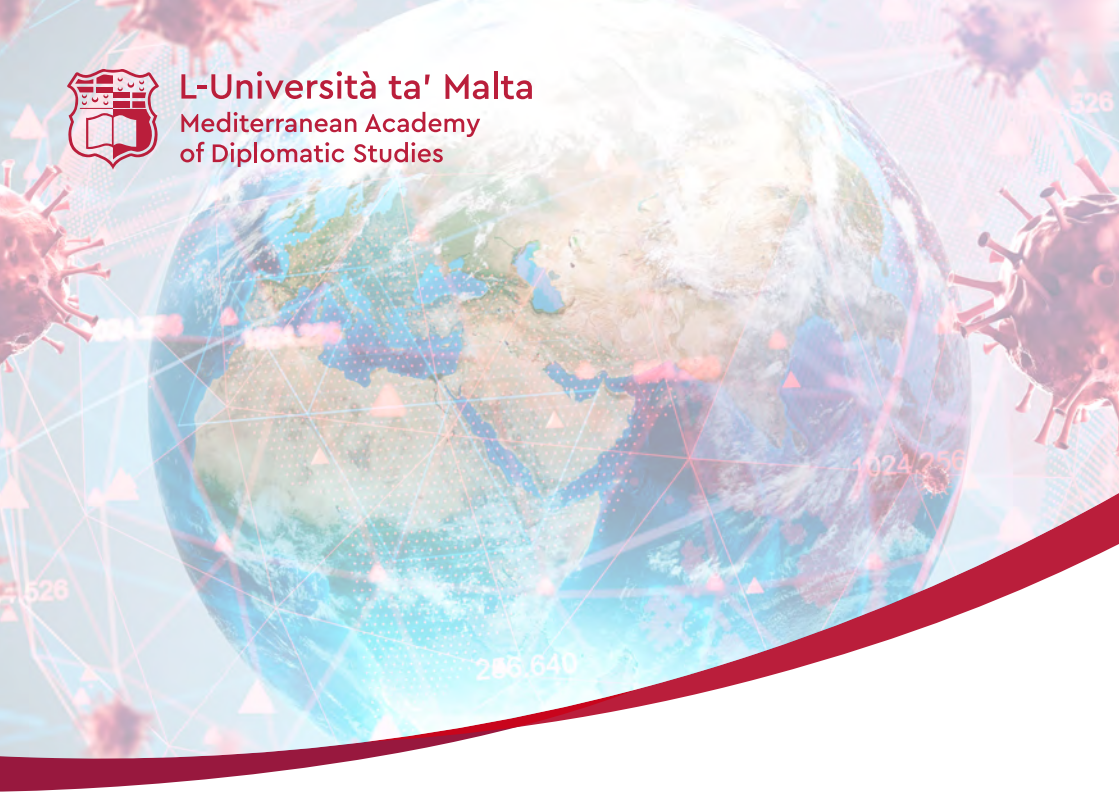

L-Università ta' Malta
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Med Agenda – Special Issue

Towards a Post Pandemic Euro-Mediterranean Strategy

Prof. Stephen C. Calleya (Editor)

Table of Contents

Acknowledgement

The emergence of a novel Coronavirus in 2019 may be the most consequential event of the early 21st century, upending modern life, globalization, and relations between countries. The health, economic, and social impacts of COVID-19 could have potentially destabilizing impacts at a time when other sources of instability like armed conflict and climate change have already caused undue pressure on a number of regions around the world. When one shifts the analytical lens to the Mediterranean, the continuously deteriorating security situation of this region could potentially exacerbate the conditions caused by the pandemic. The Mediterranean region has no effective security governance, no inclusive regional security organizations, and no framework that could advance cooperation coming out of the pandemic.

COVID- 19 causes us to reconsider what composes a security threat. In the evolving security environment, it is essential to look beyond current realities and timely evaluate strategic implications and effects on individuals, states and the international system regarding pandemics. COVID-19 tests the system we live in and is a transformative reflection point that guides us through what we had as a normal before and what will be a 'new normal' afterwards. Given its broad-reaching and global effects, COVID-19 is a game-changer that has impacted our ways of living. This pandemic is forcing us to adapt rapidly and to explore different strategies and realities.

Through this edited publication entitled *Towards a Post Pandemic Euro-Mediterranean Strategy*, MEDAC is presenting a series of articles providing real time analysis of the COVID-19 pandemic that the world is confronting. This publication includes contributions from MEDAC academics and distinguished visiting lecturers on the various impacts of COVID-19 in the fields of Diplomacy and International Relations.

This publication would not have been possible without the editorial support of Thomas Attard, M.A., a MEDAC Alumnus and research assistant at MEDAC.

Switzerland's MEDAC Vocation

Professor Godfrey Pirotta, *MEDAC Chairman*

MEDAC was established in 1990 pursuant to an agreement between the governments of Malta and Switzerland, with the specific mission of training young (and aspiring) diplomats from the Mediterranean region. Since its inception, the Academy's main supporters have been the Swiss Foreign Ministry, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Malta and the University of Malta. For the past 30 years, MEDAC has offered a one-year full-time Master (MDip and MA) degree in Diplomatic Studies. The academic programme comprises study units in International Law, International Relations, International History, International Economics and the practice of diplomacy. Language instruction in English, French or German is another element of the Masters programme. Apart from the academic dimension, the programme provides participants with an opportunity to study and interact in an international setting with students coming from North Africa, the Middle East, Africa, Europe and beyond.

Throughout MEDAC's three decades of training young diplomats from the Mediterranean region, the contribution of Switzerland's partnership has enabled MEDAC to benefit from direct invaluable experiences pertaining to contemporary international relations. MEDAC students have been provided with the opportunity to participate in annual study visits to Switzerland for more than the past 10 years. This week long academic endeavor has always consisted of interactive seminars at numerous international organisations in Geneva and also visits to the Swiss Federal Ministry in Berne.

Study visits to Geneva have included informative expert briefings at the World Health Organisation (WHO) where students are able to discuss in a comprehensive manner the importance of mitigating and managing global health challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic highlights the tremendous importance of providing young diplomats with a panalopy of skills and wisdom in the field of diplomacy, including health diplomacy, to be able to address current global affairs.

The inclusion of an interdisciplinary approach which is enshrined in MEDAC's post-graduate degree programme, including reference to global health diplomacy, is invaluable as demonstrated by the challenges that have emerged as a result of the 2020 pandemic. The direct exposure to leading international organisations in Geneva and 'a hands on' approach during academic sessions clearly highlights both the importance and relevance of the invaluable contribution that Switzerland provides to MEDAC's raison d'etre as a postgraduate training academy for young diplomats from the Mediterranean region.

Restoring Order in Pandemic Times

Professor Stephen C. Calleya, *MEDAC Director*

The Covid-19 pandemic provides us with an opportunity to conduct a reality check on the state of affairs of international relations in the 21st century. By definition a pandemic will usher in a new chapter in international relations in that it upsets the pattern of relations that is taking place as each actor in the international system seeks to crisis manage the health scare in a manner that is least disruptive economically and politically.

A cursory glance upon post-Cold War relations in the past thirty years sheds light on a number of defining moments in contemporary history that help us interpret more clearly the parameters of the current era. First, after a decade of superpower dominance between 1990 and the turn of the millennium, the United States has adopted a less intrusive foreign policy. The aftermath of the September 11th 2001 terror attacks and subsequent global war on terror strategy has seen the superpower adopt more of a foreign policy of selective engagement. This more cautious approach on the international stage has created space for regional powers to become more influential in their respective spheres of influence with China the most prolific actor in this regard.

The second major shock to the post-Cold War system was the international financial meltdown that commenced in September 2008. The collapse of the international economic order and the political decision to bail out the financial institutions significantly undermined the credibility of the capitalist system. This significant blow to the economic model that had emerged as the victor of the Cold War was further eroded by the policy of austerity that was adopted by most developed countries in the decade after the financial collapse.

The third historic episode that has sent shock waves throughout the international system is the Covid-19 pandemic that has brought to a standstill most of the international community during the first half of 2020. The instantaneous nature of global disruption at a political, economic and societal level is unprecedented in modern times and thus will impact the course of international relations in the decade ahead.

The massive health crisis plus economic shutdown that reverberated across the globe forced states and international organisations to adopt rapid draconian measures to try and prevent the pandemic from evolving into complete pandemonium. The Covid-19 contagion had a domino effect across the entire world commencing in China and quickly spreading to Europe and the Americas. The interdependent global system of states facilitated the rapid spreading of the coronavirus to all parts of the world.

The sudden shock that the Covid-19 pandemic unleashed upon the international system has resulted in a nebulous and challenging moment in international relations. This historic development has ushered in a much more fluid, volatile, and uncertain situation in post-Cold War relations. The collapse of the global political and economic order in such a short space of time and lack of coherence on the way forward reflects the 'sui generis' of international relations when historic moments happen.

The fact that the post Covid-19 pandemic character and structure of world politics will be radically altered is indisputable. But it is too soon to interpret whether this new phase will be a transitory or permanent one. Some observers claim that the post-pandemic period will be a temporary phase that may have a negative impact that lasts a few years and will largely consist of trial and error episodes of managing to live with the new normal. Others argue that the new uncertain moment we are in is here to stay as the international system of states comes to terms with the fragility of living in a globalized world of close to 8 billion people.

A review of the world system at work after the first six months of the Covid-19 pandemic reveals how overly simplistic traditional interpretations of the concept of power have become in such challenging times. The superpower and numerous other so-called great powers have suffered significantly high number of deaths and have often appeared to have arcane health care systems. Thus a post Covid-19 world will be one where the concept of power will be more multidimensional, structures more complex, and states themselves more permeable.

