THE EFFECTS OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY

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Abstract: As of June 2021, the pandemic has killed over four million people and continues to impact healthcare systems, the economy and governance. Though the pandemic has affected all world regions, it has significantly impacted the most impoverished and vulnerable.

The COVID-19 outbreak forced peace and security actors to quickly adapt to a 'new normal' and reorganize their work to continue operating in this new context. Some of the sudden adopted changes initially meant to be temporary seem to be destined to remain in place and have the potential to reshape the sector in the medium to long term. The COVID-19 health crisis has a direct impact on many aspects of the civil dimension of security especially on human security, health security, food security and economic security. The economic and political implications of the pandemic will ripple through the world for years. The pandemic is raising geopolitical tensions, and great powers are jockeying for advantage and influence. States are struggling to cooperate and in some cases are undermining cooperation to respond to the pandemic and its economic fallout.
The post-coronavirus world could be a world of intensified nationalist rivalries on the economic revival and political influence. However, strengthening cooperation among nations at different levels will lead to the growth of health, economy, and security. While much remains uncertain, it is clear COVID-19 is both a multidimensional crisis and an opportunity for change.

Keywords: effects, COVID-19, peace, security

1. Introduction

The scale and global impact of the COVID-19 pandemic highlights the severity of the threat that phenomena and situations falling outside the traditional military security paradigm can pose to international peace and security. Already the COVID-19 pandemic (and the responses and reactions to it) has had an adverse impact on traditional security issues.

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Existing geopolitical tensions have been heightened and State-sponsored actors appear to be exploiting vulnerabilities created by the health crisis to intervene in other States and create destabilizing effects by spreading coronavirus-related disinformation and carrying out cyber-attacks (Pobjie, 2020:4).

Several crucial themes have been identified for the special issue on COVID- 19. These include the state apparatus, governance, peacebuilding and security; state instability and fragility amidst COVID-19; securitization of COVID-19 pandemic; democracy and elections amidst the spread of COVID-19; gendered experiences, perspectives and responses to the pandemic; and impacts of Covid-19 crisis on conflicts and politics. Other themes include, but are not limited to, countering violent extremism in an era of Covid-19; traditional media representations of African agency and responses to Covid-19; social media reactions to, and mis-representation of COVID-19 treatments; and the need to build resilience in health care system, post-COVID-19 (Oriola and Knight, 2020:112-113).

COVID-19 rapidly elevated health security as a human, national and global security threat. Responses can partly be explained through securitization theory and particularly the existential language coupled with unprecedented extraordinary measures taken. Overall, COVID-19 has probably impressed upon decision-makers how a previously peripheral threat perception rapidly became pivotal in global and national security debates and forced leaders to introduce responses beyond normal politics in order to deal with an existential threat to all societies. The ripple effect across societies is unpredictable and this is visible in how leaders react, containment measures and the will to enforce decisions with police, and even military agencies. As the world recognizes that health insecurity anywhere is a threat to security everywhere, we need to make common cause with all the nations in the world as a collective to accept extraordinary measures to serve the common good of humanity.

The key rights affected by the COVID-19 emergency were the rights to freedom of movement and assembly. Hybrid democracies with weaker institutions and lower public trust toward the government demonstrated certain risks to democracy and human rights in their implementation of emergency measures. As the executive expanded its power, the legislature and the judiciary were limited in their ability to oversee the measures and their implementation (Skendaj et al., 2021: 41).

Also, the Security Council's characterisation of the COVID-19 pandemic as an endangerment and threat to international peace and security and not a 'threat to the peace' under article 39 of the Charter gives rise to important legal implications (Pobjie, 2020:1).

2. United Nations and COVID-19

In Resolution 2532 (2020), the UN Security Council characterised the COVID-19 pandemic as an endangerment to international peace and security and, for the first time, demanded a general ceasefire and humanitarian pause in armed conflicts across the globe (Pobjie, 2020:1).

Peace operations across the world began swiftly adapting to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 disease. Missions have been forced to take unprecedented steps to cope with the coronavirus pandemic. These efforts may be just the beginning, and much more significant reductions and changes in the way these operations function may be needed over the coming months (De Coning, 2020:1).

The SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus has forced United Nations peacekeeping missions to reassess which of their activities are essential for carrying out their mandated responsibilities. Missions have also had to adapt operations to minimize the risk of spreading the virus to both the people the UN is tasked to protect, and to the peacekeepers themselves. Some of these new practices are specific to the pandemic and will change over time in response to the severity of the risk the virus poses. Others are likely to be more lasting, including a more essentialist approach to mandate implementation and adaptive approach to planning and mission management. (Ibid).

The COVID-19 pandemic is prompting shifts in security priorities for countries around the world. As militaries face growing calls to cut budgets, gaps are emerging in UN peacekeeping operations; military training and preparedness; counterterrorism operations; and arms control monitoring, verification, and compliance. These gaps are likely to grow without a quick end to the pandemic and a rapid recovery, making managing conflict more difficult particularly because the pandemic has not caused any diminution in the number or intensity of conflicts. COVID-19-related disruptions to essential health services such as vaccinations, aid delivery, and maternal and child health programs will increase the likelihood of additional health emergencies, especially among vulnerable populations in low-income countries. As examples, the pandemic has disrupted HIV/AIDS treatments and preventative measures in Sub-Saharan Africa, as well as measles and polio vaccination campaigns in dozens of countries. World populations, including Americans, will remain vulnerable to new outbreaks of infectious diseases as risk factors persist, such as rapid and unplanned urbanization, protracted conflict and humanitarian crises, human incursions into previously unsettled land, expansion of international travel and trade, and public mistrust of government and health care workers (Annual threat assessment of the US intelligence community, 2021: 17-18).

3. Human security and COVID-19

The spread of infectious disease (ID) in catastrophic proportions, such as in endemics and pandemics, is a threat to national and international security. In fact, the threat to human security and biosecurity should be included along with other perceived security threats such as conventional warfare and terrorism. Unlike ISIS, al-Qaeda, and the Taliban, ID has no natural enemy; it cannot be stopped by policy, borders, or alliances. Yet it gets less treatment in the literature and by policy wonks than do more traditional security threats (Albert et al., 2021: 83).

In the midst of this crisis, the role of the various aspects of the civil dimension of security and the impact of the pandemic on the latter could appear as secondary. Yet, fundamental freedoms and democratic principles, access to verified and unmanipulated information, migration, women's rights, and participation, as well as the protection and education of children, are all at the core of this crisis. Indeed, some even have a catalytic effect on the pandemic.

While certain aspects of the civil dimension have been instrumental in the evolution of the health emergency, in turn the crisis could have long-term repercussions in many areas related to the civil dimension. The COVID-19 pandemic threatens to cause a lasting global challenge to certain liberal principles (Maylam, 2020: 1-2). The COVID-19 health crisis has a direct impact on many aspects of the civil dimension of security. Indeed, the health crisis is

characterised by a confrontation between democratic principles and the authoritarian model, an escalation of disinformation and propaganda, and a threat to the values of inclusiveness and solidarity. For now, these elements have overshadowed and continue to overshadow the emergence of a comprehensive and coordinated global response to the pandemic, which knows no state boundaries and affects – albeit to varying degrees – every country in the world (Maylam, 2020: 17-18).

COVID-19 pandemic therefore has seriously threatened food security. The risks in food security are compounded when one examines the impact of the pandemic on the 3 basic elements of food security (food availability, physical access to food and economic access to food) (Caballero-Anthony, 2021:2).

With the onset of COVID-19 Pandemic, the global education system is going through an unprecedented disruption though different mode and strategies of learning by different countries have resulted in an almost balanced continuation of the learning process but has not been fruitful for all levels of students. According to UNICEF, in South Asia, almost 430 million children are affected by school closures and are at risk of dropping out of the education system due to the economic impact on their families (Barua, 2020:1).

In the case of COVID-19, although the virus infects people regardless of gender, its impacts are nonetheless gendered. With women comprising of the bulk of the world's frontline health workers, both formally at work and informally at home, they are at significant risk of infection. This is further heightened by the chronic shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE) endangering health workers worldwide. Domestic violence is another indirect impact of COVID-19. With the combination of increased tension, stress and confinement conditions in the household during times of crisis, rates of domestic violence also tend to rise (Nanthini and Nair, 2020:3-4).

While coronavirus pandemic is unquestionably in the focus of worldwide attention, specific influences on the magnitude of negative psycho-socio-economic fallout of COVID-19, which depends on a constellation of pre-pandemic, peri-pandemic and post-pandemic factors in each country and region, deserve particular attention. *(Ćosić et al., 2020: 28).*

The humanitarian and human rights dimension of the COVID-19 pandemic underscores the inconsistent application of sanctions and their impacts on general populations and travel, something that is slowly becoming more recognized in work on mobility and tourism justice (Seyfi et al., 2020:11).

