JINNAH INSTITUTE

Asia and the World After COVID

Acknowledegments

Editor

Salman Zaidi

Design

Ayesha Mushtaq

About Jinnah Institute

Jinnah Institute is an independent policy research and public advocacy think tank in Pakistan. The Institute advances the causes of:

- Democratic institution building and strengthening state capacity for delivery on policy goals;
- National and human security discourse with an emphasis on regional peace;
- Entitlement to fundamental rights and freedoms;
- Accountability of public bodies and government;
- Building public equity in a plural and inclusive national identity.

To meet these objectives, Jinnah Institute engages with policy-makers, government, media, civil society, state institutions and academia. The Institute actively seeks to articulate independent national security strategies for Pakistan which incorporate the country's strategic imperatives while providing room for constructive engagement with the international community, as well as policy and opinion makers.

By serving as a bridge between academia and policy-making, and focusing on capacity building for the state and other policy making institutions, the Institute creates an enabling context and public space for ideas and resources to come together through mediums such as policy briefs, reports, lectures, seminars, round-tables and caucuses.

Within this framework, the two overarching program areas under which the Institute undertakes a variety of projects and interventions are:

a. Open Democracy Initiative

b. Strategic Security Initiative

Under these operational streams, Jinnah Institute seeks to accomplish a series of different but complementary objectives that work towards achieving the Institute's overarching goal of establishing a more democratic, transparent and inclusive environment for policymaking and a more tolerant, open and peaceful Pakistan.

Asia and the World After COVID

A Jinnah Institute Publication

Contents

ASIA AND THE WORLD AFTER COVID

How has the coronavirus pandemic transformed our societies thus far, and what new pressures will it spawn? Leadership responses have varied, as unprecedented demands on states, diplomacy and institutions create new trendlines for a new world. Global thought leaders share ideas on what to expect.

Struggling Times

Barnett Rubin

The U.S. will emerge from the pandemic only slowly with a weakened economy and a huge budget deficit, the magnitude of which will certainly impact credit markets. The US has postponed the deadline for filing income taxes, and the record high rate of unemployment means tens of millions of people are not paying payroll taxes, so the federal government's revenue must be taking a dive, though we don't have data yet. The revenue of the states, dependent on sales, excise taxes, as well as persona income taxes, have taken a "horrific" fall, gutting the financing of education, health, and other state subjects. Congress bills allocating $2.5 trillion (that's 12 zeroes) for economic recovery, and it's not enough. There will be trillions more. Taken all together it means that the US will not have the discretionary income it had in the past to project power.

At first, it looked like China would be strengthened by the pandemic. But now there are growing questions about how the closed nature of the Chinese system contributed to the spread of the disease. China's aid diplomacy is faltering because of the large amount of faulty equipment it is supplying as it sends masks and other protective equipment around the world. There were already rising questions about BRI and CPEC, but now it is an open question how an economic policy based on connectivity will fare in an era of social distancing. Hence, it is not clear to what extent China will be able to benefit from the weakening of the US. The unfortunate conclusion is that just as transnational cooperation becomes more important than ever, there will be a vacuum in the leadership needed to produce it.

Barnett Rubin is a Senior Fellow and Associate Director of Center on International Cooperation (CIC).

Compelled Solitude

Rajmohan Gandhi

COVID-19 has given a push to both multilateralism and scapegoating. The virus is bias-free. It is impartial over race, religion, nationality. It is against life, especially human life. But since something in human nature desires a scapegoat for a calamity, we should expect pressures in every country against particular groups of disliked people and/or against particular countries. In countries where popular media loves to target particular groups, we should expect the targeting to intensify, though, given the impartiality of the virus, the targeting may take subtler forms.

But I expect multilateralism — and the notion of a common humanity — to deepen in the minds of millions of serious women and men in the world who are obtaining daily evidence that front-line heroes against the virus represent a variety of races, religions, sects, races and nations. A significant slice of humanity is therefore likely to emerge from the crisis with a firmer belief in our commonness.

"Asia" is an immense space. The story is bound to vary from country to country. If the virus becomes more menacing, attacking all of us in new and larger waves, there may be an urge for changes in leadership. If this does not happen, people may not want — during a crisis — to disturb the existing leadership. However, if large numbers of the worse-off feel unaided when attacked by the virus or by hunger, they will force a change.

Though isolated, many of us are lucky enough to be widely connected across the miles, and sometimes across oceans. Also, while steering clear of people, we are also perhaps loving them more. We probably value our near ones more than we did, and are less likely to take them for granted.