After the end of the Cold War saw the bipolar international system of states give way to a unipolar moment dominated by the United States and subsequently a more multipolar system of states it is clear that the fallout from the pandemic provides for a re-think of relations if order is to be restored globally. While any reference to a 'new world order' likely emerging seem premature given the remarkable upheaval caused by the pandemic in such a short period of time it is clear that strategic planning must take place to avoid a 'new world disorder' perspective from gaining momentum. Such an evaluation of the new geo-strategic landscape must seek to accommodate post pandemic political and economic realities in such a manner that a 'new world reordering' of relations takes place that gradually restores political stability and economic productivity worldwide.

The reaction to the Coronavirus pandemic in 2020 has highlighted how decentralized and anarchic the international system of states remains. Given the highly effective and elaborate global intelligence network that the WHO had at its disposal how was the pandemic not anticipated before it spread across the globe? Why weren't global alarm bells rung and borders closed to contain the spread of the virus? The largely ineffective stance adopted by the system wide authority in this regard, the World Health Organization (WHO), has undermined any semblance of order in world politics.

The task at hand is to ensure that the new post pandemic chapter ushers in a new world reorder that maintains stability in the international system and does not give way to a new world disorder where regional fragmentation and a resurgence of nationalism is rampant. If such a modality of co-operative security is to emerge it is essential that scholars focus more of their attention on formulating crisis management practical guidelines to contend with transnational security challenges that have become a permanent fixture in geopolitics.

Such an exercise in strategic realignment must include a comprehensive rethink of the concept of security. The traditional concept of security that focuses on military assets is too anachronistic. The Covid-19 pandemic demonstrates that a twenty first century concept of security must place human security at the top of the agenda and focus more strategic resources on health care and environmental security. In addition, the concept of security must be more flexible in design so that it can cater to constantly emerging risks and threats everywhere. A forward looking strategic framework must ensure that states are better

equipped to manage pandemics by adopting emergency contingency plans of action that do not allow for contagion of viruses globally and at least seek to contain outbreaks locally or regionally.

The very fluid and uncertain pandemic times we are experiencing where both continuity and change are manifesting themselves demands that we re-evaluate the concept of security so that a more effective cooperative security agenda is adopted to address the multitude of security challenges we are facing as a result of the pandemic. The chaotic scramble for medical equipment and supplies once the pandemic had started is one such totally unacceptable development that needs to be addressed in any security overhaul.

As the global death total approaches half a million people in June 2020, the most basic question that needs to be addressed is how could such a pandemic be allowed by the international community to wreak havoc upon the 21st century globalized world? As the pandemic continues to spread it may seem premature to already refer to lessons learnt from this historic moment. Yet certain outcomes already seem obvious. As highlighted above thirty years after the end of the Cold War, it is abundantly clear that the concept of security has remained too Cold War oriented.

Trillions of dollars continue to be spent on military procurement that include state of the art new airplanes, ships, and missiles. While such resources are important for traditional warfare they are largely ineffective when it comes to combating a pandemic. With Covid-19 loss of life in the United States in the first half of 2020 totalling more than one hundred thousand people, equivalent to all the loss of American lives in combat during the second half of the twentieth century, it is clear that a much higher proportion of future budgets should be dedicated to health care sectors and environmental protection.

The Covid-19 pandemic has provided us with a real time case study of the transnational nature of security in a world of global mobility. If such a borderless world is to continue to be the hallmark of twenty-first century relations what contingency planning and mechanisms are going to be set up to contend with this new reality? It is essential that action be taken to implement a more holistic security agenda that embraces human and environmental security policy action plans. In the decade ahead a much higher proportion

of future security budgets need to be dedicated to enhance human security by ensuring access to universal health care, guaranteeing access to universal quality education and launching environmentally friendly initiatives.

Security is all about planning for the worse and hoping for the best. But when it comes to health care in some countries the strategy seems to have been plan for the best and hope the worse does not happen. The time has come to recalibrate security priorities by adopting a much more holistic security framework that places a premium on health care, environmental protection and universal education. Expenditure on military procurement should only focus on resources required to defend one's country.

The lockdown that was imposed by most governments resulted in a breakdown of the fabric of society and undermined globalisation in all sectors. The Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated the pace at which technology has become an even more fundamental factor in our daily lives, as can be witnessed by the fact that social media has grown exponentially via Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp, Zoom, and other technological platforms. Yet while technology can assist in making up for the absence of human contact during an emergency it is clear that technology is no substitute to humans being able to interact with one another on a permanent basis. Social interaction is fundamentally important if the mental wellbeing of the people is to be maintained.

Globally most states went into a three month full or partial lockdown. While the scope of such an achievement is bewildering, restarting social and economic activity is proving to be the hard part. As the disruption to global political and economic activity results in massive job losses in all sectors especially those linked to the service industry such as tourism it is impossible to predict in which direction the global economy will eventually turn. One certainty is that the outlook will be a volatile one. Instability is a sign of the times. Individuals and corporations everywhere are finding that they must either learn to live with instability or drown. The so-called new normal will consist of more security challenges and less resources to combat such threats and risks. One of the most important lessons to learn

from the pandemic is that we must not return to a world that operates upon a false sense of security doctrine.

One of the basic features of the so-called new normal is the principle of 'social distancing' which sounds simple enough but in reality means a complete change of lifestyle. The resultant smaller and more selective groupings are impacting negatively all mass population activities that are part and parcel of our globalized world. An immediate challenge will be how to transform this economic model to implement this principle in the work and entertainment place and at the same time remain economically productive.

Another interesting outcome as a result of the pandemic is that suddenly geographic distance matters more. Intercontinental trade collapsed rapidly once the pandemic emerged. It is important to rethink the global chain of production and consider a shift from global to regional supply chains to better secure resources. Given the ever increasing list of transnational security challenges the world keeps confronting it seems logical that Europe pivots from Asia to the Mediterranean when it comes to establishing future supply and production chains. Investing in regional supply chains that consists of states that are geographically proximate will also enhance geopolitical stability in uncertain times.

Given the severity of the pandemic on a global basis has the time come to rethink globalization? Current political alliances are all operating on thin ice and throughout the pandemic allegiances have shifted continuously. It thus seems logical to conceptualize more of a regional outlook when it comes to political and economic cooperation as an alternative to the more vulnerable global mechanisms in place.

Networks of production would thus be structured upon regional modalities of cooperation instead of the global system that has dominated since the end of the Cold War. The Euro-Mediterranean area offers such a setting for such a regional cooperative policy to be implemented.

Looking ahead, when the pandemic dust settles will states become more vocal in their questioning of the effectiveness of international organizations in the mitigation of Covid-19?

States that mismanaged their handling of the health crisis may adopt such a strategy to deflect attention from their own shortcomings. The long list of international organizations that can serve as scapegoats in this regard is certain to include the United Nations (UN), the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the European Union (EU).

Throughout the pandemic the resilience of the multilateral international system proved disappointing. Where were the international organisations when you needed them most? The United Nations has been largely irrelevant for lengthy periods of time in this regard. The World Health Organization has not been prolific enough throughout this pandemic. As its title highlights the WHO is supposed to be able to mitigate any global health challenge in real time. Instead the WHO was more often than not a passive bystander. When one considers that the WHO is an international organization with over seven thousand personnel and offices throughout the world it is clear that a more robust plan of action is to be expected from such an international organisation in pandemic times.

Post Pandemic Prospects in the Euro-Mediterranean Region

The Covid-19 pandemic is the most adverse peacetime shock to the global economy in over a century. The economic consequences of this evolving crisis will impact negatively both developed and developing countries for years to come. In the past decade the Mediterranean has witnessed its fair share of upheaval as a result of the Arab Spring revolutions which saw different degrees of political and economic turbulence play out in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya and outright conflict in Syria and Libya.

After a decade of continuous transition the Covid-19 pandemic has unleashed even more uncertainty and instability across the MENA region. The severe economic contraction in sectors that most Mediterranean countries are dependent upon such as tourism will have a multiplier effect across all areas of the economy. The resultant loss of jobs, investment, and the downturn in future economic prospects will put more pressure on governments to deliver support to their respective citizens or suffer civil societal upheaval on a scale not witnessed to date.

The Covid-19 crisis will thus accentuate further the disparities that exist across the Mediterranean area. Economic downturn will give rise to instability everywhere but especially in the developing states of both North Africa and sub-Sahara Africa. Mismanagement of the pandemic will lead to further uprisings in the decade ahead that could result in shifts to either stronger democracies, or even more likely, militant autocracies.

In Europe, northern European states and southern European states also face a solidarity challenge that is essential to address successfully if the EU is to remain a relevant player in global and regional relations. At a regional level Euro-Mediterranean relations risk being overwhelmed by the emergence of a permanent north-south geopolitical fault-line. The temptation to erect a cordon sanitaire between the EU and the southern shore of the Mediterranean must be avoided at all costs. Just as the EU needs to avoid a north-south divide from emerging between its own members it must also ensure that a north-south divide does not emerge across the Mediterranean. Only robust political and economic leadership at a Euro-Mediterranean level that seeks to implement a strategic plan of action that engages all Mediterranean states and counters forces of paralysis and fragmentation will be able to assist in mitigating the numerous sources of instability across the Mediterranean region.

Of course much will depend on the length and severity of the pandemic. Will the economic downturn be a profound one that has a multiplier effect for more than a generation or be equivalent to a sabbatical from regular economic cycles? If the health crisis leads to less development in the decade ahead across the MENA region this could lead to a collapse of current systems of governance and the emergence of more failed states. Such a scenario of increased instability would give rise to a regional setting where a tidal wave of economic migrants will seek to cross the Mediterranean towards Europe in an effort to escape from the impoverished post Covid-19 reality.

