Contact Tracing and Privacy

Interview with Dr. Jennifer King  
Stanford University, United States

**The COVID-19 crisis has pushed some companies and countries to develop contact tracing apps to know if users have been in contact with someone who has tested positive. Other surveillance tactics around the world include using drones to monitor pedestrian traffic in the U.K. and, until recently, Israel’s use of telecom data to track down potential coronavirus patients. What are your thoughts about the tradeoff of potentially important data to protect health and privacy/surveillance?**

There are two assumptions I’ve seen made repeatedly during this crisis about how we should use technology to fight COVID-19: first, that we need as much information about individuals and their contact and travel histories as we can get. Second, that tech-based solutions must inherently be “better” than, say, manual contact tracing. Both of these assumptions need critical pushback. Not only is more not inherently better, in general, privacy researchers and advocates are concerned about normalizing a level of data collection and surveillance that is unnecessary and contributes to the erosion of civil liberties in the longer term.

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Maybe we do hear from public health researchers (and I say this specifically because I’m concerned that, in fact, many of these proposals are being developed without their input) that a location-based contact tracing system would be more efficient or more accurate than collecting names and phone numbers by hand. It is possible to architect solutions to this problem that don’t build out a permanent surveillance infrastructure that outlasts this crisis. But in order to accomplish that, we need privacy by design across multiple dimensions: the technical architecture, the user interface, and the data governance — whether this be policy or legal regulation.

In sum: there may be some temporary, short-term tradeoffs that make sense with respect to sharing with whom we associate, our health status, and our identities with public health authorities. This shouldn’t mean we give up our expectations of privacy with respect to this data forever. Nor should it mean that we are forced to reveal everything about our lives in order to support public health efforts, or that we give up data that isn’t relevant to these efforts simply because, say, a governmental authority has partnered with a commercial vendor or service that attempts to harvest data from us as we so regularly see now in many consumer contexts.

**In May, Apple and Google released their contact tracing technology to help government health agencies build apps. However, only three U.S. states have said they will definitely move ahead with the technology. What are your thoughts on the reluctance of states to utilize the technology?**

It wouldn't surprise me if some of that reluctance stems from the discomfort of partnering with big tech at a time when public opinion toward the platforms is negative. But we may also find that there are many other barriers and challenges involved, the least of which is a lack of expertise in many states with building public-facing technology. My impression is that fewer and fewer states develop their own information systems, but instead contract with vendors, many of whom may not be motivated to utilize Apple and Google's infrastructure.

One of my key concerns with this entire situation is that it seems like contact tracing apps are a solution in search of a problem — we haven't demonstrated that the "old fashioned" ways aren't sufficient. In an economy where millions have lost jobs, why not invest in a temporary, human-intensive solution, rather in a technological one that will undoubtedly employ far fewer people (and maybe even for more money)? Why not collect data while we go and figure out whether automated solutions are truly needed? Technology is not an inherently magic solution to these problems; there has been much discussion of the limitations of the Apple/Google platform, and I would suggest that not jumping into a technical solution with both feet is wise. If COVID-19 is really going to be with us for the long haul, then doing it right seems better than doing it fast.

**Do you have any concerns about expansion of contact tracing technology for additional data collection? What can be expected when (or if) contact apps are scaled back when the pandemic threat lessens?**

In theory, absolutely. Although I expect that there is more practical risk for this in the commercial sector than in public health. For example, we are facing a world where many employers are going to be scrambling to ensure that their workplaces do not become hot spots for future infections. Where we don't have any public infrastructure to assess and mitigate these risks, we'll undoubtedly see private solutions come into

play, and likely with little regulatory oversight or penalties.

I'm not an expert in employment law, but I am comfortable speculating that, at least in the U.S., many employees will have few legal options to resist some amount of COVID-related surveillance by their employers. The shorter-term risks we face may be less about government collection of data in this space and much more about employer and other private parties attempting to collect data from us about our infection status.

**Are adequate controls and laws in place in the United States regarding the collection, use, and retention of contact tracing related data?**

Again, I'm not a lawyer, but based on my understanding of existing U.S. privacy regulations, my answer would be no. Basically, we are reliant on the policies that the developers (whomever they might be, including states or public health authorities) write for these apps. Whether they would be developed transparently and with public input is an open question.

**What advice would you give to U.S. citizens about contact tracing apps and their privacy rights?**

It's a challenging question. I think who is offering the app, and whether you can trust them, is crucial. Unfortunately, I think in many cases, states that might partner with a private developer to build an app may not have the expertise or the will to look out for the best interests of their residents. And simply telling people to read the privacy policy is a cruel trick — overwhelmingly, privacy policies are not developed or written for the general public, and it's rare that even companies do the work of making them more broadly accessible and understandable, let alone public agencies (which is regrettable).

In the absence of adequate laws, I suggest that before you decide to

use an app, you should look for assessments or endorsements from an advocacy or privacy organization you trust. See what your state or similar watchdog groups are saying about it. Again, I do think it's possible to conduct contact tracing in a way that does not sacrifice our civil rights. I also do think it's important to leverage technology, if it is appropriate, to fight this disease. But with a lack of federal level laws, it means each state could do something differently, and state level laws obviously vary, making it a challenge to give straightforward advice.

**The Chinese government recently introduced a mandatory surveillance app, classifying citizens according to their health status and risk for COVID-19. What kind of implications do you anticipate resulting from this moving forward?**

Not being an expert on either Chinese law or culture, it's difficult for me to speculate what the implications are within China. However, I think it's an object lesson for the rest of us in how a mandatory, state-sponsored solution operates, and whether it's an appropriate solution for democratically governed societies. What I find the most interesting in these types of implementations are the opportunities they give us to observe how these types of systems fail, where they run into conflicts, how people resist them, or work around their edges to recapture or maintain their privacy.

From the outside, I think it's easy to assume that these systems are infallible, monolithic, and impossible to resist. The stories that leak out about how people do resist them, or hack them, or evade them are valuable in understanding the limits of applying technology to social problems.

**There have been concerns that surveillance efforts tied to the pandemic may be used to expand power by some governments, particularly authoritarian states. How dangerous do you view this possibility?**

It's definitely a risk. There are winners and losers in every crisis; they create opportunities for good and bad. But as I mentioned above, we so often assume that these technological solutions will just succeed without resistance. I suppose the cynical view is that they create opportunities for authoritarian regimes to push the limits and experiment with how far they can use technology to solidify their control. But they also give us a roadmap for how to resist it.

*Interview by Alexandra Gilliard*



**Dr. Jennifer King** is the Director of Privacy at The Center for Internet and Society (CIS) at Stanford Law School. An information scientist by training, Dr. King is a recognized expert and scholar in information privacy. She examines the public's understanding and expectations of online privacy and the policy implications of emerging technologies. Her scholarship has been recognized for its impact on policymaking by the Future of Privacy Forum, and she has been an invited speaker before the Federal Trade Commission at several Commission workshops. She was a member of the California State Advisory Board on Mobile Privacy Policies and the California State RFID Advisory Board.

Prior to joining CIS, Dr. King was a co-director of the Center for Technology, Society, and Policy, a graduate student led research center at UC Berkeley, and was a privacy researcher at the Samuelson Law, Technology, and Public Policy Clinic at Berkeley Law. Prior to entering academia she worked in security and in product management for several Internet companies, most notably Yahoo!.

# Surveillance and Individual Liberties in the Post-COVID-19 World

Dr. Dale Mineshima-Lowe

Birkbeck, University of London, United Kingdom

Over the past several months with the COVID-19 pandemic running rapid through most countries around the world, there has been much quick movement towards finding accurate means to track the infectious spread of the virus in as real-time as possible. Through the rapid and changing nature of most governments' responses to the spread of the virus amongst its populations, changes to data collection and digital surveillance are being undertaken by a number of countries around the globe, as a means for combatting and tracing/tracking the spread of the coronavirus.

A number of countries have created and implemented the use of coronavirus tracking apps for mobiles, however, a few have also taken a step back from the use of the apps due to concerns about the level of surveillance and on data protection grounds. Countries such as the [UK](#), as early as back in April (2020), there had been calls for [further scrutiny](#) of the contact tracing app developed due to collection, storage and use of data harvested from the app for combating the coronavirus pandemic. In other places like [Norway](#), we have seen the temporarily banning in the use of its coronavirus tracking app back in mid-June based on challenges and questions about the impact to individual liberties and personal data protection. Critics have long argued about government or organizations and the level of data collected, how long that data will be held and where it would be stored, even in the pre-coronavirus period. However what has become more noticeable during the coronavirus pandemic, are the [different approaches to data collection and storage](#) being taken by

various governments around the globe and that perhaps more readily demonstrates the domestic relationships that have been trending about perspectives of personal data and its collection or use.