If our prayers are realized and the pandemic recedes, will this recognition also fade away? If envisioning the normal in times of danger is one secret of survival, remembering (after normalcy returns) the sort of risks we face today may be a secret of wisdom.

In India, Pakistan, China or anywhere else, if we use the solitude compelled by the pandemic to ask the frankest of questions — about ourselves, our societies, and our nations — that would be a response the coming generation might appreciate.

Rajmohan Gandhi is an eminent historian, biographer, and serves as Research Professor at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

CoVid-19 and the Future of Multilaterism

Peter Frankopan

The spread, extent and effects of CoVid-19 took many by surprise. With more than half the world's population in lockdown, it is not hard to see why. And yet those working on major threats to geopolitical security especially those specialising in emerging infectious disease have been warning about this for some time: in December, I was asked to write about the greatest dangers facing the world in the coming decade by a prominent publication in the UK.

The editors asked if I thought China was the biggest challenge; or digital disruption; or perhaps Iran and the nuclear threat – or maybe rivalry between Pakistan and India, within the context of Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative or otherwise. All of these were serious, I said: but two threats stood head and shoulders above all others: pandemic; and the lack of a global plan to deal with pandemic. As it turns out, as my article was being published, doctors in Wuhan were starting to notice strange cases of patients with an unknown respiratory illness being admitted to hospital.

The world today feels like a very different place to just a few months ago. Then, discussion was all about trade wars; pressure on Iran; possible peace settlements in Afghanistan; rising military expenditure; rising connectivity and sharpening rivalries. Now, we are facing something very different: the decimation of small businesses; question marks about the viability of major corporations; the very stability not only of governments but perhaps even of states themselves; of global pandemic – and not only a possible but very likely food shortages for the poor around the world that may lead to 300,000 deaths per day, according to the head of the United Nations World Food Programme.

So when we think about the future of multilateralism, we are in fact thinking about the future of humankind. We should be trying to think big and beyond our national responses and local concerns to trying to find some joined up courses of action, of support and of medical, financial and humanitarian intervention. This is the moment to be drawing in resources, scholars, business people and to be creative in trying to steer away from the rocks and towards safety.

On that, it is hard to be too optimistic: after all, few would agree that multilateralism was in good shape before CoVid-19 for the really big issues in the world today – like climate change; like migration; like tolerance; like normalising regional relations away from confrontation. On the other hand, human beings are nothing if not pragmatic. And we are often at our best when faced with crisis – or as is the case now – multiple crises. So you never know. Necessity is the mother of all invention; and it is not that hard to look past a few hard-line or populist leaders who play to the galleries to see that for most people around the world, we would much rather try to solve problems together rather than descend into the jaws of hell.

Peter Frankopan is Professor of Global History at Oxford University, and author of the best-selling book 'The New Silk Roads'.

Like an Earthquake with Aftershocks

Parag Khanna

The coronavirus has proven to be a greater test for leadership than 9/11 and the financial crisis combined, a sobering shock that has shattered complacent assumptions that progress always moves "up and to the right." Evolution, both biological and civilizational, is a much more haphazard and indeterminate process. If we are lucky, the world will pass "peak virus" within the next six months. But the economy, governments, and social institutions will take years to recover in the best-case scenario.

Moving forward, public- and private-sector leaders will have to accept a far greater agency in defining long-term priorities such as combating climate change and communicating the short-term sacrifices necessary to achieve them. Incentives will have to be realigned, with governments subsidizing investments in sustainability—and markets rewarding those firms that achieve revenue with resilience. If we are at "war" against the pandemic or future civilizational threats, we should act like it.

But it would be wildly optimistic to predict, even to hope, that multilateral institutions will be upgraded by great powers to better cope with future shocks. The United Nations will continue its terminal decay. While the IMF has temporarily restored its relevance, its macroprudential supervision will fall by the wayside. The World Bank is woefully slow and under-resourced. The most optimistic scenario, then, is a revival of regional organizations. Regionalization will be the new globalization.

The further we look into the future, the more we can imagine how global society may well be reinvented by the coronavirus pandemic. The 14th-century Black Death caused millions of deaths across Eurasia, splintered the largest territorial empire ever known (the Mongols), forced significant wage growth in Europe, and promoted wider maritime exploration that led to European colonialism. These phenomena trace strongly to the plague even if they played out over centuries. The consequences of today's pandemic will emerge far more quickly, and with the benefit of foresight, we can try to mitigate them, capitalize on them, and build a more resilient global system in the process.

Parag Khanna is founder and managing partner of FutureMap and author of numerous books including Connectography and The Future Is Asian.

JINNAH INSTITUTE

Email: info@jinnah-institute.org
www.jinnah-institute.org