While turning back the clocks is obviously not an option what strategy is required to ensure that Mediterranean states land on their feet post pandemic? It is apparent that all Mediterranean states will face common challenges in post-Covid-19 times as a result of the

international economic downturn that impacts all sectors including the very important sector of tourism.

In order to arrive at a viable regional agenda for recovery it is essential that political and economic leadership maps out a sustainable development programme that makes the Mediterranean a more attractive foreign direct investment location than hitherto the case. Managing the ramifications of the historic Covid-19 crisis in an effective manner demands that a Euro-Mediterranean summit be called to address challenges in a collective and coherent manner. This international initiative will be tasked with addressing issues pertaining to education, health care, and tourism and focus on launching a common Mediterranean infrastructure development plan that generates tens of thousands of jobs in all countries.

More specifically the Euro-Mediterranean Recovery Plan should address a number of strategic objectives. First, it should help southern Mediterranean governments move their citizens away from the overcrowded coastal belt. By 2035, living conditions along the coasts will become increasingly unbearable. It will therefore become imperative for almost all of the southern Mediterranean states to develop their respective “hinterland,” the Sahara. Egypt and Algeria have already started to move in that direction. This means creating jobs, schools, hospitals, and above all housing for tens of millions of people every year, away from the present urban centres, towards more attractive living conditions. While this is a huge challenge the post Covid-19 moment of generating employment provides an opportunity when such an immense undertaking should take place.

The EU should therefore discuss with its Mediterranean partners a long-term strategy for settling some 100 million people away from the present urban centers, as Brazil, Nigeria, and most recently China have done. Such a program should become the biggest public-private investment and employment program ever undertaken in the Mediterranean. It should provide for the most advanced technology of “desert living,” climate-adapted housing, solar energy, and road and rail connections. It could give a tremendous boost to a modern Mediterranean culture of living and technology by drawing on experiences in the

south-west of the US, Dubai, and Brazil. The EU would also learn from this experience. It would have to finance part of the blueprints and the advanced technology to be applied.

The success of coordinating post pandemic Euro-Mediterranean relations will be determined by the extent to which interaction between these two adjacent regions of the Mediterranean contributes to an improvement in the standard of living of all peoples. A more integrated engagement should focus on immediately enhancing Euro-Arab R&D in the field of innovation, especially when it comes to renewable and alternative energy.

Second, the EU needs to give a boost to education. There will not be sustainable development without improved training and technology. This is the Mediterranean's weakest point and their largest disadvantage in the international markets. The EU should therefore commit the bulk of the future ENP funding to education, training, and technology. It should:

-Help, in particular Egypt and Morocco to provide 100 per cent of children with primary education with modern curricula;

- Massively finance teacher training;

- Encourage the MED countries to establish "Arab Erasmus and Bologna programs" of student exchanges and quality improvements of their universities;

- Encourage European public research institutions to twin with their Mediterranean counterparts and thereby help them raise their performance;

- Engage in a meaningful program of scholarships for PhD students in computer technology, science, and engineering.

Strengthening such practical policy dialogue mechanisms is essential in the ENP (2020-2030) perspective if one is serious about integrating the Mediterranean partners close into the fabric of European society.

The Euro-Mediterranean Recovery Plan must also make available a substantial scholarships scheme for university students from Euro-Mediterranean partner countries and increase mobility grants for higher education staff.

The educational field is a sector where much more needs to be done. The European Commission together with its member states needs to trigger both public and private stakeholders to work hand in hand with a long-term perspective to attract a larger number of Arab students to their shores. This will of course require an updating of procedures for visas, making them more user-friendly for such a category of professionals.

Future Euro-Med programs need to ensure that people-to-people interaction is at the forefront, especially young people as the Anna Lindh Foundation Young Mediterranean programme has been championing. It is essential that a much larger number of students from the Arab world are given the opportunity to study in the EU. The Bologna process must be made functional to them. The same goes for joint EU-Arab research projects. The EU must introduce a package of programs that seeks to tap into the wealth of intelligence in the Euro-Med region via scholarships, seminars, and other initiatives.

When it comes to diplomatic training, Malta has already established itself as a regional centre of excellence in the Mediterranean through its educational and training institution, the Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies (MEDAC) where over 800 graduates from across the Mediterranean and beyond have been trained in the last 30 years. Between 1996 and 2012, MEDAC together with the European Commission and the Maltese Ministry of Foreign Affairs was also responsible for coordinating the Euro-Mediterranean Information and Training Seminars. The Malta Seminars were an official confidence building mechanism of the Barcelona Process where more than 1,500 diplomats had the opportunity to interact. The time has come to re-launch such a Euro-Mediterranean diplomatic training programme and to emulate this exercise in Euro-Mediterranean diplomacy in other areas such as that of justice and home affairs so that a future generation of professionals from other sectors also have the chance to share a similar experience

Third, the Euro-Mediterranean Recovery Plan should give a boost to renewable energy. The Mediterranean requires more expertise in modern technology. This is one area in which the Mediterranean can become world leaders. Few countries on earth offer so many favourable opportunities for the major three or four most promising technologies for producing renewable energy at competitive costs. Mediterranean states have ample sunshine

throughout most of the year and 10,000 km of coastlines with good to excellent wind and wave conditions, especially on the Atlantic and Red Sea coasts.

Why not marry these natural advantages with the EU's rich experience in the design and use of renewable energies and engage in a comprehensive and long-term EU-Mediterranean development effort in a post Covid-19 recovery programme? Both sides would immensely benefit from such joint undertaking, which would have to involve public and private research institutions, solar companies, utilities, and developers.

The EU would benefit in the following domains:

- It would open a new big market for large-scale application of its technologies in its immediate neighbourhood under ideal conditions.

- It would be able to diversify its energy supply from fossil to renewable by importing "clean" electricity from Egypt, Libya, Algeria, and Morocco, all of which dispose of ample fields for installing large solar fields (both PV and solar-thermal) to be connected to the European-Mediterranean grid under construction.

The Mediterranean would benefit in four ways:

- By making its energy supply sustainable beyond the times when fossil sources will reach depletion.

- By cooperating more closely with European research institutes in the development of more sophisticated research facilities.

- By getting involved in the manufacturing and installation of solar/wind/wave facilities, jointly with European partners.

- If Israel were to be involved, by creating peaceful research and commercial links with Israel.

What needs to be done to make this dream become a reality? First, the European renewable energy industry has to realize the long-term opportunities of teaming up with Mediterranean partners. Second the European Commission has to back such a cooperative approach by offering adequate political and financial support. It should play the catalyst role

in bringing the two sides together. This is a long-term venture, but the post Covid-19 job creation moment offers a context within which such an endeavour should be launched.

The longer-term objective of an enhanced political dialogue between the EU and the Mediterranean world should be to foster a more conducive political and economic environment within which a cooperative security dialogue takes shape. The Covid-19 crisis has forced everyone to reflect seriously on what type of sustainable well-being modality of development is necessary in a world of eight billion people. The Euro-Mediterranean area must devise its own regional post Covid-19 security strategy if it is to emerge stronger in the new world reorder of the twenty first century.

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Geopolitical impact of the Coronavirus on the EU and the MENA Region

Professor Bichara Khader

- Introduction

The Coronavirus epidemic will be reported in history books as the most world-shattering health disease, since the "Spanish flu" one century ago. As of this writing, 15th of May 2020, the disease has exacted a human toll, exceeding 200.000. More than half of the world population has been locked-down. In almost 195 countries, measures ranging from partial or total confinement to curfews have been taken and enforced, causing economic devastation and financial havoc.

Everywhere, lives have been disrupted. Images of empty streets in Paris as well as in Amman or Algiers will remain in the memories for generations to come. Seeing the Pope celebrating Easter in an empty St Peters Cathedral, in Rome, captures the scale of this defining moment.

The far-ranging consequences of this epidemic will not be limited to an economic recession, probably never seen since 1929. It will also have a transformational effect on States and societies and will certainly lead to significant shifts in the distribution of power at the international level.

It appears that the virus has probably broken out, in December 2019, in the industrialised Chinese region of Wuhan**.** After its initial missteps and underreporting of the number of deaths, China seems to have contained the epidemic. But the virus migrated to Europe where, in the initial phase, Italy and Spain became the new hotspots before its spread to almost all European countries. But the countries reacted differently to contain the virus: some countries imposed a two months lockdown, shuttered nurseries, schools and universities, closed borders, banned travel, grounded planes, but Holland and Sweden opted for what was called "herd immunity" with little success. In all countries supply-chains have been disrupted causing severe economic recession. But the epidemic has caused another severe damage related to the future of the European Project itself.

The US has not been spared either. And although President Trump, in his first declarations, tried to downplay the threat, saying that it is under control, and that democrats are using it as a "new hoax"[1] to get rid of him, he had to acknowledge later the magnitude of the disease as the US has overtaken China and Europe in the numbers of infected and dead. The

[1] Thomas Wright and Kurt Campbell:" *The Coronavirus is exposing the limits of populism*", www.**theatlantic.com,** March 2020

epidemic will probably recede or disappear but its geopolitical consequences on the standing and the reputation of the US will be severely felt.

Arab, Mediterranean and other Mena countries have also been struggling with the virus. Iran and Turkey have been severely hit. Egypt confined partially its population but locked-down information about the pandemic. Gulf countries and their expatriate workforce have also been affected. War- stricken countries like Syria, Yemen, and Libya suffered most because of their precarious health infrastructure and the on-going conflicts. The Palestinian territories in the West Bank had few hundred cases, but the risk of exponential spread of the pandemic is higher in Gaza Strip which lives under Israeli siege, since 2007, and is overpopulated, with little living space, and precarious medical facilities and equipment. Iraq and Lebanon were not spared at a time of political instability and street protests. North African countries have also been hit. Israel has not been an exception with thousands of infected and hundreds of dead, mainly in the Haredim Communities and even in the army.