The COVID-19 crisis also has short- and long-term implications on gender issues. The containment measures adopted in several countries in response to the pandemic have led to an increase in domestic violence against women (+44% cases in France). Moreover, the health crisis has led to a worsening of socio-economic inequalities between women and men. To avoid a lasting deterioration in these areas, these elements must be taken into account fully in the short and long-term responses to the crisis and its aftermath. On the other hand, the health crisis has had, and continues to have, dramatic repercussions on the security and future opportunities of children and young people around the globe. The increase in violence against them with, for example, a 30% increase in intra-family violence in France, and loss of access to education during the same period could have serious long-term implications for society (Maylam, 2020: 1-2).

4. Health security and COVID-19

The prevention and detection of disease outbreaks, responding to them in such a way that they do not become emergencies, and the definition of what constitutes a health emergency and/or a pandemic are the principal concerns of global health security. (Harman, 2021:605).

This pandemic is dismantling the foundations for protecting and advancing health. The right to health, health equity, and social justice form a trinity of values that animates the daily practice of global health. This coronavirus has accentuated inequalities on all continents, across all societies. The direct effects of the pandemic have been horrifying.

Border closures, and the lack of basic equipment for front-line health personnel, have revealed how poorly prepared countries have been for such a pandemic. As governments invest heavily in measures aimed at containing the virus and offer socio-economic stimulation packages to their own population, there is a risk that aid budgets, including budgets for funding the WPS agenda and the civil society actors promoting this, will shrink (Osland et al., 2020: 2).

The global shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE) such as surgical masks, N95 masks, respirators, hand sanitizers, gloves, face shields, disposable gowns, etc. for frontline health care workers did not only represent an ethical challenge but also a significant barrier to pandemic preparedness. Ultimately, these shortages posed a significant risk to both national and global health security (Javedl and Chattu, 2020:302-303).

As evident from the spread of COVID-19, the world has paid a high price when a government curbs the free flow of information, particularly risk communication from its health professionals. Major players in global health need to work together instead of attacking each other for achieving the common targets of improving the overall health status of global citizens. In this globalized world, no country can isolate itself. There is a need for a forward-looking view, and change is essential as the road ahead will require alliance-building and safeguarding human rights as they have a significant impact on whether we can achieve health security at the national and global levels health security. Failure of international cooperation would prevent patients from getting the essential health services they need and jeopardize the health of frontline workers and the operation of the entire health care system globally. Nations need to develop and nurture cooperation practices, which serve as the core for mutual strategic trust. The priority for all countries should be to explore and find common resource allocation, common interest, and common operational overlap on development issues (Javedl and Chattu, 2020:302-303).

However, while COVID-19 exposes the fault lines in global health politics, it also demonstrates some of the positive gains made in global health security, including a subtle shift away from dependence on the UNSC and WHO. Institutional change and experience from previous global health emergencies have led to a more dispersed and inclusive form of global health security that is more equipped to respond to global political issues during a major pandemic (Harman, 2020:373).

The global COVID-19 pandemic, along with the implemented social distancing efforts intended to slow down its spread, have brought economies and food systems into disruption at a global and local scale, with wide ranging ramifications in terms of food security. Food insecurity is likely to lead into serious consequences in terms of public health. Public health,

which is largely how the COVID-19 response has been led and initially classified, appears to be insufficient to describe or deal with the consequences of this type of pandemic. Moreover, COVID-19 highlights that the concept of "One Health" covers more than just the emergence of an infectious disease, but also extends to food-related health outcomes. Ultimately, to prepare for future outbreaks or threats to food systems, one must to take into account the SDGs and "Planetary Health." By doing so, we should be able to mitigate the impact of larger societal and political risks such as vulnerability, livelihoods, etc., and their interactions with the natural environment (Mardones et al., 2020: 6).

5. Economy and COVID-19

Economic security has become an important priority, although this is not about social protection, but also about supporting strategic sectors of the economy. Balancing on the brink of the need for social protection, on the one hand, and the rise of austerity, on the other, governments opted for severe economic restrictions (Pidyukov et al., 2021: 771).