While some countries are using contact tracing apps to track clusters of individuals and notify those who have been in contact with someone who has shown symptoms and tested positive, others including [Taiwan](#) and Singapore are using such apps also as a means of implementing an “electric fence” program to ensure people are remaining in quarantine. Where apps may not be in use or in tandem with them, others such as Russia have turned to the use of thousands of security cameras in cities like Moscow, to assist with contact tracing and monitoring citizens under quarantine measures. Other measures that have been employed during the height of quarantine restrictions, have seen police forces use of [drone technology to enforce population quarantines](#), as well as the use of [facial recognition tech](#) – to identify suspected infected individuals and ensure protection of public health and welfare. There have even been claims that such [facial recognition technology is even possible when individuals are wearing facemasks](#).

In most of the cases mentioned, these measures – using apps to be downloaded to mobile phones to track movements and contacts to use of drones - would under other circumstances be considered controversial and [a slippery slope into a surveillance state](#). Their use in relation to the coronavirus pandemic has stirred some debate and questions about

the extent of powers of the authorities and the overriding of individual liberties, but less so than one would have expected. So why? Why do citizens accept them now? Does the ends truly justify the means enough that individuals globally are complicit with the increased surveillance and tracking of where they have been and with whom, in order to control the spread of the coronavirus? If so, what happens in the aftermath?

*The implications of the current trends being witnessed globally towards contact tracking and surveillance, while varying to different degrees amongst nations, are overall still quite frightening.*

The implications of the current trends being witnessed globally towards contact tracking and surveillance, while varying to different degrees amongst nations, are overall still quite frightening. To many observers, the legacy of the current COVID-19 world order sees the current developments continued and without withdrawal back to pre-COVID conditions of surveillance. Not only are current trends a stretch of government reach in many countries that simultaneously infringe on individual liberties and protections, but these current responses leads to a [growing concern the pandemic being used as a means of extending governments' authority and powers](#) under the guise of being “a necessity” and “in the public interest”. While this has been a key concern that has been voiced since April (2020) of countries who were seen as having democratic legitimacy challenges even before the pandemic, it raises the uncomfortable question about this same issue elsewhere and the long-lasting [impact special powers granted during the pandemic](#) will have. It leads to a questionable aftermath, highlighting the [challenges, especially with regard to democratic principles](#) and state reach. It begs the question to be asked: Will this be the true lasting legacy of the current COVID-19 world? Even beyond the economic and employment issues?

One has to ask, that with the development of techniques and advancements of digital technologies and acceptance by populations

of tracking during this period for the “common good” and health of people around the world, can it be retrospectively controlled when mass surveillance is no longer necessary? The lid has been opened on the extension of governments' powers for “national interests” and as is being played out on the global stage, a number of governments are using the extension of powers as a license to dramatically impact civil rights and liberties, in some cases [rolling back decades of legislation](#) that have been put in place for the health, safety and future of the nation, all in the name of national security and interests of the people.

Will states who have all of this [tracking and surveillance](#) data as well as new technology to track individuals, readily relinquish its collection, storage and use once the pandemic looks to be “controlled”? Who decides when it is “controlled”? Where and when will it end?



**Dr. Dale Mineshima-Lowe** is a part-time Associate Lecturer at Birkbeck, where she has taught in the both the Politics and Geography Departments. She also serves as the Managing Editor for the Center for International Relations' special publications, and also teaches at the City Literary Institute, an Adult Education College in London. Dale has a MA and PhD in Politics, both from the University of Durham in the UK, a BSc from Santa Clara University in California and has taught at the Universities of Durham, Limerick, Bedfordshire, and has guest lectured at the University of Birmingham. She has a keen interest in democratic transitions & governance, American & European history/ politics, as global issues like the environment, migration, social capital, civic education and digital tech for education.



# COVID-19 Strains on Inequality

Interview with Dr. José-Antonio Espín-Sánchez  
Yale University, United States

## **Spain has been hit hard by the pandemic. How has it influenced inequality issues there?**

Inequality has been rising in recent decades in Spain. It is still too early to tell what the total impact will be, but in the medium-run, the most affected will be the middle class — small business owners in particular. As an example, look at the tourism industry and restaurants: there are many family-owned restaurants in Spain that have been hit particularly hard by this crisis. With little savings and little help from the government, many of them will not survive the crisis. In the medium term, they will be replaced by food chains, such as McDonalds. This means that where you had a middle class of family-owned business, you now have a multinational corporation.

The returns from that business will go to wealthy capital owners, and the employees will make minimum wages. This is an important and direct effect on inequality. The same applies to many other small businesses and shops. In a country where the government does not encourage entrepreneurship and small businesses are vulnerable, this is the last nail in the coffin.

## **What should be done to decrease the widening inequality divide created by the coronavirus?**

When fighting inequality, there are policies that are specific to this pandemic, and others that are more general. As mentioned above, the government should focus on the survival of small businesses,

especially those in sectors that will be profitable after the crisis is over. This will help reduce inequality and increase efficiency, resulting in increased market competition. Without government intervention, many sectors will see an increase in concentration and market power.

Another important aspect of this crisis is that it is accelerating the processes of automation in the workforce. Automation is an incredible force that will increase inequality. The government is wasting an incredible chance to increase human capital during the crisis. Instead of just giving unemployment subsidies to everyone, the government could use this opportunity to make the payment conditional on the unemployed workers receiving some online degree on programming or robotics. These are investments in human capital that would be indispensable in the following decades. Automation is here, and it will produce mass structural unemployment.

## **In the United States, the pandemic and resulting employment issues have sparked new debates relating to universal basic income and unemployment. Do you think the creation of a UBI program is feasible or desirable in the US? If so, what would it need to consider?**

Like with many policies, with UBI the devil is in the details. A low UBI is not different from many policies that the US and other developed countries have in place. Moreover, UBI has the added advantage that it is not conditional on other sources of income. This means that, unlike current welfare policies, it would not discourage people from finding

...a universal healthcare system will alleviate many of the health externalities that we see today in the US with the pandemic.

and keeping a job or trying to get promoted in their current job. A high UBI may discourage people from finding a job, even if it is not conditional on other sources of income. The main problem, however, will be how to finance such a large expansion of the budget.

I think universal healthcare will be a better use of government funds. It will both reduce inequality and increase efficiency by leveling the playing field. Moreover, it will create huge benefits for families that now worry about medical emergencies. Last, but not least, a universal healthcare system will alleviate many of the health externalities that we see today in the US with the pandemic. If your neighbor is sick and does not have health insurance, you are more likely to get sick, even if you have health insurance. Universal health insurance makes sense from the selfish point of view. It is worth it for health insurance to be provided to all, to prevent healthy people from getting sick.

### **How would you like to see international and regional institutions change to help countries move forward from the pandemic?**

I think they should encourage more international integration, both in terms of trade and migration, but also in technological ventures. International trade and globalization are responsible for moving billions of people out of poverty and dramatically decreasing global inequality. At the same time, most of the lack of economic growth we have seen in Africa and Latin America in the last two centuries is due to a lack of trade integration among the countries of these regions. The US and China are large countries, and the EU has successfully created a tariff union. The Mercosur, however, is far from reaching its potential, and there is nothing even comparable in Africa. Promoting trade, migration, and

joint technological ventures would help realize economies of scale and specialization in those regions, even without relying on the US or China.

*Interview by Alexandra Gilliard*



**Dr. José-Antonio Espín-Sánchez** is Assistant Professor of Economics at Yale University. He is an Economic Historian with a strong background in economic theory and industrial organization.

His thesis was centered on traditional irrigation communities in Murcia, Spain. Some of the towns in the region used auctions to allocate water from the river while most others allocated the water through fixed quotas. He recovered auction data and estimated water demand, to assess the efficiency of each system.

He also works on diverse areas such as auction theory, mechanism design and political economy.

# The Coronavirus Pandemic and the Plague of Inequality

Tim Bovy  
EJEF, United Kingdom

## Introduction

Plato called inequality “the greatest of all plagues” because it freed the rich from feeling any obligation to society and the common good. Over two millennia later, Mike Lofgren, a former Republican U.S. Congressional aide, decried what he describes as the “secession” of the rich in which they “disconnect themselves from the civic life of the nation and from any concern about its well-being except as a place to extract loot.” We see the consequences of this attitude in the way that the coronavirus recession “has exacerbated the racial and income divides in America.” As Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, a distinguished scholar in African-American studies at Princeton University, observes: “For years, the United States has gotten away with persistently chipping away at its weak welfare state by hiding or demonizing the populations most dependent on it. The poor are relegated as socially dysfunctional and inept, unable to cash in on the riches of American society.”

