

opportunities of point scoring instead of giving any mature, solid or informed response.

The role of media in Pakistan has also left much to be desired. They have been criticizing even good steps taken by the government such as giving relief to the people and asking for debt relief, which by the way was done by a host of developing countries around the world. There is a need for Pakistan to make massive reforms in the media industry by training and bringing those journalists to the fore who could understand what is health crisis, what is economic crisis, and what are the interventions made by the governments, etc.

On a larger scale, the international corporate media has created a great global scare. Fear is the best tool to create any behavioral change and the whole world was closed down after creating an international phenomenon of fear. Whether it is deliberate or not, the generated fear does seem to be driving a massive behavioral change worldwide. A monoculture is being developed in the world following this crisis, in which we are being restrained into a certain shell. There is also the fear that this behavior could become a new normal. For example, following technological advancements, becoming a cashless society and basing all transactions, and in turn activities on technology, will translate into giving up control and curtailing personal autonomy. This should not be allowed to become the norm in the post-pandemic world.

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Emerging Trends in Diplomacy, International Relations and Pakistan

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The Covid-19 pandemic has not just affected health but economy, society and politics as well. Moreover, it has transformed diplomacy and affected international relations. There are various aspects of this transformation which need discussion. Firstly, the changes in diplomatic format; secondly, its role in international relations; thirdly, dynamics of international politics in the post-Covid-19 world; fourthly challenges for Pakistan in this new world.

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The world of diplomacy, where meetings and conferences are considered essential, has opted for online communication. Almost all scheduled meetings have to be done through video conferencing following the virus outbreak. The European Council was the first to hold a video conference summit about this pandemic. The UN Security Council (UNSC) voted via email for the first time in history. The World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and Group of Twenty (G-20) leaders are conducting online sessions. Lately, Pakistan also hosted a video conference of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) member states to discuss the Covid-19 pandemic.

The trend of physical contact has ended and so have the centuries' old rules of protocol. The level of reception at the airport, the guard of honor presented, the meetings granted and the banquets hosted for visiting dignitaries were all social cues indicating the relationship between any two nations. Consequently, Covid-19 has considerably lightened the load on government treasuries worldwide, however the above mentioned protocols were also tools to sway political opinion and garner positive sentiment.

Similarly, Covid-19 is affecting the international relations. The rapid spread of the disease and the global economic effects call for a united effort. The World Health Organization (WHO) should be strengthened, and joint efforts made to counter the disease and reduce the speed of its spread. There is also a need to fight the expected global economic recession together at the international level. But unfortunately, two major world powers—United States (US) and China—are busy in accusing each other to be the cause of this crisis based on conspiracy theories. The US was insistent in the UNSC meeting of April 9 that the latter should mention the Covid-19 spread from China. On the other hand, according to China, this is irrelevant and not covered by the UNSC mandate. In May this year, US President Donald Trump labeled Covid-19 as the 'Chinese virus.' He also blamed WHO for not providing timely warnings and spreading misinformation and suspended funding to the organization for two to three months—the US is the biggest donor to WHO and provided \$400 million out of its \$6 billion budget last year.

Some Western analysts believe that a number of third world governments will fall as a result of rising inflation, unemployment and poverty following the outbreak of Covid-19. However, the same could be true for the first world countries. Their current leaders and their entire political systems depend on whether their governments can efficiently handle their current circumstances and stabilize the economic situation.

In the short term, pandemic has led to a cessation of hostilities in most war zones such as the ceasefire announced in Yemen.

However, the Kashmiris in India have gained no relief. Conversely, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi no longer has to face countrywide protests against his policies and anti-Muslim strategies and practices of his government persist. A systematic campaign is underway to demonize Muslims and extremist Hindus are maligning Muslims for spread of Covid-19. This has brought reactions from the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and some Arabs at individual level.

Alongside the political and social effects of Covid-19, the world faces crippling economic consequences of global recession. In only three weeks, 15 million Americans became unemployed. Europe and the rest of the world are not far behind. The question is will the world emerge as a better place by default after this pandemic. Will the US and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) coalition be forced to draw down their troops under economic pressure? Will there be peace in Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Palestine and Kashmir? Can the US and the rest of the world learn to let go of weapons of mass destruction including biological weapons? Only time will answer these questions.

In the post Covid-19 world, China is expected to emerge victorious in international politics and the US may lose its hold in the global affairs as a superpower. However, some analysts believe that Europe could become an opponent instead of a trade partner of China. New centers of power could emerge to fulfill the vacuum. This could shatter old alliances and create new ones, establishing a new world order all together.

Pakistan's Foreign Office (FO) has been fighting on multiple fronts to contain the Covid-19 crisis faced by Pakistanis across the globe. It is responsible for economic diplomacy, it must take care of Pakistanis living abroad, it has to gain aid and cooperation from friendly nations and also enlighten the world about the difficulties of people in Indian Occupied Kashmir.

On April 12, Prime Minister Imran Khan appealed for a global initiative for Pakistan's debt relief. Following up on the appeal, the foreign and finance ministers called their counterparts in various countries. Subsequently, a meeting of the G-20 finance ministers and governors of central banks on April 15 extended support to a time-bound suspension of debt service payments for the developing countries.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) and Pakistani missions abroad are working tirelessly to arrange the repatriation of thousands of Pakistanis from a number of countries alongside helping Pakistani communities, providing them with relief and assistance wherever required. Two officers – Junaid and Salman – from the Pakistan Embassy in Beijing went to Wuhan at the beginning of the outbreak to take care of Pakistani students stuck there, knowing well that they would not be allowed to return until the lockdown is lifted. It was 76 days before they could leave Wuhan. Pakistan's president and foreign minister also visited China on March 16, as a gesture of solidarity.

The foreign minister wrote letters to the UN secretary general and to the president of the UN Security Council bringing to their attention the threat to the health of the people of Indian Occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IOJ&K), and urged that India lift all restrictions to ensure Kashmiris could survive the disease. Meanwhile the OIC has expressed deep concern over rising anti-Muslim sentiments and Islamophobia in India where the Muslim minority is being blamed for spread of the coronavirus. The OIC Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (IPHRC) has also condemned the unrelenting vicious Islamophobic campaign in India.

Generally, MOFA was able to deal with the Covid-19 crisis to the best of its ability. However, it failed to convince Iran to keep returning Pakistani pilgrims in quarantine. The government also failed to make alternate arrangements to contain them in quarantine on Pakistani soil, leading to the spread of the disease. However, after that learning curve Pakistani authorities were careful to check and quarantine all incoming traffic.

The FO, in coordination with the Prime Minister's Secretariat and Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), is helped in repatriation of thousands of nationals from abroad. However, the operation deserves more attention and its speed should be accelerated for the benefit of the stranded Pakistanis and their families.

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