As a result of the pandemic, poverty has grown and economic disruption has affected people in many countries. The World Bank estimates that in 2020, as a result of COVID-19 and its economic effects compounded by the effects of armed conflict and climate change, between 119 and 124 million people were pushed into extreme poverty (those living on under $1.90 per day) 16. In 2021 the crisis will continue and is projected to intensify, and those figures will further rise to between 143 and 163 million. Measures to contain the spread of the virus such as repeated lockdowns brought economic disruption which threatened nearly half the world's workforce with loss of their livelihoods (Di Liddo, 2021: 14).

The national security issues in particular non-traditional security issues such as law enforcement, health, food, supply chain management, industry etc. are severely impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak in all countries of the world. In developing countries, the pandemic has severely been affecting not only the health sector but also the overall socio-economic spectrum (Alam et al., 2021:2). The Covid-19 pandemic resulted in rapid economic decline in the world economy (Caballero-Anthony, 2021:2).

The Covid-19 has the great impact on the economy of the world. It has affected the economy of more than 150 countries. The lockdown during Covid-19 pandemic has affected all service sectors like restaurants, banks, food and beverages etc. The E-commerce sectors also affected due to the pressure of supply chain deliveries (Kapoor and Dubey, 2020:214).

COVID-19 health outcomes cannot be simplistically linked to national incomes or being within the global north or south. Some of the highest infection and fatality rates recorded to date have been in the global economic hegemon – the United States, and in Western European countries. In contrast, the picture is much more mixed in the global South: while some lower- and middle-income countries (e.g., Brazil, Ecuador, and Mexico) have become infection hotspots, other countries/regions (e.g. Africa, East and Southeast Asia) have had much lower official fatality rates to date.

The pandemic's potential to disrupt governance arrangements is partly linked to its having highlighted the fragility of a global economic system that, until now, seemed the only one possible; its having exposed, and compounded, structural inequalities at local to global levels; and its having prompted extensive state intervention to tackle the health emergency

and the resulting economic fallout, potentially reshaping public discourses about the role of state and market for years to come (Cotula, 2021:1).

The economic and political implications of the pandemic will ripple through the world for years. The pandemic is raising geopolitical tensions, and great powers are jockeying for advantage and influence. States are struggling to cooperate and in some cases are undermining cooperation to respond to the pandemic and its economic fallout, particularly as some governments turn inward and question the merits of globalization and interdependence. Some governments, such as China and Russia, are using offers of medical supplies and vaccines to try to boost their geopolitical standing (Annual threat assessment of the US intelligence community, 2021: 17-18).

The economic fallout from the pandemic is likely to create or worsen instability in at least a few and perhaps many countries, as people grow more desperate in the face of interlocking pressures that include sustained economic downturns, job losses, and disrupted supply chains. Some hard-hit developing countries are experiencing financial and humanitarian crises, increasing the risk of surges in migration, collapsed governments, or internal conflict (Ibid). The resurgence in COVID-19 infections early this year may have an even greater economic impact as struggling businesses in hard-hit sectors such as tourism and restaurants fold and governments face increasing budget strains. The effects on developing countries especially those that rely heavily on remittances, tourism, or oil exports may be severe and longer lasting; many developing countries already have sought debt relief. The economic fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic, along with conflict and weather extremes, has driven food insecurity worldwide to its highest point in more than a decade, which increases the risk of instability. The number of people experiencing high levels of acute food insecurity doubled from 135 million in 2019 to about 270 million last year, and is projected to rise to 330 million by yearend (Ibid).

5.1 Digital technologies and economy

The pandemic accelerated the adoption of digital technologies in some areas where uptake had been stalled or was only slowly progressing, such as data collection techniques, e-health online appointments and therapies, online working, learning, and social interconnectedness. New challenges were created, requiring the scaling up of production, fast-tracking of digital supplies, construction of online platforms and video-conferencing products. These transformations did not come without a cost: the pandemic exacerbated existing challenges, demanding government interventions to prevent harm and social exclusion associated with teleworking and social networking on an unprecedented scale. Even before the pandemic, social scientists recognised that technological development and economic growth did not necessarily result in social progress. Their analyses and the questions they raise in this article reveal how the innovative digital solutions embraced during the pandemic to stop the spread of the virus and avoid economic meltdown may also have been used to justify restrictions on personal freedom and forms of surveillance that risk being difficult to reverse (Hantrais et al., 2020:266).