The well-off have no such difficulties. They have, for example, benefited disproportionately from the \$2.2 trillion stimulus package, entitled the “Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act,” signed into law by President Trump on March 27, 2020. The Joint Committee on Taxation (JCT), the nonpartisan congressional body, found that “about 82 percent of the benefits of the legislation go to about 43,000 taxpayers who earn more than \$1 million annually. Less than 3 percent of the benefits go to Americans earning less than \$100,000 a year.” The JCT added that “far and away the greatest beneficiaries of the legislation will be hedge-fund investors and owners of real estate businesses.”

Unsurprisingly, Trump baked huge benefits to his own property businesses into the relief package.

Meanwhile, “coronavirus continues [to deepen] the consequences of inequality, pushing many of the burdens onto the losers of today’s polarized economies and labor markets.” In his address to the United Nations General Assembly in September 2018, French President Emmanuel Macron “reiterated the need to tackle inequality – the root cause of the global imbalances – so as to be able to build a new world order.” Nearly two years later, the building has yet to begin. As my essay will argue, the pandemic is revealing the same social justice issues that led to the Occupy Movement, following the 2008 global financial crisis. The green shoots of a new order are, however, beginning to appear from an unexpected quarter. The corporate elite, to which governments in the West have traditionally kowtowed, are rewriting the capitalist narrative, and, in the process, aligning it more closely with the social market economy of post-war Germany in a new social contract. To understand the significance of this profound shift in thinking, it is useful to understand how inequality became a wilful choice among governments in the West, despite centuries of wise counsel revealing its iniquity.

## The Long History of Inequality’s Hazards

Plato said: “There should exist among the citizens neither extreme poverty nor, again, excessive wealth, for both are productive of great evil.” Aristotle believed that “the ability of the political community to promote the common good would be impeded by large gaps between rich

and poor.” Shakespeare’s King Lear intoned, “So distribution should undo excess, and each man have enough.” Plutarch put it succinctly in the first century: “An imbalance between rich and poor is the oldest and most fatal ailment of all republics.”

For over two thousand years, great thinkers have been telling us that inequality undermines solidarity and the common good. Nonetheless, we persist. What we learned in 2008 is that since 1976 “almost all the benefits of growth were being monopolized by the highest paid and those wealthy enough to own significant portfolios of financial assets,” enriching society’s select and winnowed few at the expense of the many. In the growth “generated by the economic recovery since 2009, 95% was monopolized by the top 1%. They saw their incomes rebound by 31.4%.

This unacceptable level of inequality is having a devastating impact on the coronavirus risk for those living near the base of the income pyramid.

Meanwhile, 99% had seen virtually no gain in income since the crisis.” Worldwide, this same tune keeps playing in what has become a fanfare to the elite. A recent U.N. Report shows that “inequality is growing for more than 70 per cent of the global population, exacerbating the risks of divisions and hampering economic and social development.” “The richest one per cent of the population,” says the Report, “are the big winners in the changing global economy, increasing their share of income between 1990 and 2015, while at the other end of the scale, the bottom 40 per cent earned less than a quarter of income in all countries surveyed.” This unacceptable level of inequality is having a devastating impact on the coronavirus risk for those living near the base of the income pyramid. “Research suggests,” notes a New York Times article, “that those in lower

economic strata are likelier to catch the disease. They are also likelier to die from it. And, even for those who remain healthy, they are likelier to suffer loss of income or health care as a result of quarantines and other measures, potentially on a sweeping scale. At the same time, inequality itself may be acting as a multiplier on the coronavirus’s spread and deadliness.”

The deliberate embedding of systemic inequality into the societies in which we live explains why it has segued neatly from the global financial crisis into the coronavirus pandemic. I say “deliberate” because we will it. Inequality is not the by-product of some uncontrollable force. When Immanuel Kant said, “Live your life as though your every act were to become a universal law,” he meant that we can will the moral and ethical structures necessary to create a government that serves the common good. But, what if the will of those in power is corrupt, interested only in self-serving ends that perpetuate self-aggrandizement to the exclusion of the needs of society? In such a society, “taking” rather than “making,” rent-seeking rather than creating, enriching the few at the expense of the many, taking the free out of free markets [makes] a mockery of democracy. In that world, inequality and misery are intimate companions.”

### Willing Change

How do we bring about change? We will it. There have been times, some of them not so long ago, when our political systems were aligned with the wise counsel of the great thinkers noted above. During what the French call “les Trente Glorieuses,” from 1945 until 1975, voters in the advanced economies of the West demonstrated “how politics could tame markets, putting officials in power who pursued a range of social democratic policies without damaging the economy; [the period witnessed] an historically unique combination of high growth, increasing productivity, rising real wages, technological innovation, and expanding systems of social insurance in Western Europe, North America, and Japan.”

We can only recapture the spirit of such an epoch by changing the political narrative. The Koch brothers viewed elected politicians as mere “actors playing out a script” whose “themes and words” they supplied.” Their script incorporated Milton Friedman’s belief in a hands-off economy in which business has no responsibility either to people or to society. Writing in 1970, Friedman said that businessmen who “declaim that business is not concerned ‘merely’ with profit but also with promoting desirable ‘social’ ends; that business has a ‘social conscience’ and takes seriously its responsibilities for providing employment, eliminating discrimination, avoiding pollution and whatever else may be the catchwords of the contemporary crop of reformers” were living in a kind of cloud cuckoo land of “pure and unadulterated socialism,” and were the “unwitting puppets of the intellectual forces that have been undermining the basis of a free society these past decades.”

This recurring theme of placing the market and profit above the needs of society has been dominant for over forty years. It perpetuates an economic system in which, as Thomas Piketty has observed, “the rate of return on capital is higher than the rate of economic growth, ensuring that the gap between those whose incomes derive from capital assets and those whose incomes derive from labor” continues to widen, “mimicking the aristocracies of old Europe and banana republics.” The “unwitting puppets” that Friedman vilifies became the puppeteers whose wealth, as the Nobel Laureate Paul Krugman observes, enabled them “to buy the political system...to serve their interests.”

### Changing the Narrative

A new narrative, however, is gradually taking shape. If governments in the West are the mouthpiece of the elite, what happens when one of the players in this double act changes the script? Organizations such as the World Economic Forum (WEF) and the International Integrated Reporting Council (IIRC) are attempting to do just that. They are rewriting the narrative by acknowledging businesses responsibility to society, thus

challenging the Friedmanite philosophy on which Western governments have been basing their neoliberal, free-market agenda since the middle of the 1970s. Klaus Schwab, the founder of the WEF, has declared that “this form of capitalism is no longer sustainable.”

He attributes this change in thinking in part to “the ‘Greta Thunberg’ effect: The young Swedish climate activist has reminded us that adherence to the current economic system represents a betrayal of future generations, owing to its environmental unsustainability.” This generational betrayal has far-reaching implications for equality as well. Branko Milanovic and Roy van der Weide observe that “as inequality rises, social mobility declines.” Their recent research “has found that inequality hurts the income growth of the poor but not the rich.” “Wealth,” as Marx noted, “is transferred effectively between generations, and that the children of capitalists will exploit the children of workers when their time comes.” This perpetuation of social and economic inequality has been borne out in the January 2020 Report by the IIRC which observes that one of the major failures of the Friedman doctrine is that “[a] favored few have benefited from the system at the expense of a heavily-exploited ‘bottom of the pyramid’ underclass.”

Both the WEF and the IIRC want to upend the Friedmanite model, not so much to take us forward, as to take us back to the period before shareholder capitalism absolved businessmen of the need to have a social conscience. “Business leaders,” says Schwab, “now have an incredible opportunity. By giving stakeholder capitalism concrete meaning, they can move beyond their legal obligations and uphold their duty to society.” The question is, can these business leaders have the same influence on Western governments that Friedman has had on them since firing his first salvo across the boughs of businessmen over four decades ago? Will the potential cataclysmic consequences of climate change and the coronavirus pandemic that inspired a rethink of the neoliberal economic model by the WEF and the IIRC align government leaders of the major Western economies with them? All of the evidence,



as indicated in the discussion above, points to the contrary.

### **Exorcising the Friedman Doctrine: Has China Stolen a March on the West?**

One country, however, may have already stolen a march on the West. In his discussion of the best antidotes to shareholder capitalism, Schwab mentions China's State Capitalism as the runner-up to stakeholder capitalism because it "also pursues a long-term vision." Its vision incorporates the basic tenets of a social market economy, which balances free-market economic principles with a strong welfare state, in which "the free market efficiently produces a quantity of goods and [distributes them in a way] that can be made morally and practically better by making [the distribution] more 'social,'" as a means, for example, of reducing poverty. The results of such a system have been noteworthy.