For now, 195 countries are still grappling with the disease, in the hope that research centres will soon find a drug or a vaccine that will allow them to go back to normalcy. This may take months, if not years. In the meantime, the transformational geopolitical effects of Coronavirus will be significant and probably wide-ranging. Josep Borrell, the EU High Representative aptly described the challenge to come:" *Covid-19 will reshape our world, we don't know when the crisis will end but we can be sure that the time it does, our world will look different"*[2].

This paper seeks to shed some light on the possible geopolitical consequences of Coronavirus at the international level, mainly regarding the MENA region. The research questions are the following: Will this crisis lead to another AMENA's (Arab Middle East and North Africa) future freer, more integrated, more prosperous or to the consolidation of the current stalemate or even to failed states? And, finally, will this crisis reinforce the current apathy in the EU-Arab relations or will it force the EU to assess critically and rethink its relations with its neighbours, overhaul its old-fashioned policies, and inject new life in its global outreach?

- The Pandemic stripped bare the MENA REGION

Like all countries of the world, MENA countries (Middle East and North Africa) are feeling the sting of the pandemic[3]. Al-Jazeera TV documents the total number of infected and dead but, in some countries, underreporting is prevalent. All countries established quarantines and even curfews. Prayers in Mosques (even in the holiest cities of Mecca and Medina) and

[2] Josep Borrell: EEAS, 23 March 2020

[3] One can find a very good analysis of the impact of Coronavirus in Arab countries in, Haizam Amirah -Fernandez: *Coronavirus in Arab countries: passing storm, opportunity for change or regional catastrophe*, **Elcano**, Madrid, April 6,2020 and also in the Arab Center's report:" *The coronavirus pandemic and the Arab world :impact, politics and migration",* www.arabcenterdc.org , March 24,2020

Churches (even in the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem) have been banned, triggering some protests from Imams and clergymen.

Before the outbreak of the epidemic, MENA countries had no shortages of crises. Plagued with bad governance and state incompetence, all countries delayed their response to the disease, allowing the spread of the virus. Such delay posed daunting challenges as Health Systems are poor with hospitals lacking essential medical equipment. Over-crowded camps of refugees and displaced Syrians (in Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and Iraq), Population density (mainly in Gaza and Egypt), increased mobility within the region, significant migrant expatriates (mainly in the Gulf states), extreme poverty (Yemen, Djibouti, Egypt and elsewhere), on-going popular protests (Iraq , Algeria, Soudan, Lebanon) civil strife or regional wars (Syria, Yemen, Libya) , Israeli siege (Gaza) and Israeli occupation (Palestinian West Bank), are other facilitating factors for the spread of the disease.

Maybe the only positive element in this gloomy picture is the age pyramid of the Arab MENA population as the Youth (0-25 years) represent almost 50 % of a total population of 430 million Arabs, while the most vulnerable segment of the population (more than 65 years of age) does not exceed 8 to 10 % in comparison with 22-25 % in Europe. But this is a meagre solace as the combined other factors exact an important human toll and unbearable economic consequences, laying bare States' mismanagement and inefficiency, the glaring absence of a regional response and the paralysis of the Arab League.

In the Arab Gulf Region, the pandemic struck at the worst moment marked by plummeting oil prices to unprecedented level since 1982, as the economic recession has slowed global demand on oil. However, these countries have better-staffed and equipped health systems and sufficient financial resources to cope with the disease[4]. But expatriate workers in these countries have been disproportionately impacted as businesses and construction projects were brought to a halt. With the depletion of their financial remittances**,** millions of families in the Arab region and in Asia (Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, Philippines, Indonesia etc.) are likely to face severe economic stress.

Saudi Arabia, the most populous country of the Gulf Cooperation Council, has been triply battered: first by its self-inflicted oil price war which drastically reduced its oil revenues, gravely impairing its diversification strategy called Vision 2030, and secondly, by the Coronavirus pandemic whose impact has been severely felt in Saudi Arabia itself and in the Moslem World at large, as Saudi Arabia quarantined entire cities, imposed curfews that include the Holy Shrines of Mecca and Medina, suspended year-round pilgrimages (UMRAH)

[4] The Saudi Kingdom spent 1% of its GDP on supporting the economy during the lockdown, the UAE 1.8%, Bahrain 3.9%, and Qatar 5.5, in David Hearst:" *Saudi Arabia: What happens when the oil stops"***,** www.middleeasteye.net, April 22.2020

and called on Moslems to delay plans for the Hajj (the great pilgrimage)[5]. And thirdly, by the war it spearheaded in Yemen, since 2015, squandering billions of dollars.

The concomitant occurrence of Coronavirus, oil slump, and the war in Yemen put the Saudi Monarchy under stress. It had to struggle against the pandemic and at the same time it had to mitigate its economic impact on Saudi welfare system. That's why the Saudi Government announced packages of financial rescue measures, in what Yasmin Farouk considered to be "in *perfect logic with the rentier-state behaviour*[6]*".*

Saudi Arabia has weathered many storms in the past. But this time, the context is totally different as the financial resources of the Kingdom are dwindling and its welfare system shrinking[7]. Undoubtedly The social, political and geopolitical impact will be severely felt.

Iran, the Saudi rival, is faring even worse. It became the hotspot of the pandemic in the MENA Region, with thousands of dead. As in the case of Saudi Arabia, the country faces a triple challenge: the pandemic, the oil price collapse and American sanctions. The UN Secretary General, Joe Biden -the presidential candidate-the NY Times editorial board, and many other voices called for lifting, or easing the sanctions on Iran, but these voices have been unheeded by the Trump administration. No wonder therefore if Iran's projected GDP for 2020 may contract by as much as 25%. Yet, the launching of a military satellite during the pandemic perfectly illustrates Iranian self-pride and resilience.

The United Arab Emirates have not been spared by the pandemic, but with sovereign funds exceeding one trillion, the country will weather the economic storm. Nevertheless, the halt of the tourist activity, the probable postponement of Expo 2020 in Dubai (which was expected to attract some 20 million visitors), the grounding of its Air fleet, the slump in the transhipment industry (mainly in Djebel Ali) will be felt very hard. All these sectors will not recover very soon. The same can be said of other Gulf States such as Qatar, Kuwait and Oman, although the situation of Oman is worse as this Sultanate has smaller financial reserves (only $18 billion) and almost no significant foreign investments that can offset the oil price collapse.

The Pandemic is having a devastating impact on Iraq, another oil-exporting country. The chronic political instability of the country and the street protests against the corruption and inefficiency of the political system are aggravating factors that will increase the misfortunes of the country whose GDP may decrease by 10 to 15 %. The depletion of Iraqi financial

[5] On two occasions, in 1821 and 1865, cholera outbreaks among pilgrims to the Holy Shrines killed 20.000 and 15.000 , in Imad Harb:"*Two unwelcome repercussions of the Coronavirus in the Gulf Cooperation Council*", in www.arabcenterdc.org/ March24,2020

[6] Yasmin Farouk: *« Updating traditions: Saudi Arabia's Coronavirus response*", Commentary, in www.carnegieendowment.org, April7,2020

[7] Already before the Coronavirus, the war in Yemen, massive arms" purchases, and "vanity projects", like the futuristic city NEOM have drained the Kingdom's financial reserves, from $ 732 billion in January 2015 to only $499 billion in December 2019. The oil price collapse in 2020 , the fight against the Coronavirus, and the stimulus packages will further drain Saudi Arabia's financial assets.

reserves may tense relations with the Iraqi Kurdish Autonomous Region. Furthermore, the resurgence of the remnants of the Islamic State (ISIS) is another worrisome nightmare.

The pandemic hit Lebanon while the country was grappling with a crippling financial crisis that led to a 50% devaluation of the Lebanese pound and to debt default (March 2020), and facing huge street protests against the corruption and the incompetence of the political elite. Amazingly, the pandemic did not stop the protests as Lebanon is on the brink of collapse.

The pandemic dealt a major blow to Egypt with its 110 million inhabitants. The country is the least prepared to deal with a pandemic of this scale. In the initial phase, the government strived to hide the gravity of the situation, quarantined the information, expelled some foreign journalists and cracked down on activists and critics who accused the authorities of failing to provide health facilities and economic relief. But later, it had to admit that the virus is poised to inflict heavy human toll and economic disaster. Indeed, the tourist industry, which is a main source of revenue ($12.6 in 2019) and employment, has been paralyzed. Migrants remittances have dwindled and the Suez Canal transit fees (an average of $ 5.5 billion every year) have diminished drastically as international trade has slumped.

We don't have sufficient information about the impact of the pandemic in the conflict-ridden countries such as Syria, Yemen and Libya. What it is alarming, in these countries, is that "a major pandemic was not enough to make guns fall silent". For that reason, the impact will be unbearable. In Yemen, almost 80 % of the population need humanitarian assistance and many wars are being waged simultaneously in the country. What's more, a UAE backed militia in Southern Yemen set up a "Southern Transitional Council", and declared "self-rule", on 25th April, 2020, adding a "civil war within a civil war"[8] . The declaration of "self-rule" was rejected by the Saudi-led coalition, thus straining relations between Saudi Arabia and the UAE. In Libya**,** the pandemic did not discourage warring factions to continue fighting and calls for a humanitarian cease-fire remain unheeded. In Syria**,** medical equipment is scant as many of the hospitals have been destroyed and medical personnel killed or exiled. Coronavirus has been an unwelcome addition to the misfortunes of the country. The regime claims controlling the disease, but what it controlled, in reality, is "*the discourse about the disease"*[9]*.*

Jordan has also been affected by Covid-19 and it took tough measures to curb its spread, including curfews, and surprisingly enough, Jordan has been successful in containing the disease.