6. Lessons learnt

There can be derived seven key policy-relevant lessons by shining the spotlight of COVID-19 on how global sustainability has evolved over recent decades. First, to survive future disasters, the key role of environmental harm must receive even more attention, especially when it triggers dangerous feedbacks between ecological and socio-economic systems. Second, integrated globally-coordinated, long-term solutions are needed to address multiple issues, using multi-disciplinary methods (instead of piecemeal, knee-jerk reactions). Third, individuals need to feel empowered for sustainable development, to help themselves and their neighbours by adopting simple and sensible measures. Fourth, building on the third lesson, key social values like inclusion, empowerment, equality, social justice, unity and consensus building will further strengthen solidarity and resilience against destabilising shocks. Fifth, the pandemic has given fresh impetus towards a transformative BIGG path to sustainable development. Sixth, urban habitats and lifestyles could be redesigned to boost sustainability, by leveraging digital technology (DT). Seventh, better understanding and use of tools for analysing and managing risks is important, especially in handling extreme events. These lessons will help to re-prioritise and re-set sustainable development strategy (Munasinghe, 2020: 1-2).

Analysis reveals the need for development approaches that can anticipate and respond to future, uncertain shocks – whether pandemics, climate change, financial turbulence or something else we have not even thought of. This means both revealing and challenging the structural conditions, power relations and political economic orders that create risks and vulnerabilities in the first place, while also accepting the need for flexible, contingent and negotiated responses in the face of uncertainty and context-specific complexity. Lasting transformations must address fundamental matters of power and politics, including challenging incumbent institutions and interests, at the same time as fostering hopeful, innovative alternatives. Post pandemic transformation also means embracing uncertainty and fostering often unruly, diverse alternatives that allow economic, social and political systems to transform towards more equitable and sustainable development pathways. It means rejecting the illusions of 'control', whether via technology, the market or state intervention, and enabling a more caring, inclusive, convivial approach to development; one in which knowledge and learning from diverse people and places have key roles to play and are harnessed to complement formal institutional (Leach et al., 2021:2).

Finally, within the framework of global health diplomacy, critical stakeholders' nations, individuals, and corporations must together strengthen the efforts of the World Health Organization (WHO) at delivering on its mandate. Everyone will surely benefit from efforts aimed at understanding changes that could impact global health and building capacity to respond to global health risks. This is why collective action for mitigating health emergencies is imperative. As infectious diseases continue to define global epidemiology and affect national security, national priorities must be broadened to include global health concerns, and the frontline role of the WHO in pandemic response demands greater recognition and appreciation. In this context, the rich and strong members of the WHO must invest in building stronger healthcare systems in poorer countries (Oshewolo and Nwozor, 2020: 265-275).

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, COVID-19 presents an immense challenge to the global community, highly impacting the capacity of most societies to maintain their well-being and appropriate functioning. As such, understanding its ongoing repercussions, including the characteristics of recovery from COVID-19, require longitudinal studies that will shed light on the varied impacts on individuals, populations, and societies. (Kimhi et al., 2020:6).

This pandemic has severely disrupted the proper functioning of the global community, leading to the closure of schools and academic institutions, partial or complete lockdowns, reduced public transportation and aviation, unemployment and economic hardships, decline of global stock markets, and panic shopping due to widespread concerns about supply shortages (Kimhi et al., 2020:1).

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a threat multiplier (Caballero-Anthony, 2021:2). COVID-19 affects developed as well as developing countries and requires global cooperation and solidarity, including development assistance (Schneider et al., 2021:5). This pandemic has disrupted life worldwide, with far-reaching effects that extend well beyond global health to the economic, political, and security spheres. It is expected COVID-19 to remain a threat to populations worldwide until vaccines and therapeutics are widely distributed.

COVID-19 rapidly elevated health security as a human, national and global security threat. Responses can partly be explained through securitization theory and particularly the existential language coupled with unprecedented extraordinary measures taken. Overall, COVID-19 has probably impressed upon decision-makers how a previously peripheral threat perception rapidly became pivotal in global and national security debates and forced leaders to introduce responses beyond normal politics in order to deal with an existential threat to all societies. The ripple effect across societies is unpredictable and this is visible in how leaders react, containment measures and the will to enforce decisions with police, and even military agencies. As the world recognizes that health insecurity anywhere is a threat to security everywhere, we need to make common cause with all the nations in the world as a collective to accept extraordinary measures to serve the common good of humanity.

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