In 2000, the nations of the world came together at the United Nations to announce eight Millennium Development Goals for the planet, the precursor of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that the U.N. subsequently introduced. At the top of the list was to cut by half the number of people living in extreme poverty before 2015. In his article "China's anti-poverty drive has lessons for all," Graham Allison notes that "Just four years later in 2004 World Bank President Robert Zoellick declared that 'China's efforts alone' put the world on track to achieve this goal.' In Zoellick's words: 'Between 1981 and 2004, China succeeded in lifting more than half a billion people out of extreme poverty. This is certainly the greatest leap to overcome poverty in history.' And in 2010, five years before the deadline, thanks primarily to China's success, Zoellick declared the mission accomplished."

As Allison mentions, China continued to improve on this record. "[In 2017], World Bank President Jim Yong Kim highlighted what he called 'one of the great stories of history.' China, he said, had lifted 800 million people out of the miseries of extreme poverty and thereby extended the

life of its average citizens by more than a decade." By contrast, "cuts to government spending that followed the 2008 financial crisis led to a rise in inequality and flatlining life expectancy growth in the UK."

### **Reviving the Spirit of les Trente Glorieuses**

Because the West has willingly allowed inequality to become a plague, its pernicious effects have flowed without interruption from the global financial crisis into the global coronavirus pandemic, with equally devastating consequences. There are signs, however, that, as in the time of les Trente Glorieuses, under the right leadership a shift towards social democracy could help to correct this inequity.

Senator Biden's presidential campaign, having initially rejected social democracy, has recently become more receptive to it, which, if he is elected, could bring the United States closer to a social market economy in a political environment more congenial than that of authoritarian China. Biden's campaign is now putting forward "policies that would shift wealth and economic power away from the extremely rich and toward workers and middle-class people hit hardest by the pandemic," in an attempt to address the inequality that the coronavirus pandemic has highlighted.

### **Conclusion**

Although the changes to the economic system that the WEF is promoting and the potential for a movement towards social democracy under a Biden presidency present hopeful possibilities for taming inequality, the shape of a post-pandemic new world order remains undefined. Maybe, it will be led by China; or, maybe by a reformed U.S. under a Biden presidency; or, in time, maybe by a global governance consortium led by thinkers with compassion for the common man and for the plight of our planet. We simply don't know. The script is still being written. The story has yet to be told.



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# Pandemic Effects on Peace Operations

Interview with Dr. Nathaniel Allen

Africa Center for Strategic Studies, United States of America

## **What is the current state of peacekeeping operations around the world? Are they adequately supported to achieve their mission?**

Currently, there are approximately sixty different multilateral peace operations across the world, comprising approximately one hundred and fifty thousand personnel. Two thirds of these personnel are located in Africa, where most of the largest missions are based. Over the past five years, there has been a slow but steady decline in the number of missions in Africa and in the overall U.N. peacekeeping budget, which is now about \$6.5 billion dollars.

Peacekeeping operations around the world could certainly stand to be better resourced. Missions around the world face liquidity problems because the U.N. lacks ability to transfer money between peace operations accounts, has no cash reserves, and due to late payments by member states.

More importantly, there is pretty solid social science evidence that peace operations are effective in doing just about everything they are asked, from reducing civilian casualties to helping peacefully resolve conflict. Though there is always room for improvement and for reform, more investment by the global community would likely reduce the instance and severity of conflict across the world.

## **How has the COVID-19 crisis placed additional strains on the effectiveness of peacekeeping efforts, particularly in conflict areas such as the Democratic Republic of Congo?**

The outbreak of COVID-19 has meant that peacekeepers across the world now have to contend with a public health crisis on top of their already considerable responsibilities. Troop rotations have been

frozen, and contact with the local population, which is crucial to helping peacekeepers perform their duties, has been minimized to avoid spreading the virus. In places where there have been outbreaks, peace operations have shifted their efforts to help mitigate its spread.

However, despite the U.N.'s call for a global ceasefire, armed groups across the world are attempting to exploit the virus to make inroads. This is a big problem in places such as the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), which is being wracked by violence caused by intercommunal conflict and various armed groups operating in the area. MONUSCO, the U.N. mission in the DRC, has deployed troops to hotspots in these areas and supported government forces in their efforts to manage the threat, but it remains to be seen how successful these efforts will be in containing the violence. The Security Council has long been weighing a faced withdrawal of U.N. forces from the DRC, but recently extended the mission's mandate through the year's end.

## **Do you think effects of the pandemic could exacerbate any existing conflicts and/or create new ones? If so, are there any particular areas of most concern to you?**

This is a serious concern. The pandemic has had varying effects across the globe but in Sub-Saharan Africa – the region where I work, violence has skyrocketed. So far this year, conflict activity is up by 20 percent and casualties are up by nearly half compared to the same period the prior year. Armed groups from the DRC to the Sahel to Eastern Africa are activity exploiting the pandemic. And I think it's particularly important to note that we're still relatively early in the pandemic, with the medium to long term economic and geopolitical consequences yet to play out.

The two particular areas I'm watching closely are 1) the Cabo Delgado

region of Mozambique, where Islamist insurgents are on the advance and violent events have tripled over the past year, and 2) the tensions between Ethiopia and Egypt over the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. Recent negotiations failed to reach a deal, and Ethiopia has pledged to start filling the dam in July. A conflict between two of Africa's largest and most powerful countries would be catastrophic.

**What special threats are citizens in peacekeeping areas experiencing – or could experience in the future – as a result of the coronavirus crisis?**

I don't think the risks to citizens in peacekeeping areas are all that much different from citizens in other conflicted areas. In addition to the threats to their safety posed by the presence of armed groups, citizens in these areas now must contend with the public health threat posed by the spread of the coronavirus, as well as the economic strain the virus is putting on local economies. Peacekeepers across the world can and are acting to help protect public health and physical security, but can only do so much given the need for social distancing and limited resources.

**The United Nations has come under scrutiny during the pandemic for a variety of reasons, particularly the effectiveness of WHO. Could this increasing lack of faith in the U.N. affect its peacekeeping efforts?**

I don't see the effectiveness of the United Nations peacekeeping operations coming under scrutiny in quite the same way that the WHO has. Insofar as they contribute to reducing the instance and severity of conflict and are welcomed by host governments, peace operations are clearly needed.

What we have seen, however, is a longer term shift away from large multidimensional peace operations alongside a growing trend of regionalization and external involvement in conflict outside of the U.N., though mechanisms such as the G5 in the Sahel or the Multinational Joint Task Force in the Lake Chad Basin. I don't see this trend going away any time soon, and I think it will mean that the nature of U.N. involvement in many conflicts across the world is going to change. Like it

*The pandemic is currently playing out as a public health crisis nested into an economic crisis nested into a geopolitical one. It is the economic and geopolitical consequences, which I think will take years to unfold, that most concern me.*

has in these theaters, the U.N. will have to get more used to working with multiple internal and external stakeholders who support various parties to a conflict, with less robust mandates than it has had over the past twenty or thirty years.

**What long-term effects could the pandemic have on continuing peacekeeping operations?**

The long term effects of the pandemic on peacekeeping operations are difficult to predict, but in all likelihood will be significant. The pandemic is currently playing out as a public health crisis nested into an economic crisis nested into a geopolitical one. It is the economic and geopolitical consequences, which I think will take years to unfold, that most concern me.

On the one hand, it is pretty clear that the financial implications of COVID-19 could increase pressure on members of the international community to reduce support to peace operations, leading to continued cuts and mission shortfalls beginning as early as next year, when a bunch of mandates are up for renewal. On the other hand, continued conflict, as well as new conflicts and crises facilitated by the pandemic and its aftershocks, could increase demand for peace operations, particularly regionally-sponsored ones. Much will depend on how successful local governments are in addressing the pandemic and its aftershocks and the degree to which major regional and international actors decide they want to continue to support peacekeeping efforts.

*Interview by Sheritha Brace*



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Prior to the joining the Africa Center, Dr. Allen was a policy advisor at the U.S. Institute of Peace Task Force on Extremism in Fragile States. He has also worked at the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations, for the Foreign Affairs and the Armed Services Committees of the U.S. House of Representatives, and with NORC at the University of Chicago's International Projects Department. Dr. Allen's research has been published in leading policy journals and newspapers. He has received fellowships from American University, the Robertson Family Foundation, and the U.S. Institute of Peace, where he was a 2016-2017 Williams Jennings Randolph Peace Scholar.

Dr. Allen holds a Ph.D. in international relations and African studies from the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies, an M.A. in development studies from the Princeton School of Public and International Affairs, and a B.A. in political science from Swarthmore College.