This is not the first time Palestine is confronted with a health disease. Already in 1838, an outbreak of plague took place in Palestine, with two hotspots in Jerusalem and Jaffa. An American scholar, Edward Robinson, who studied the period, wrote about quarantine and

[8] **English.alaraby.co.uk**, April 27,2020

[9] Radwan Ziadeh:" *Syria's authoritarian regime and Covid-19*", in www.arabcentrerdc.org, April 24.2020

lockdowns to limit movement into and out the two epicentres[10]. But in 2020, the context is different as the population is 20 times bigger and Palestine is either occupied or besieged. Yet, in spite of these adversities, the Palestinian territories in the West Bank, have coped sufficiently well with the disease. There have been few deaths and most of them in East Jerusalem which is occupied by Israel. The situation in the Gaza Strip is more worrisome as this tiny enclave of 365 km^2 is the most over-populated (2 million inhabitants) place in the world after Singapore and Hong-Kong. Already locked down by the Israeli siege, since 2007, the population found itself trapped by the Coronavirus. But Gaza lacks medical equipment, and its hospitals are under-staffed and some have even been destroyed by three Israeli offensives between 2008 and 2014, and there are only 2300 beds for 2 million inhabitants. In a region where families composed of three generations live under the same roof, and where "*each individual has an average of 0,18 square meter[11]",* social distancing it almost impossible. To this, one has to add scarcity of drinking water and frequent electricity power cuts. In these conditions, if the spread of the pandemic is not rapidly contained, the consequences might be tragic[12]. Israel allowed the entry of some medical equipment as it came under increasing international pressure, but the population feels doubly trapped by the siege and, now, by the epidemic.

North African countries are also severely hit by COVID-19. They also locked down their population. Algeria seems to have registered more deaths than Morocco, Tunisia or Mauritania, as its health sector, coupled with dysfunctional bureaucracy, suffered from lack of medical equipment and sufficient medical personnel. An aggravating factor may have also been the presence in Algeria of almost one hundred thousand Chinese workers and expatriates with frequent connections with China[13].

The socio-economic consequences in all Maghreb countries will be devastating not only because of the cost inflicted by the pandemic but also because European lockdown will further squeeze their economies. Algeria will be hit harder as the country is severely battered by the steep decline of oil revenues. The only good news for Maghreb leaders is that the Pandemic offered them an opportunity to ban all street protests[14], as each of Central Maghreb countries have sustained political protests calling either for a new political system as in Algeria or for more "accountability" and transparency as in Morocco and Tunisia. Thus, the pandemic offers a respite to the ruling elites of the Maghreb. But if these elites fail in tackling the pandemic and its effects, trust gap between them and their citizens will widen even further.

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[10] Gabriel Polley:" *Lockdowns, quarantines and social distancing : remembering Palestine's 1838 plague*", www.middleeasteye.net,April 20,2020

[11] Omar Shaban: *« Gaza's new conflict: Covid-19* ***»: www.counterpunch.org/2020/04/03***

[12] Hugh Lovatt: « *Defeating Covid-19 in Gaza"*, www.ecfr.eu, April7,2020

[13] Bichara Khader: *«Chinese breakthrough in the Arab and Mediterranean markets*", in **IEMED Mediterranean yearbook, Barcelone, 2019**

[14] Daniel Brumberg: « *Covid-19 promises Algeria uncertainty, danger and -perhaps-opportunity*", **www.arabcenterdc.org**, April 23,2020

Finally, Israel has not been sheltered from the pandemic either. The acting Prime Minister, Netanyahu, declared a state of emergency, quarantined the population, mainly in areas inhabited by Orthodox Jews and Haredim, and approved the use of mobile phone geolocation technology to track and trace people who may have been in contact with infected patients. In spite of these measures, the pandemic has not been contained. But Netanyahu reaped a success on the political front as he succeeded in convincing his rival Benny Gantz to form a Unity Government[15], allowing himself to remain as prime minister for the coming 18 months and thus avoiding indictment, prompting this harsh comment of Eran Etzion : " *The Covid-19 will hopefully be beaten but the virus of voter distrust in Israeli-democracy has now infected the entire body public"*[16] .

- **The economic cost of Coronavirus on the Arab economies**

All the forecasts by the World Bank, the UNDP, and the Economic Commission for Western Asia predict the biggest devastation of Arab economies in the last 40 years. In the hypothesis that the pandemic does not recede before the end of the year, I estimate the total GDP, in the Arab Countries, to shrink by at least 10 % (in oil producing countries) and by 15% in the other countries. If the sharp decline of oil prices persists for the next six months, more than $ 500 billion will be lost causing rising budget's deficits that will impair the Gulf region's quest for diversification. The private sector will feel the bite as it depends directly or indirectly on government contracts and projects. As the public and private sectors, in the Gulf countries, depend on foreign labour, they will be hardly hit as hundreds of thousands of foreign workers and expatriates have left the region. Arab Countries, such as Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon, will feel the economic pain of oil prices' slump, as they are doubly affected by the loss in migrants' remittances and the forced return of their overseas migrants. Kuwait, for example, did not renew the contracts of some 17.000 Egyptian teachers as schools have been shuttered increasing the pressure on the strained labour market in Egypt. If the economic crisis in the Arab Gulf oil-exporting countries continues, they "*may revert to nationalising their workforces in sectors where many Arab expatriates' workers currently occupy mid-management positions*"[17]

Capital volatility is another curse. It is estimated that, only between January and mid-March 2020, the region businesses lost $ 240 billion of market capital, 8% of the region's total wealth. Combined with oil prices slump, total debt will increase by 15%, according to the International Monetary fund, i.e. $190 billion, to reach $ 1.46 trillion this year.

The Pandemic will ruin the tourism sector in the Arab Countries. This sector plays an oversized role as the region is an open-air museum, awash with cultural heritage, Holy

[15] Sylvain Cypel : *"Israël : Coronavirus au secours de Netanyahou* », in **www. Orient XXI.com,** March 24 ,2020
[16] Eran Etzion: »*Netanyahu saved by Covid-19",* in **www.middleeast eye.com***, March 2020*
[17] Basma Momani: «*The impact of low oil prices and Covid-19 on Arab economies*», in www. arabcenterdc.org, May 4,2020

shrines and sandy beaches. It is estimated that Arab countries attract some 100 million tourists and pilgrims every year. Egypt, Morocco, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Tunisia and Jordan are the largest destinations. Tourism contributes 12-14 % of Egyptian GDP, 19% of Tunisian GDP and 15.9 % of Moroccan GDP. The Arab Tourism Organisation estimated total revenues from tourism to amount to $ 130 billion in 2019, which represents 5 % of global Arab GDP. The tourist activity employs almost 15 % of the workforce. Hotels will feel most the squeeze but the food supply chains, farmers and private transport companies will suffer equally. Arab airlines will take a huge hit. The Arab Civil Aviation estimates the loss in revenues for Arab airlines to be around $8 billion until the end of April. Should the pandemic be with us until the end of the year, the loss will exceed $35 to 40 billion. In the Gulf region, where big airlines are a national pride, airlines will be bailed out but, in other countries, airlines may not recover.

The fall-out of the pandemic on total employment in the Arab World will be catastrophic. It is estimated that 1.7 million jobs will be lost, increasing poverty rates to an alarming 30-35 %.

All these scourges are compounded with endemic corruption, political instabilities, and control of some economies by the military and elite. As "*accountability and transparency are not hallmarks of the regimes"*[18], international investors will be wary to invest.

In these gloomy circumstances, there is a glimmer of hope: Moroccan engineers are producing ventilators and Moroccan textile industries are morphing to masks and gowns factories. Similar initiatives could be found in Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia and elsewhere.

- **No change in regional dynamics**

Will the health crisis serve as an eye-opener and transform the regional strategic dynamics? The question is being widely debated in foreign and Arab media. Sadly enough, the prevailing answer is negative." *The crisis*, wrote Dalia Dassa Kaye, *is more likely to reinforce and strengthen current negative trend lines"*[19]. Rami Khouri is even more blunt:" *Arab leaders were already incompetent, then came coronavirus"*[20],laying bare their inefficiency. The Arab League remained as a bystander and, as Haizam-Amirah-Fernandez ironically comments:" *All it has managed to do is to postpone the Arab Summit scheduled to take place in Algiers, on March 30"*[21] , to mark the 75th anniversary of its birth.

[18] Jean Ani Nader:" *How the Middle East reacts to the pandemic*", in www.fairobserver.com/ April 14,2020
[19] Dalia Kassa Kaye: "*Covid-19 impacts on strategic dynamics in the Middle East*", in www.randcorporatiobn.org/blog/2020L03/covid-19
[20] Rami Khouri:" Arab *Leaders were already incompetent, then came the coronavirus"*, in The New Arab, March 20,2020
[21] Haizam-Amirah-Fernandez: quoted article

The first reactions of incumbent leaders have been disheartening. Some authoritarian regimes cracked down on legitimate speech and stifled the protest movements under the guise of public health safety. Others, mainly in the Gulf Region, engaged in scapegoating. On Twitter, hashtags such as "Coronavirus Qatar" blamed Qatar for the spread of the virus. In Bahrain, the Ministry of Interior accused Iran of spreading the virus which is "an *internationally prohibited form of aggression"*[22].The Council of Ministers in Saudi Arabia, meeting on 10th March, 2020, in presence of King Salman, went even further:" *Iran bears direct responsibility for the outbreak of corona infection".* Worse, immediately after the outbreak of the disease, Saudi Arabia quickly sent troops to encircle Qatif where Saudi Shia inhabitants are concentrated accusing them of "*illegally visiting Iran and bringing back with them the virus"* [23].