# Will African Governments Survive the COVID-19?

Professor Luka Kuol

Africa Center for Strategic Studies at National Defense University, United States

## Introduction

The survival of humanity has never been challenged in the way the COVID-19 has impacted our global society. Unlike other crises that are seen as synonymous with poverty and developing countries, the coronavirus has paradoxically hit the most prosperous and highly un-fragile developed countries first. It has put the poor and rich, developed and developing countries, white and People of Color, women and men, and young and old at the same level of risk. It was shocking for the people of developing countries and particularly in Africa to see how COVID-19 has, for the first time, exposed the fragility of the developed countries to which they look up to as the pinnacle of stability. This made African countries worried of how they can survive such a forceful pandemic and raises fundamental questions of whether African states would pass existential therapy tests with the coronavirus. While there are opportunities for defeating COVID-19 through rigorous efforts and preparation, the enormous socio-economic and political impacts of this pandemic might result eventually in the survival of fittest.

The way COVID-19 is spreading in Africa is alarming and unprecedented. While only four (4) cases of COVID-19 were reported in February in three countries, confirmed cases increased exponentially to 183,428 in the first week of June 2020 with all 54 African states affected (ACSS, 2020a) and an average case fatality ratio of 4.2 percent (Ihekweazu and Agogo, 2020). These reported estimates are far below the actual numbers due to weak capacity in testing and coverage. In mapping the risk factors for the spread of COVID-19 in Africa, ACSS (2020b) finds most countries are susceptible to COVID-19 with 40 percent of the countries having average or more than average risk scores. Although some factors such as high younger population (Rossman, 2020) and tropical weather (Prata et al, 2020) in Africa might respectively reduce fatality and the transmission of COVID-19, such benefits may not outweigh the negative effects of other risk factors. If the rate of the pandemic's spread persists, coupled with social difficulty in complying with physical distancing, Africa is destined to be the host and reservoir for the coronavirus.

## How human security is threatened by COVID-19?

Besides the great loss of human lives and increased health insecurity, the real impact of COVID-19 will be the economic costs that will haunt the African economies with

far reaching negative consequences. The economic impact of COVID-19 will not only derail many years of socio-economic development but it will negatively affect political stability, international relations, peace, and civil rights (IEP, 2020). Depending on national and regional responses, various forecasts of COVID-19 impacts on Africa's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth suggest a record contraction between 0.7 and 2.8 percentage points in 2020 (AfDB, 2020) and the first recession in 25 years in several African countries (OECD, 2020).

This massive contraction of African economies will have profound negative impact on all threats to human security; particularly increased vulnerability to food insecurity, poverty, unemployment, physical violence and abuse of basic human rights. While 49 million people globally will be pushed to extreme poverty, Sub-Saharan Africa will be the region hardest hit, as it is projected to account for about 46 percent (23 million) of those people pushed to poverty (Mahler et al 2020). Also, COVID-19 will have a more profound impact on food security in Africa than other regions. The U.N. World Food Program estimated that the pandemic might double the food insecurity population in Africa in 2020 from 130 million to 265 million (Marks, 2020). It is projected that Africa will experience the highest level of unemployment in 2020 as a result of COVID-19 with about 20 million jobs, mainly youth, threatened with destruction that might potentially cause social unrest and violence (Chido, M. 2020). With the rapid spread of COVID-19 and increasing use of excessive force by governments to effect lockdown and social distancing, the crisis of COVID-19 is becoming increasingly a human rights crisis in Africa (Wintour, 2020) and a security crisis as well.

The impact of the pandemic on environmental security has produced mixed effects. Policies adopted by various countries to confront COVID-19 such as lockdown and social distancing have, on one hand, caused substantial improvements in air quality, clean beaches, and less environmental noise contraction but they have also caused increased waste and the reduction of recycling (Monserrate et al 2020). As these policies are temporary and contingent arrangements, their positive effects on the environment are short-lived and not sustainable.

The severity of COVID-19 on African countries will largely be determined by both internal and external factors. Besides the structural problem of weak public health systems, the ways African states function and govern themselves in terms of their relations with their citizens, quality of institutions and freedom space will play a critical

role in mitigating or exacerbating the impact of COVID-19. According to reports of Transparency International and Freedom House, many African governments are not able to create a free political environment resulting in a lack of trust from citizens and erosion of transparency. These poor relations between states and their citizens have caused increased defiance of citizens to the social restrictions and physical distancing declared by their governments. Regrettably, the quality of institutions and policies has been deteriorating in Africa; particularly in economic management, structural policies and public management and institutions (World Bank, 2019).

Given the dependence of African economies on global markets, the level of economic impact of COVID-19 will largely be determined by the external factors. The global economy, specifically China as a key trade partner to Africa, commodity prices, and oil prices will have profound impact on the African economies. The global economy is forecasted to contract by 5.2 percent as a result of COVID-19, the deepest global recession in the decades (World Bank, 2020a). As COVID-19 will globally depress demand and disrupt supply, the prices of most commodities exported by many African countries will plunge in 2020 and beyond. In particular, commodities that are the mainstay of the African economies such as energy, metal, and commodities associated with transportation such as oil will be most affected by the coronavirus-induced contraction and slowdown of the global economy.

The economy of China, the main trade-partner of many African countries, is forecasted to be the hardest hit by the pandemic with its GDP estimated to contract by 3.7 percent, with the highest deviation from the world benchmark and lowest growth in more than four decades (Maliszewska et al, 2020). Though the origin of the virus has not been ascertained, the first appearance of the virus in China will tarnish the image of China as key trade partners for many African countries. While China might control its tarnished image by availing or donating to many African countries the necessary medical equipment and sharing its impressive experience in the control of the spread of the virus, the growing demand for China to bear the burden of the cost of the global spread of the virus will continue to haunt the future prospects of the Chinese economy.

Responding to the COVID-19 in Africa:

The health insecurity caused by the spread of the Coronavirus has become an increasingly social, economic, and political emergency. The contingency policies such as lockdown and social distancing adopted by various countries in developed and emerging economies in Asia and Latin America have produced mixed outcomes and cast doubt about the viability of such policies. There is also the looming second wave of the spread of the COVID-19. The search for a vaccine for the COVID-19 makes it the only viable option for effectively confronting health impacts of the virus. While countries are competing to create the vaccine, there will be challenging issues of

coordination, prioritization, accessibility, and affordability of such a vaccine.

In Africa, the spread of the virus is accelerating but not at the speed with which it was forecasted and relatively slow in comparison to the global toll (Tremman, 2020). Only 10 out of 54 countries drive the rise in numbers of cases of the pandemic and 70 percent of death cases are reported in only five countries (WHO, 2020). It is most likely that the warm weather conditions, high young population, and contingency policies adopted by countries early affected by the virus such as China, US, UK, and the EU might have contributed in slowing the spread of the virus in Africa. Besides these factors, many African countries have responded swiftly to the spread of the virus. This has been largely heightened by the improved learning curve of Africa in confronting a series of virus diseases, the response and coordinating mechanisms adopted by the African Union, and the support from the international community; particularly the World Health Organization.

*The Africa CDC has facilitated the African Union to adopt in February 2020 the Africa Joint Continental Strategy for COVID-19 that underpinned African leadership and ownership of the response to the outbreak as well as leveraging partnerships with health agencies...*

With a cumulative learning curve and technical know-how in preparing and responding to various outbreaks such as Ebola virus disease, Lassa fever, polio, measles, tuberculosis, and human immunodeficiency virus, African countries adapted such experiences in confronting COVID-19 (Loemba et al, 2020). In particular, in 2016, the African Union established Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) with five decentralized regional collaborating centers in Central, Eastern, Northern, Southern, and Western Africa (AU, 2016). The aim of Africa CDC is to strengthen the capacity and capability of Africa's public health institutions as well as partnerships to detect and respond quickly and effectively to disease threats and outbreaks. During the outbreak of the coronavirus in January 2020, the Africa CDC was effective in responding to the outbreak by activating in its Emergency Operations Center for the COVID-19 that organizes weekly virtual coordination meetings with its five regional collaborating centers, Ministries of Health, as well as providing regular briefings about the pandemic (Loemba et al, 2020).

The Africa CDC has facilitated the African Union to adopt in February 2020 the Africa Joint Continental Strategy for COVID-19 that underpinned African leadership and ownership of the response to the outbreak as well as leveraging partnerships with

health agencies (Africa CDC, 2020). The implementation of this strategy by the AU African Taskforce for Coronavirus has helped African countries adopt a combination of mitigation and suppression measures (Smith, 2020) that helped in slowing the spread and reversing the growth of the pandemic respectively. In particular, many African countries, as early as January 2020, swiftly took measures to thwart importation of COVID-19 by effecting surveillance at airports and screening of passengers (Loemba et al, 2020) as well as suspending direct flights to and from countries affected by the pandemic; particularly China (Nkengasong and Wankoula, 2020).

Besides these continental and regional efforts to confront the coronavirus, individual African countries established relevant institutions and adopted measures to contain and manage the pandemic. Many African countries established presidential COVID-19 task forces to guide the national management of the pandemic, sharing information, combating misinformation, and interagency and interdisciplinary coordination (ACSS, 2020c). Some countries have ramped up quick and cheap homegrown production of medical supplies such as masks, hands sanitizers, ventilators and diagnostic tests to curb the spread of the virus (Cal Nebe, 2020).

Although the traditional African donors and partners are struggling with the virus, the Africa Joint Continental COVID-19 Strategy has been munificently implemented in partnership with multilateral, bilateral, and private institutions. In particular, the World Health Organization has been playing a leading role in the implementation of the Africa COVID-19 Strategy. Specifically, WHO has been providing testing kits, training of health workers, providing guidance and remote support on the use of electronic data tools and strengthening and coordinating surveillance efforts and epidemiology, modeling, diagnostics, clinical care, and treatment (WHO, 2020). Importantly, WHO will play a critical role for ensuring the developing countries and particularly African countries to access and afford the future vaccine for the COVID-19.

Besides WHO, the World Bank (WB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) have availed considerable funding to the African countries to support their efforts in saving lives, protecting livelihoods and securing the future, and ameliorating the human and economic impact of the COVID-19 (World Bank, 2020b, and IMF, 2020). The African Development Bank has also provided a package of financial relief, preparedness and response assistance to many African countries and regional economic blocks to support their efforts in confronting the coronavirus (AfDB, 2020). The EU, as one of Africa's strategic partners, announced an extensive aid package of about EUR3.25 billion to assist African countries to deal with the impact of Coronavirus (Baker McKenzie, 2020).

The United States is taking a lead in initially availing \$274 million of humanitarian and assistance to African countries to confront the COVID-19 in addition to its funding of health programs implemented by multilateral organizations (Africanews, 2020). The

way China is quickly recovering from the impact of the COVID-19 in comparison to other Western countries; particularly the U.S, may put China in strategic leadership in confronting the coronavirus; particularly in Africa. Despite the growing doubts of the quality of its assistance, China was swift in providing colossal funding, medical supplies, and know-how to assist African countries in their efforts to contain the virus, which might put China on the top in the battle for influence in Africa (Tremman, 2020).

What does the future hold for Africa?

The COVID-19 has exposed serious cracks in systems of government, capacities of states and public policies, particularly in the Western countries. It has renewed debate not only about the future of capitalism and the role of state in managing the economy but the critical role of institutions and strategic leadership. Importantly, the COVID-19 has underscored the need to revisit how security is perceived, planned, managed and delivered to the citizens. The coronavirus has shown that human security is less at risk of the threat from the buildup of nuclear arsenal than by a pandemic that can hardly be fought by conventional weaponry.

There is no doubt that all African countries have been affected by the spread of the pandemic with variation in the level of impacts. There will be some governments that will barely pass the existential therapy test in the post-COVID-19; particularly countries that have been classified as very fragile or failed states. Some countries that have been relying on oil and commodities will be hard hit and likely to be pushed to the high fragility category. Also, state-citizens relations and legitimacy of state will be altered in the post-COVID-19 with increased erosion of freedom space. Most of the autocracies and intermediate regimes in Africa are likely to accentuate their grip to power in the post-Coronavirus with some intermediate regimes transitioning to the category of autocracies and some democracies regressing to intermediate regimes.

The future of African countries will be shaped by the economic impacts of COVID-19 rather than its direct health effects. In the midst of the coronavirus, African countries will be faced with the challenge of sequencing and balancing the health and economic priorities (Smith, 2020). Despite growing global non-cooperative behavior, the coronavirus will make global collective and cooperative action a necessity to save humanity, not only from the current pandemic but also from more vicious ones to come. This anticipated global cooperative action will result in finding an affordable COVID-19 vaccine that will help African countries to focus on addressing the social and economic impacts of the virus.

For the African countries to put their economies on the path of recovery after the coronavirus, policy-makers may need to reflect on what was effective and ineffective and to adapt in iterative ways to adopt the right policies. One lesson is that there have been reactive responses to the pandemic, as most countries do not have

coherent proactive and forward-looking national security strategies. The absence of such strategies has resulted in inability of many African countries to strike strategic balance not only between economic and health priorities but also in the security-development-governance nexus. The pandemic has underscored the centrality of the concept of human security in shaping the forward looking of how security could be better delivered to all citizens through the whole-society approach. Also, the pandemic has shown the critical role of institutions and leadership in ameliorating the impacts of the virus. The scenario of lockdown may invoke the infant industry argument and the need for homegrown capacities to produce basic essentials and commodities for survival during the future pandemics as well as diversifying the economies. So Africa might emerge from this pandemic well prepared from the future pandemics if its leaders could learn from such a bitter experience of COVID-19 by designing proactive and people-centered national security strategies and building anti-fragile institutions.



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# Food Security During the Pandemic

Interview with Dr. Esben Lunde Larsen  
World Resources Institute, Denmark

## **Does the virus pose a threat of food contamination, with food acting as a vector of disease transmission?**

The virus, as far as I have seen described, does not pose a threat of food contamination.

## **How has the pandemic impacted food security in the developing world, and what challenges will this present in the coming months?**

The biggest challenge to food security has been the general shutdown. In the developing world, [it has become difficult] for smallholder farmers to deliver their goods to the market, and for consumers to access food. These will be major challenges in the months to come as well, since everything has come to a halt. So, re-establishing supply chains, opening up markets, and securing exports is key. The accumulated debt during this time for smallholders without income is also a key challenge to solve.

In the developed part of the world, some places like the US have experienced a food shortage due to the shutdown of processing facilities, which again has led to major food waste. [Another challenge will be] re-distributing food in the US from the food service sector to retail.

## **Global food supply chains have already been disrupted as the pandemic spreads - do you anticipate this will get worse? What steps need to be taken to ameliorate the problem?**

We have not yet seen the worst impact in the global South, so it is difficult to predict how the disruption will develop. I anticipate that it will get worse in the global South. Stimulus packages from developed countries should focus strongly on securing a more just and sustainable food system.

## **How has the pandemic impacted global food waste?**

In the Western world, especially in the U.S., we have experienced major food waste due to the shutdown – especially in the food processing industry. But we don't have the numbers yet.

## **The pandemic, while devastating on many levels, has also been viewed as an opportunity for steps to build a more sustainable planet. Do you agree? If so, what would you like to see?**

I agree. Build Back Better is key. The stimulus packages from governments should be focused on sustainable development, investments in green infrastructure, sustainable energy solutions, sustainable food systems, and education for low-income groups with a specific gender focus on women and girls.

*The biggest challenge to food security has been the general shutdown.*



**Dr. Esben Lunde Larsen** is a fellow in Food, Forests, and Water at the World Resources Institute. Prior to joining WRI, Dr. Larsen had a political career in the Kingdom of Denmark as Member of City Council from 2006-2014, Deputy Mayor from 2010-2014, Member of the Danish Parliament from 2011-2018 and Cabinet Minister in Her Majesty the Queens Government from 2015-2018. First as Minister for Higher Education and Research and secondly as Minister for Environment and Food.



## Could the New Four Trillion Stimulus Plan Save China's Economy After the COVID-19 disaster?

Dr. Tao Peng  
World Journal, Germany

**W**ith the 2019 Novel Coronavirus Outbreak (COVID-19) accelerating the economic recession, Beijing has recently decided to launch a new economic expansion plan in advance. It has been accused that it will be similar to the "Four Trillion" stimulus plan in 2008, which brought serious after-effects such as "adopting a deluge of strong stimulus policies", capital inflation, RMB depreciation and other problems and that Xi Jinping's "second reform" and previous efforts to adjust the economic structure will also be put to death. However, whether this new economic stimulus plan has the effect of boosting the economy, or repeating the past "Four Trillion" mistakes, depends on where the funds invested and the money released by the plan flowed into, and whether the recent Coronavirus outbreak can be effectively controlled.