Against this backdrop, hopes that Covid-19 will serve as a wake-up call have been dashed. Countries are still unwilling to bury the hatchet of recrimination, and war, to heed the needs of their peoples and assuage their fears. Iran and Saudi Arabia are at each other's throats. But while Iran shows a high degree of incredible resilience, Saudi Arabia's clout and influence in the Moslem World is dwindling, and its public image has been tarnished. By cancelling the Umrah and the Hajj and banning prayers in the Holy Shrines, billions of dollars have been lost. More importantly, Saudi Arabia used the pilgrimage as "*a soft-power instrument…, as 1.8 billion Moslems pray in the direction of Saudi Arabia every day"*[24]. But Saudi Arabia wasted this symbolic capital, by politicizing the Hajj, by its meddling in regional disputes (in Libya, Syria etc.), by exporting its Salafist ideology, by cosying up with Israel, by waging the war in Yemen which resulted in humanitarian disaster, by failing the Palestinian struggle for liberation, by campaigning against Qatar , Turkey, Iran and other Moslem states. No wonder if Imams in Libya and Tunisia and many other voices in the Moslem World called for boycotts of al Hajj, which is one of the five pillars of Islam. While other Moslem countries are challenging Saudi Arabia "pan-Islamic leadership".

Internal strife is still raging in Libya and may even plunge the country in the abyss after Khalifa Haftar, on April 27,2020, claimed he has a "popular mandate" to govern Libya. There is no lull in the war of Yemen. Worse, the declaration of "self-rule" in Southern Yemen by the UAE-backed Yemeni militia and the establishment of a "Southern Transition Council" (STC), on April 25,2020 added a "civil war within a civil war"[25]. The declaration of "self-rule" was rejected by the Saudi-led coalition, thus straining relations between Saudi Arabia and the UAE, both members of the Arab coalition. The STC declaration may lead to a three-way split of Yemen, with Houthis controlling the North (including Sanaa), the new Southern

[22] Ryan Grace: "*Covid-19 prompts the spread of disinformation across the Middle East*", in Middle East Institute, www.mei-org, March 20,2020

[23] Madawi Al-Rasheed: "*Coronavirus has shut MBS:' Saudi circus show": what will he do now"?,in* www.middleeasteye.net , April 6,2020

[24] Krithika Varagur:" *The coronavirus threatens Arabia's global ambitions",* in www.foreignaffairs.com/Saudi-arabia/2020-04-15/

[25] English.alaraby.co.uk, April 27,2020

Transition council controlling Southern Yemen including Aden, and the Hadi's government controlling some dispersed governorates.

Algeria and Morocco are still at loggerheads. Covid-19 has been exploited by the Syrian regime to show that the Syrian regime is efficient in handling the pandemic and by Israel in the pursuit of its settlements' expansion in Palestinian occupied territories, as international media attention has shifted to the global pandemic.

Some countries, like Iran, Iraq and Egypt, released thousands of prisoners not out of compassion but out of necessity, but Israel did not release one single Palestinian prisoner, although the health crisis forced Israel to cooperate with the Palestinian Authority. There has been a brief lull in the battle in the province of Idlib but Turkey clashed with Ha'yat Tahrir al Sham (HTS) in Idlib and with Kurdish militants who seized the opportunity of the virus to harass Turkish patrols in North East Syria**.** Iraq remains vulnerable to ISIS resurgence and to proxy wars on its soil. It is possible that the economic cost of the pandemic will reduce Iran's capacity to meddle in regional affairs**,** mainly in Syria. However, such a probability will not necessarily weaken the Syrian regime as other countries, like the United Arab Emirates, are stepping in Syria**,** shoring up the regime in a bid to stem Iranian influence. Lebanon suffers from the intertwined interests of Iran, Syria and Hezbollah and the country is on the brink of collapse.

On the whole, the pandemic laid bare the inability of incumbent regimes to curb the spread of the virus and to provide collective response. But what is more distressing is the absence of the League of Arab States. The Arab League took no initiative in coordinating production or distribution of protective equipment, in another proof of its structural deficiencies, thus prompting this harsh comment of Marwan Mu'asher, former Jordanian foreign minister:" *The Arab League will continue to be mostly focused on issuing communiqués rather than solving real problems"*[26]*.* A Lebanese writer, Hazem Saghieh is even more blunt:" *it would be foolish to expect that any hope could come from this wretched institution*"[27]. To the discharge of the League of Arab States, one has to admit that it mirrors the fragmentation, the rifts and the polarisation of its member states, and as Arab proverb says: "the jockey cannot run faster than his horse". And this saying applies to the EU itself.

Undoubtedly, the epidemic could have offered an opportunity to ease tensions, to bridge political gulfs, to put an end to civil strife, to go beyond narrow regime interests, and to flesh out a regional response. Unfortunately given their short-sightedness and lack of democratic legitimacy, Arab and other regional regimes squandered the opportunity.

With the exception of American proxies in the region, mainly Israel, there is almost unanimous popular outrage against the US whose retreat from the region is often described

[26] in Michael Young: *"On light of the Arab League's inaction on Covid-19 and much else, does the organisation still have any utility?* www.carnegie-mec-org/diwan/81254, March 19,2020
[27] Ibid.

as “good riddance”. Nevertheless, the pandemic could have been a boon for the US to win back the hearts and minds of MENA peoples by showing compassion, easing sanctions, acting as a moderating force or as an even-handed mediator. Such a hope has also been wiped out, further decreasing faith in US policy. Such a development has two effects: the first is the *“increasing ownership by regional states in matters affecting their security”*[28], and the second, is the increasing influence of China and Russia in regional affairs.

- **Summing up**

The socio-economic impact of the pandemic on the Mena Region is expected to be devastating, not only because of the inefficiency of State policies, but also because on of the extreme vulnerability of the Arab economies to external determinants[29] such as oil demand, tourism, trade, transport and migrants ‘remittances. Undoubtedly, the economic collapse will further increase unemployment and poverty rates. Geopolitically, the pandemic is not set to have significant impact on MENA countries. Authoritarian regimes will remain intact and “*no one should expect these regimes to proactively embrace genuine reform under any circumstances*”[30] Some conflicts may be frozen but as the pandemic recedes, they may be re-activated. The remnants of the Islamic State claim that the Covid-19 is “God’s retribution” against its enemies and are re-surfacing in Syria and Iraq. Iran’s influence in the region may be curtailed. Gulf States will not shelve their differences any soon. Turkey may temporarily refocus its attention on the domestic front but meddling in Syria and Libya will not stop. Israel will further tighten its grip on the Occupied Palestinian territories in spite of international condemnation. Algeria and Morocco will continue their squabble. The Libyan crisis will deepen further after Khalifa Haftar claimed he has a “popular mandate” to govern Libya (27 April 2020). Increased difficulties and strains for refugees and displaced people may create incentives for radicalisation. To put is in a nutshell: Before the pandemic, Arab outlook was gloomy. With the pandemic, Arab general outlook is likely to be gloomier.

- **The European Union and MENA countries in time of Coronavirus**

The pandemic will be recoded in History books as the challenge of our lifetime. But will it be a “game-changer” in the relations between the European Union and its “nearest abroad”: the Mediterranean and the Arab World?

If we assess EU policies towards the Mediterranean and Arab region in the last decade, as I did in my last books and articles[31], it is hard to believe that the Pandemic will be a “game-

[28] Bilal Saab and Chen Kane:” Regional *security from the bottom up”,* in **www.middleeastinstitute.org**, February 27,2020
[29] Haizam-Amirah-Fernandez: quoted article
[30] Jason Pack, Nate Mason: “*Could Coronavirus lead to an Arab 2.0?”*, www.mei.edu**,** March 25,2020
[31] Bichara KHADER : L’Europe pour la Méditerranée, l’Harmattan, Paris 2010,238 p.

changer". Yet, the EU cannot simply watch the unfolding consequences of the pandemic without reaction. In the past decade, it reacted to the Arab Spring that began in late 2010, to the military coup in Egypt (2013) to the proclamation of the Caliphate of the Islamic State (2014),to the war in Eastern Ukraine and to the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014, to the Iran's nuclear issue in 2015, and to the war wages in Yemen by a coalition spearheaded by Saudi Arabia (2015). In the same year, it had to grapple with the migration issue (2015), convened the Valletta Summit on Migration (2015), and was confronted with a wave of terrorist attacks in many EU countries. In 2016, the EU reached a 6 billion euros deal with Turkey to prevent illegal crossing to Greece, and in the same year, the EU went through an unprecedented crisis with the Brexit referendum which mobilized the official and media attention. Since 2017, the EU agenda was awash with reactions to the erratic and "*disruptive policies of the Administration of U.S President, Donald Trump*[32]", regarding NATO, Brexit, Syria, Iran, China and above all the Arab-Israeli conflict, among many other issues. The withdrawal of the US from the Nuclear Deal with Iran constituted a negative setback in one area where EU foreign policy has achieved a remarkable success.

From 2010 until 2020, Euro-Mediterranean and Euro-Arab relations were put on the back-burner: Financial aid was disbursed but there has been no significant innovative initiative. The questions of democracy promotion, regional cooperation, and security arrangements were eclipsed by more urgent challenges as migration, terrorism, and internal security. The first EU-League of Arab States summit that took place in Sharm-El-Sheikh, in February 2019, was organized in haste and yielded no results.

Will the pandemic put Euro-Mediterranean and Euro-Arab relations on the front-burner and offer a chance for change?