At present, the new coronavirus epidemic continues to plunge the Chinese economy into recession. China's manufacturing purchasing manager index (PMI) for February this year was only 35.7%, down 14.3 percentage points from the previous month, and the non-manufacturing business activity index was 29.6%, down 24.5 percentage points from last month. The impact of the Novel Coronavirus outbreak on China's economic operation has exceeded the impact of the 2008 international financial crisis. To mitigate this trend, the central and local governments are vigorously pushing for resumption of work and production, and launching an "economic expansion" plan in advance. From the end of January to March 3, the central bank has released a total of nearly 4 trillion yuan in liquidity through reverse repurchase (agreement) and

special loans. China's 15 provinces have announced the list of key projects for 2020. Through the issuance of special bonds and additional financial investment, the cumulative investment will increase by nearly 25 trillion yuan. Since only one-third of China's enterprises resumed work in February, the entire small and medium-sized enterprise (SMEs) was severely impacted. China also plans to provide over RMB 1 trillion (approximately \$ 144.3 billion) in tax reduction and exempt administrative fees.

Will the current economic expansion plan become the new version of the "Four Trillion" plan in 2008? From the end of 2008 to 2009, in response to the international financial crisis, the Chinese government adopted a "Four Trillion" economic stimulus plan. Although the plan has stimulated the economy, it has also caused many aftermaths. Not only did it cause China to lose an opportunity for economic transformation, but also the problems such as overheating the economy, capital inflation, financial abnormal development, inefficient expansion of production capacity, and severe overdraft of effective demand have intensified. The 2008 four trillion yuan credit stimulus caused two major sequelae to the economy and society in the following ten years: soaring housing prices and overcapacity. Since 2015, China has urgently stepped on the economic "brake." Xi Jinping implemented the "secondary reform" and adopted a strategy of economic growth speed reduction and adjustment to reorganize and restructure the administrative system and financial system. The "three go, one drop, and one supplement" proposed at the end of 2015 (cutting overcapacity, reducing excess inventory,

deleveraging, lowering costs, and strengthening areas of weakness) is partly to address the sequelae of excessive credit stimulus in 2008. Since then, in terms of credit easing, the government has been emphasizing an end of adopting a deluge of strong stimulus policies and the extension of the directional regulation and precision trickle irrigation of on-lending in order to prevent money from flowing into the property market again and to avoid driving up property prices. However, the sudden outbreak of the novel Coronavirus has quickly disrupted the existing rhythm of the government's policy. The high-level meetings of the Communist Party of China were held intensively, and experts put forward various suggestions. As a result, fiscal and monetary policies were continuously introduced, and the investment dose has been increasing.

Judging by the differences in economic volume, the current fiscal and monetary stimulus plan may not be exactly the new version of the 2008 "Four Trillion" plan. In this stimulus plan, the amount of currency has reached or even exceeded four trillion yuan, but its impact cannot be compared with the past, because China's economy is now larger than in 2008. In that year, China's total GDP was about 32 trillion yuan. In 2015, total GDP was approximately 68 trillion yuan. At present, China's total GDP is nearly 100 trillion yuan, which is three times and 1.5 times higher than the previous two. Depending on the size of the economy, the impact of the same amount of credit varies to some extent. Although the absolute amount is large enough to withstand the sequelae of a stimulus program, as well as the overall impact of the new RMB 4 trillion stimulus plan will perhaps not be too great. However, if the money disbursed in a short period of time is concentrated and quickly flowed to a certain area, it may also cause a major shock. This depends on whether money flows mainly to the property market, or to the consumer goods market, or the stock market?

Recently, several provinces have successively announced plans for key projects in 2020, and a new round of investment dramas totaling more than 20 trillion yuan has also begun. Judging from the information that has been disclosed, infrastructure investment is still a major issue in the planning of local governments. Because investment in infrastructure is still the most direct and effective economic stimulus policy. But in this

round, China's government from top to bottom has formed a consensus to invest in "new infrastructure", that is, on the basis of complementing traditional infrastructure such as railways, highways, and rail transit, the government will vigorously develop new infrastructure such as 5G, artificial intelligence, industrial Internet, smart cities, education and healthcare.

*Whether the new round of economic stimulus will repeat the "Four Trillions" plan of 2008 and how much it will play a role in boosting the China's economy depend on the focus of government investment funds and where the money released by credit flows.*

There are signs that although the Coronavirus epidemic has impacted the economy, the digital economy has become a "counter attacker" in the process. Taking online office, online education and other fields as examples, the "online model" can effectively offset the losses caused by shutting down production. For example, companies can continue to work and students can continue to learn online. In the long run, the digital economy has great room for growth, especially because of this epidemic, which has made more industries aware of the importance of digital construction. Therefore, in the post-epidemic era, the digital economy will become an important content of "new infrastructure" investment such as cloud computing. As the infrastructure of the entire digital economy, the "new infrastructure" will have unprecedented opportunities for development. In the past, when infrastructure was mentioned, people immediately thought of stimulating infrastructure such as railways and highways, but now the new infrastructure means cloud computing, AI, and 5G technologies. It is showing sufficient vitality and is expected to become a new growth point for China's future economy.

Whether the new round of economic stimulus will repeat the "Four Trillions" plan of 2008 and how much it will play a role in boosting the China's economy depend on the focus of government investment funds and where the money released by credit flows. If money flows into the

housing market in the short term, the stimulus plan will have many negative impacts like the old “Four Trillion” plan. If money flows into the consumer market and new infrastructure (such as cloud computing, AI, 5G technology) for a long time, the economic boost after the epidemic will have another picture. However, there is a sharp contradiction between fighting the epidemic and returning to work. Whether the novel Coronavirus outbreak is mitigated and controlled in the short term will determine whether the new economic stimulus plan can be truly implemented and effective.



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# COVID-19: Internal Security Threat?

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**T**he emergence of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (also known as COVID-19) has had many economic, political, and emotional impacts thus far. The long-term effects may not emerge for many years. Of the initial impacted areas, perhaps the one of most concern is the emotional impact. While statistics and key performance indicators are objective-based, emotional responses and emotional measurements are not. An individual's contextualism combined with current mood and situation can result in unpredictable responses.

Most countries have a military to protect themselves from invaders. Billions of dollars have been spent on research and development of warships, multiple launch rocket systems (MLRS), jet fighters, tanks, and other such weapons, all in the name of ensured autonomy. These items were necessities before the technology revolution, but now such utilitarian posturing of "look at my big guns!" is no longer the symbol of military strength. The "big guns" now are of a soft nature—hackers and discontented masses.

In predominately and historically collectivist cultures, the level of power distance is usually high. But in very individualistic cultures like the American culture, the power distance is miniscule. Power distance is the extent that workers and masses follow instructions of managers or leaders without resistance. It also includes a level of trust. In collectivist cultures like China, the masses typically do not resist or adamantly question the policies of the government, and they have at least a

measureable amount of trust that the government is doing what is best for the masses.

In the US, this isn't the case. In the American culture, the masses tend to question, if not resist, the policies and decisions of managers and leaders. It is not uncommon for a worker to tell their manager "No, I'm not going to do what you asked me to do." In fact, if a worker performs an action as demanded by the manager, and the action is illegal, the worker will be held legally responsible, too. The Enron scandal is a prime example of this. Such whistleblower laws, extreme individualism, miniscule power distance, loss of an altruistic moral compass, demand for unwavering perfectionism, and constant disinformation, as well as technology to "ensure transparency" create high levels of resistance, suspicion, and distrust, which are now engrained in the fabric of modern American culture.

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed more than just its origin, which is also hotly debated with the familiar American finger-pointing to assign blame. COVID-19 has shown how much people have become accustomed to the daily grind of work. People rely on leaving their homes every day. Staying at home has caused mental anguish for many people, and the abrupt change of routine has increased anxiety. COVID-19 has also revealed a weakness in the free market system: economies quickly grind to a halt when money stops flowing from the masses spending their paychecks. As national economies are interdependent in today's modern world, this slowdown or halt has resulted in hardships for many people.

*No one should underestimate the desperation level of those (the masses vs. the government) who are driven to a breaking point from lack of healthcare, livable wages, education, and housing as well as the loss of an altruistic moral compass, demand for unwavering perfectionism, and constant disinformation.*

In the US, these hardships combined with distrust may become America's biggest security threat. Internal threats may not be as easy to identify and to resolve as external threats. The factor of distrust may be very difficult for government entities to counter. A huge amount of disinformation and distrust may very well be the perfect recipe for future unrest or revolution in the US. How the American government handles such unrest will either peacefully resolve the problem or add fuel to the fire.

Americans are already skeptical that vaccines are causing a rise in autism. If there is a mandated COVID-19 vaccine, American parents may not trust that it won't cause damage to their children. Some Americans may suspect that the US created COVID-19, and then perhaps a damaging vaccine. Additionally, the current American president has consistently tried to dismantle universal healthcare for the American masses. With the exorbitant cost of healthcare in the US, how can Americans pay for acute medical care for COVID-19 or for the devastation caused by America's plague of mass shootings? The downward spiral continues infinitely.