Josep Borrell , the High Representative for Foreign Policy of the EU, gives his answer : *" I think that even we are badly affected by the Coronavirus crisis , we have to show solidarity with other countries who are in a much worse situation"*[33].Indeed, in April 2020, the Commission launched "TEAM EUROPE" to support partner countries fighting against the pandemic. The approach is to "combine resources from the EU, member States and financial institutions, such as the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)". The goal is to propose a package of 20 billion euros to help the most vulnerable countries in Africa, Middle east and other regions of the world, and mainly the people most at risk, including children, women, the elderly and disabled, as well as migrants, refugees and displaced persons. The Commission and the EIB

-Europa y mundo arabe : una evaluacion de las politicas europeas (1957-2015), ICARIA-IEMED, Barcelone, 2015
- « *Arab Spring and post-Arab spring (2011-2019): an assessment of the European response*", in Mark Harwood, Stefano Moncada and Roderick Pace (eds): The future of the European Union: demisting the debate, The Institute for European Studies, Malta, 2020, pp.108-126

[32] Stefan Lehne and Francesco Siccardi *:" Where in the world is the EU now"?,* www.carnegieeurope.eu*, April 29,2020*

[33] *Remarks of Josep Borrell at the AFET-SEDE-DROI Commission of the EU parliament", EEAS***,** Brussels, April 20,2020

have already pledged 15 billion. But as Borrell himself admits:" *This is not fresh money…we have to restructure and reorient our resources to give priority to the fight against Coronavirus".* No matter whether it is new money or not, the initiative is laudable. Already the EU offered Morocco 450 million euros, Tunisia 250. Jordan and Lebanon are to receive 240. Smaller sums are promised to other Mediterranean and Arab countries in need. The support of the EU will focus on:

-Responding to the immediate health crisis;

-Strengthening health, water and sanitation systems;

-Mitigating the immediate social and economic consequences.

By marshalling the financial package, the EU seeks as Josep Borell explained: "to *defy the critics and demonstrate, in very concrete terms, that it (the EU) is effective, responsible in times of crisis"*[34]*.*But for the EU external action to be really effective, it should focus on immediate and long-term challenges.

- Immediate challenges in the midst of the pandemic

Refugees should be a first priority of EU action. The rapid spread of the virus in these over-crowded camps in Greece will be difficult to curb as lockdown is almost impossible, and as the refugees live in squalid conditions without running water, let alone soap or protective equipment. Leaving Greece alone in managing the situation is not an option. EU request to relocate refugees most at risk is not an option either as Greece is at pains dealing with its own health problems. Undoubtedly the cramped camps of refugees in Greece constitute a time-bomb.

But not all is grim: Coronavirus had some positive side-effects related to refugees. Portugal decided to legalise all of its undocumented refugees. Spain, Belgium and Netherlands and other countries suspended deportation of refugees to their countries of origin. Spain emptied its "Centros de internamiento de extranjeros" (CIE). Germany offered asylum to some 50 teenagers. Italy legalized some 200.000 refugees and migrants probably due to shortage of labour force in the agricultural sector, but suspended, on March 12, all hearings and appeals relevant to asylum. All these developments are welcome but the question of cramped hotspots in Greece and Italy and elsewhere will remain daunting challenges for the EU.

The EU should pay special attention to refugees and displaced people in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. It is true that the EU has been generous with these host countries. But displaced Syrians, in Syria itself-mainly in Idlib province- are in dire need of humanitarian and

[34] Josep Borrell: **EEAS briefing**, March 23,2020

medical help, as most of the medical infrastructure has been destroyed. These refugees may find themselves totally unprotected should Coronavirus break out in their camps.

Irregular migration has to be managed with humanity. As paradoxical as it may seem, the pandemic did not stem the flow of migrants seeking to cross the Mediterranean. Dinghies transporting migrants have been located, and, at least, in one case, Malta called up the Libyan coastguard which took back the 46 people on board, although the rubber dinghy was in European rescue zone[35]. Two other regrettable developments have been reported by Patrick Kingsley[36] : one is related to Maltese army sabotaging a migrant boat off the coast of Malta[37] and the other related to "privatized pushbacks", in reference to commercial merchant ships returning migrants to war-torn Libya. The EU should not let such abuses to happen.

Gaza should be another priority of EU action. And indeed, it has been. Immediately after the first two imported cases were confirmed, the Head of EU Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM, set up in 2005) decided to reallocate existing funds, at short notice, to donate a portable thermal imaging fever system to the Palestinian General Administration for Borders and Crossings.

- **EU Mediterranean and Arab policy after the pandemic**

As EU is grappling with unprecedented health and economic crisis, it may not want to raise its profile in MENA region now. But the combination of chronic instability, bad governance and, now the sting of the pandemic and its aftermath directly affect the EU. In the past, as a group of experts of the European Council for foreign affairs warned: the EU has focused on "*short-term transactional policies designed to address immediate challenges such as terrorism and migration"*[38]. But on the issues of war and peace in the region, the EU has been "off the map", or simply "irrelevant", accentuating indirectly the increasing influence of other international actors as Russia, China and even India.

Given the vital interests the EU has in the region, there is an urgent need to critically assess and overhaul all its previous policies, and chart a new course of action. Otherwise" its Ring of friends" may morph into a "ring of fire". The EU has to consider its long-term interests in the MENA region[39] and not remain obsessed with short-term challenges as migration or terrorism. Coronavirus and its devastating effects on the EU and its neighbourhood should serve therefore as a "wake-up call".

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[35] Valeria Colombo: *"I am a medic on a rescue ship in Italy right now, authorities are using coronavirus as an excuse to let migrants die",* in **The Independent**, March 24,2020

[36] Patrick Kingsley: in **New York Times**, March 20, 2020

[37] Patrick Kingsley: **New York Times, April 9,2020**

[38] *"Mapping European leverage in the Mena Region*", in **www.ecfr.eu**

[39] Bichara Khader:" *European Interests in the Arab World* ", in **The European Union and the Arab World**", Casa Arabe and CIDOP, Madrid,2010, pp.14-28

In the Middle East, the EU disunity , inactions or inconsistencies on major issues , such as Iran, Syria, the Gulf internal disputes, the war in Yemen, the Arab -Israeli conflict, the EU played second fiddle to the US , failed to articulate a coherent, independent and pro-active foreign policy, or simply remained as a bystander.

The EU must salvage the Iran Nuclear Deal (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action), a major achievement of EU foreign policy. It should not allow American sanctions to hurt its own economic and geopolitical interests. Coronavirus has been an opportunity for the EU to showcase its compassionate face. First the EU offered 20 million Euros to the World Health Organisation to fund deliveries of health equipment to Iran. And second, France, Germany and the United Kingdom used, for the first time, Intex , a trading mechanism bypassing US sanctions and allowing them to export medical goods to Iran. These actions go in the right direction. But EU should go further by lifting the sanctions on Iran as they inflict more suffering on the Iranian people, harm EU economic interests without achieving any political gain[40].

As the US may be retreating from the Gulf, the EU should step in with three major tasks: actively mediate to end the internal Gulf rift, convince the Houthi rebels and the Arab-backed Yemeni government that there is no military solution to the Yemen internal crisis and finally to inject new life in EU-Gulf Cooperation Council relations. Keeping aloof or simply expressing "hopes" or "regrets" may weaken further EU's capacity to make a diplomatic impact in the region.

On the Arab-Israeli conflict, the time of empty declarations, "toothless diplomacy[41]", words of condemnation and regret, should be over. To be credible, European Foreign Policy should adopt a tougher stance, stick to the UN resolutions, apply pressure and sanctions when necessary. Asking Israel to abide by international law has been a waste of time, as Israel, systematically turned a deaf ear to EU warnings. Labelling Israeli products is worthless: anything produced in any Israeli settlement whether on the Golan Heights or in the West Bank should simply be banned. The EU cannot impose sanctions on Hamas in Gaza and cosy up with Israel. Such an un-balanced position damages EU moral standing. The EU should call on Israel to lift the blockade and to allow unhindered international assistance to the endangered population of Gaza. The EU should also back intra-Palestinian reconciliation talks. The task may seem daunting but this is the only way to make Gaza a "a habitable place", to regain trust in Palestine and in the region at large and to make Europe a credible actor.

The collapse of Lebanon may trigger civil war or even a regional war. The EU should, in coordination with the international community, save Lebanon. It is true that most of the problems of Lebanon are of its own making, but it is also true that the country has been

[40] Arash Azizi: "*Why sanctions on Iran should be lifted*", in **www.alaraby.co.uk/April,12,2020**
[41] Bichara Khader: «*Europe and the Palestinian question 1958-2018: declaratory but toothless diplomacy*", **Middle Eastern Studies Journal**, 2019, no.86, pp.101-142

severely affected by proxy wars on its soil, by the flux of refugees, and by the destabilization of the region as a whole.

The EU action in Syria has been almost invisible. Russia has dominated the scene. The US is withdrawing. Turkey is asserting itself and Iran is meddling in Syrian affairs. The EU provided assistance to NGO's in Syria and to refugee camps. It helped organise what was called "the friends of Syria". But the EU has not been a visible pro-active player in Syria. The US withdrawal offers the EU an opportunity to step in and prepare for the reconstruction of Syria.

Some EU countries (France and Spain) are withdrawing their military forces from Iraq. This precipitous move may allow ISIS to resurge. And there is doubt that Iraq has sufficient air and land surveillance to kill in the nib ISIS resurgence. The EU should be prepared to offer its military assistance whether alone or in coordination with NATO. This is not meddling in Iraqi affairs, it is simply extending a helping hand

The EU cannot afford to fail Middle Eastern countries. Vested interests are at stake. With US influence waning in Middle East, the EU has an incredible chance to raise its profile and play a prominent role. If it shies away, then its pretence to play a geopolitical role may become an exercise in fantasy.