In the recent past, the AIDS epidemic had a similar impact on the masses. There was a lot of uncertainty and fear of catching this deadly disease. After the initial irrational panic, Americans accepted that they would have to live with this threat and quickly resumed their normal lives, but with a bit of caution. This will undoubtedly happen again once the novelty of the COVID-19 pandemic and media attention drops. But, Americans won't forget about COVID-19 and also perhaps how the American government handled the situation. One of the major differences between the AIDS epidemic and the COVID-19 pandemic is that COVID-19 is more contagious than AIDS. The AIDS epidemic was mostly confined to certain groups at first and then spread slowly through

the masses. With proper and effective education about preventing the disease, AIDS became less feared and more controlled. COVID-19 has taken a different path. It is indiscriminate, affecting anyone from any group.

Hardships drive change, peaceful or otherwise. No one should underestimate the desperation level of those (the masses vs. the government) who are driven to a breaking point from lack of healthcare, livable wages, education, and housing as well as the loss of an altruistic moral compass, demand for unwavering perfectionism, and constant disinformation. Government is comprised of individual people. The masses are comprised of individual people. Individual people have their own breaking points, and the stresses on the American public at this time may reveal when that breaking point will be and how it will present itself—perhaps as an internal threat to US security.



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# Local Progress Towards Global Climate Success in a Post-Coronavirus Era

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**B**ack in mid-March, as the economic shutdowns associated with COVID-19 began in earnest around the world, strange pictures began to flood social media sites. These photographs didn't concern the rapidly changing political landscape of the early pandemic stages, nor were they annual tributes to the fabled late emperor Julius Caesar. No, this year's ides of March brought a different yet equally enigmatic flavor to a month made famous by the Shakespearian prophecy – images of clear blue skies over Los Angeles, distant yet distinct silhouettes of the Himalayans in northern India, and trash-free canals in the Venetian Lagoon. These surprisingly pristine images of areas traditionally blemished by pollution became a veritable media sensation in the early spring. Bolstered by playful riffs off of the original photographs, the mass incredulity spawned by these pictures garnered genuine environmental intrigue across the world. As quarantines were put in place and lives slowed down, we asked ourselves, could humanity really impact the quality of our environments to this extent?

This early social media craze helped reveal a truth of the times: the COVID-19 crisis has obscured environmental issues yet simultaneously laid bare the great value that we as humans place on livable, enjoyably clean ecosystems. Even as the realities of coronavirus became all-consuming in our daily lives, it has rekindled in so many the innate natural connection we have with the environments around us. As we stopped frequenting the roads and skies and industries reduced production, many of us began to experience outdoor walks or moments of fresh air

with renewed focus. And, as the photos of Venice and L.A poignantly demonstrated, pollution levels truly had decreased. Analyzing available data points and policy actions, researchers estimate that CO2 emissions decreased by a peak of 17% in early April compared to 2019 levels, with some nations experiencing even greater individual reductions (Le Quere et al., 2020).

However, those hoping for a major shift in our track of climate change will be disappointed, as these recent phenomena represent all but ephemeral progress. As climatologists and environmental scientists know all too well, these reductions in pollution are only temporary and by themselves, are unlikely to have any meaningful effect on the inertia of our upward climb in atmospheric CO2 levels. As the researchers note, the economic and environmental actions taken during and after the pandemic will determine our ultimate climate trajectory for this year and the decades beyond. Considering this reality, and the vast potential in outcomes it entertains, the only way to truly address climate change is through holistic policy action. Given current technology and the nature of emissions sources, there are three key economically feasible ways to decrease emissions and mitigate climate change. First is the reduction in emissions associated with transportation. Second is the reduction in emissions from energy production. Lastly, standards must be set to increase the efficiency of energy consumption regimes both industrially and residentially. All of these points will also necessitate investment in green technology to forge pathways for more involved policies down the road. Interestingly, towards the ends listed above, in the United States, it has



been the cities and states that have led the charge in climate action, not the federal government. The powerful localities and regions most keenly aware of the pressing nature of climate change have begun serving as incubators for innovative climate policy in lieu of federal action. Along the Northeast, 11 states have joined the cap-and-trade Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) to address emissions associated with electrical generation. Similarly, 13 states along the east coast have demonstrated interest in forming the novel Transportation Climate Initiative (TCI), which would establish a market-based regime governing transportation emissions. Lastly, Massachusetts and California continue to lead the nation in energy efficiency standards, with state legislatures updating efficiency goals even as the federal government lags.

Though these regional initiatives are important and address certain mitigative mechanisms, the only way in which we will come close to achieving the desired goal of limiting global warming to 2°C as per the Paris Climate Accord will be with multilateral, global action. With near-universal participation, large environmental trading blocs will more feasibly and efficaciously address climate change. Therefore, it is necessary to translate the successes of tried and true regional programs into federal, and ultimately international, climate initiatives – turning local progress into a global success. Though the current president has eschewed the position of American leadership on climate action set under the Obama administration, there is hope for renewed activism.

Given the political climate in America and around the world due to the Coronavirus pandemic, the upcoming year may provide the greatest opportunity for substantive climate change seen this generation, for three reasons. First, even before COVID-19, environmental activism was already reaching peak levels across generations (Pew Research Center, February 2020). Secondly, social media sensations, as seen in March, demonstrate the continued salience of climate action, even with pandemic preoccupations. Lastly, and perhaps most important of all, the “Overton Window” for policy action has been bored open as a direct result of COVID-19. Across America and much of the world, a sea change

*...as we look towards the future of policy in a post coronavirus era, I urge nations around the world to build off of the successes and innovation of localities and to actualize the popular activism and potential for substantive climate action.*

in policy analysis has thrown out intransigent, slow-to-shift policy norms for new calls of meaningful, systematic change. Just as health care and justice systems have been scrutinized for inadequacies and inequities both during and before the pandemic, so too will the deficiencies of other government functions such as environmental protection come under review. With the eventual growth and return to some semblance of normalcy after the pandemic, popular calls for action will open new avenues for change – environmental policy included.

Thus, as we look towards the future of policy in a post coronavirus era, I urge nations around the world to build off of the successes and innovation of localities and to actualize the popular activism and potential for substantive climate action. Looking back at the images from March, one can only hope that they are portents of positive things to come, not fleeting scenes of a bygone environmental era.



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## The lighter side: Indigo Corona Logic

Sam Ward  
United States

**M**y grandfather Fleet was a smart man, brimming with practical and creative solutions to any problems that would arise. He was also one of the most soft-spoken and subtle human beings I have ever met. He could deal masterfully with machinery, tools, carpentry, electronics, finances and even a wide array of people problems. No matter what difficulties arose, he was Johnny on the spot with a solution ... except for one time when he wasn't Johnny on the spot.

I remember him becoming so overcome with angst regarding an Indigo snake that had been living in a hole in his back yard, that he had a momentary lapse in his logic skills. The snake had been there for quite some time, but as time passed, the snake grew as did my granddad's concern. Oh, ... it would probably be fair to mention at this point that the Indigo snake is the largest snake in North America, reaching lengths of 7 to 8 feet, so his anxiety could be considered somewhat justified.

There are two things I like about Indigo snakes. 1, they're not venomous, and 2, get ready for this ... they EAT rattlesnakes. And my grandparents lived on the edge of a central Florida wilderness that I would best describe as a Disneyland for rattlesnakes.

My granddad reached the conclusion that it might be best to fill in that hole, and allow Mr. Indigo to find other accommodations ... that is, if he wasn't actually buried in the hole when it got filled.

A few weeks later, while visiting, I asked granddad about his backyard snake. He told me he had filled in the hole and hadn't seen him since. "Gosh," I said, "I kind of liked that snake," and added, "You DID know that Indigo snakes EAT rattlesnakes, right?" He replied, "Yes, but we've never had any rattlesnakes around here." At that moment, an unusual distant look overtook him. I could see the lightbulb turn on and his inner machinery spinning. He glanced back at me, then looked down and shook his head slowly from left to right. Granddad said nothing, of course, keeping true to his subtle manner. We both understood the logic of it all though.

Lately, I have been able to draw a new parallel to our current Corona situation. Indigo logic tells us that as unpleasant as the thought of an Indigo snake living in your back yard might be, we may wish to more strongly consider the possible outcomes of NOT having one. I guess I could spell it out clearly at this point, but, ... I'm making an effort to be more subtle these days.



**Sam Ward** is a freelance illustrator living on the West Coast of Florida. His illustrations appear in magazines, newspapers, on book covers, packaging and advertisements both nationally and globally. As far as his humorous observations go, well, he's just an ordinary guy who gets up in the morning in this crazy world and doesn't know whether to laugh or cry.

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