Maghreb Countries are EU's nearest "abroad", where it has stronger influence by virtue of history, geography, geopolitics and trade. The pandemic and its aftershock will have devastating consequences on Maghreb countries. First, European lockdown will provoke economic squeeze in the Maghreb, as the EU is its main trading partner (65% of total Maghreb trade is done with the EU). Second, migrant remittances will dry up, as Maghreb migrants in Europe will be severely exposed to unemployment. Third**,** the tourism sector is set to be ravaged as borders are closed and air fleet grounded. Fourth, investors will shy away from the region as they will be looking inward. We should therefore expect a collapse of GDP in all Maghreb countries and a further spike in unemployment and poverty rates.

It would be unwise to think that the mere injection of some "fresh money" in these battered economies would save these countries from collapse or bankruptcy. The EU should go beyond "money", revamp its short-sighted policies and take steps for lasting regional stability, sustainable economic reform, and promotion of regional integration.

Regional stability requires a more decisive, coordinated and coherent action in worn-torn Libya. The country is enmeshed in civil war between the UN-recognized government of National Accord (GNA) in Tripoli and the leader of the self-proclaimed eastern-based Libyan National Army (LNA). The war is raging since some years but it took a dramatic turn when Haftar's army, with some military and diplomatic backing from Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Russia and even France, attempted, in April 2019, to capture Tripoli. Neither side has achieved decisive strategic victory, as Turkey stepped its support to the government of Tripoli.

Libya poses an immediate security challenge to the EU: With more than one thousand kilometres of Mediterranean shores, Libya is the launching pad of irregular migration through the Central Mediterranean Route. Some European countries (mainly Italy and France) are backing rival sides, as the untapped oil potential of Libya excites the appetite of ENI and Total. Others, like Germany are striving to mend the fences between the contending forces (Berlin Conference, January 2020), a mission which should have been undertaken by the EU itself. Moreover, as Libya draws in regional and non-regional backers, the internal strife may lead to a regional conflict. For all these reasons, the EU is concerned that the civil war could degenerate in wider conflict, putting some European countries at loggerheads, worsening regional stability, and swelling the flow of migrants.

In the last years, the EU outsourced the migration issue and financed detention centres in Libya, in what was called as the externalisation of the migration policy. More recently, on March 31, the EU launched the codenamed "IRINI" operation. Officially, this naval mission is designed to enforce UN Security Council Arms embargo in place since 2011. *"In principle, the mission sounds good»,* comments Tarek Megerisi, but "*the vast majority of weapons deliveries to Libya do not come from sea. They are either flown in at the behest of the United Arab Emirates or driven across Libya's land border with Egypt"*[42].

Whether IRINI mission will achieve its objective remains to be seen. What is sure however, is that this mission in the Eastern Mediterranean will be seen as a move intimately linked to the Turkish-Libyan territorial agreement in East Mediterranean, and to the Turkish backing of the Government of Tripoli. Indirectly it weakens the UN-recognized government of Tripoli, something which puts the EU at odds with its own proclaimed policy of not taking sides in the conflict. That's why, the April 25, Joint call for humanitarian truce in Libya, made by the Foreign ministers of France, Italy, Germany and Josep Borrell, the EU Top Diplomat, will sound hallow in Libyan ears. Indeed, few days later, Haftar proclaimed himself as the "ruler of Libya", leaving everybody flappergasted.

If we consider that the Libyan issue should be a priority for EU foreign policy, it is not only because of the risks related to migration or proxy wars, it is also because Libya's destabilisation poses serious risk to the security and stability of neighbouring Maghreb countries. Undoubtedly, much of Tunisia's ills are intimately linked to the Libyan crisis, with which it has 459 kilometres borderline and which was one of its major exporting markets. Algeria is less dependent on the Libyan market, but it has 982 kilometres long border with it. Therefore, any destabilisation of Libya will necessarily spill over Algeria, in many ways. Morocco will not be immune neither as the crisis of Libya reverberates on all Maghreb countries.

But Libya is not the only wound of the Maghreb. Algeria and Morocco are still turning their backs to each other, with borders closed since 1994. And there are still bickering on the

[42] Tarek Megerisi: »*The EU's IRINI Libya mission: Europe's operation Cassandra*", in **www.ecfr.eu** , April 3,2020

question of the Sahara, putting the Arab Union of the Maghreb-the Maghreb Regional initiative- at risk of total paralysis.

- **Regionalised Interdependence**

Against this backdrop, the action of the EU should concentrate on facilitating a political solution for the Libyan crisis, reconciling Maghreb Countries, and pushing for regional integration, and promoting what I may call “Regionalized interdependence”.

As the pandemic revealed EU dependence on supply chains from China for medical equipment and medicines, and its vulnerability to blackmail and disruptive measures, it is ripe time to think about the relocation of some industries (mainly related to the Health sector) in the Maghreb and in the Mediterranean regions. Such a policy has many advantages. First, the Maghreb and other Arab countries are the immediate neighbours, their youth is educated, labour cost low, and there is a demand for employment. The redeployment of industries in the Southern Region, reduces the cost of transport, creates jobs and prosperity and increases the interaction between the EU and its neighbours. The more developed is the Arab region, the better off is Europe. Investing in development in its immediate neighbourhood has many advantages for the EU. First, it diminishes the “push factor” to migrate. Second, it translates in increasing trade between the two regions. Third, it stems the wave of discontent. And fourth, it helps the growth of middle class and the emergence of a local industrial elite, indispensable factors for the consolidation of democratic systems.

This is a more rational course of action. EU should draw lessons from Coronavirus crisis: Investing in China creates jobs in China and makes China more prosperous, and more assertive , but , at the same time, it contributes to the de-industrialisation of Europe and makes it weaker, dependent and vulnerable to disruption of supply chains. While a real co-development strategy with its Mediterranean and Arab neighbours creates prosperity and stability for them and prosperity and security for Europe.

- **Conclusion**

No doubt that Coronavirus is a life-shattering event and a defining moment. Its effects will be felt for years. This unprecedented health crisis can be a bane or a boon. A bane, if Europe goes back to “business-as-usual” or a boon if it transforms this pandemic into a new opportunity through a substantial overhaul of its political and economic policies at home and in its immediate neighbourhood. Regionalised interdependence as suggested in this paper should become the backbone of reinvigorated EU-MENA relations.

The COVID-19 Pandemic and Territoriality: Some Initial Reflections

Dr. Derek Lutterbeck

- **Introduction**

Since its outbreak in the Chinese province of Wuhan in late 2019, the Coronavirus pandemic has spread with remarkable speed across the world. While during the initial weeks of the outbreak, the disease seemed to be confined to mainland China, on January 20th three other countries had reported cases of Coronavirus—Japan, South Korea and Thailand—and the first confirmed case in the USA came on the following day. By late February, Europe faced its first major outbreak in northern Italy, with cases in other European countries raising rapidly. At the same time, Iran emerged as another major hotspot of the pandemic, and Africa and Latin America also began reporting their first infections of Coronavirus. By June 2020, the pandemic—even though seemingly subsiding in some parts of the world—had reached practically every corner of the globe with more than 7 million confirmed cases and around 400,000 deaths associated with the virus. Only a handful of countries have not yet reported cases of Coronavirus, most of them small and rather isolated island states.

Efforts to fight the pandemic have taken various forms, ranging from full or partial lockdowns in most countries to unprecedented endeavours to find a vaccine against the virus as fast as possible. Many of these efforts have been multilateral in nature, involving the cooperation of numerous countries in different parts of the world. Even though multilateralism has generally been under strain during the years preceding the pandemic, due to the rise in nationalist policies in many major powers, there are signs that at least in some respects the pandemic might reverse this trend. Indeed, numerous have been the policy-makers who have argued that as a "global public health issue" the pandemic calls for multilateral responses not only in the field of health but also in other areas, such as the economic fall-out of the emergency.

However, while in some ways the pandemic might have given a new lease of life to multilateralism and enhanced international cooperation, there is another noteworthy—and somewhat opposite—trend in many countries' response to the disease: the closure of state

borders. Practically all countries in the world when confronted with the Coronavirus pandemic have imposed bans on persons seeking to enter (although most if not all them allowed their citizens to return). Thus, the pandemic has led to an unprecedented reversal of a trend towards what numerous analysts had called an increasingly "borderless world" or a "de-bordering of the state" (Ohmae 1990, Albert & Brock 1996). While in many ways, the Covid-19 pandemic represents the archetype of a "21st century security challenge"—being non-state, transnational, and non-military in nature—countries' response to the emergency to a large extent taken the form of a reassertion of the age-old principle of territorial sovereignty. This article offers some initial reflections on this general trend towards re-territorialisation in response to the Coronavirus pandemic.

- **The hardening of borders in Europe and beyond**

In no region of the world has this re-territorialisation and re-affirmation of state borders been more noteworthy than in Europe. Despite the fact that the lifting of internal borders among EU (or Schengen) countries is a key pillar of the EU integration project, from mid-March 2020 onwards, practically all EU (or Schengen) countries began reintroducing controls at EU internal borders, as well as with non-EU countries. Bans on entry from other EU countries were imposed by almost all EU member states in order to prevent the spread of the virus. While EU officials have been very weary about this development, fearing it might undermine the Schengen agreement and the functioning of the EU's internal market, EU institutions have ultimately been powerless in preventing the re-imposition of EU internal borders. All the EU Commission was able to do is to issue (non-binding) guidelines, which member states should respect re-introducing border controls. While these guidelines acknowledge EU member states' right to re-impose controls at their internal borders "for reasons of public policy and internal security", they call for the respect of certain basic principles in so doing, such as the principle of non-discrimination between citizens of EU states, the principle of proportionality, and the need to co-ordinate such measures at EU level (EU Commission 2020). EU institutions have also proven rather unsuccessful in co-ordinating EU countries' moves towards relaxing these internal controls: at the time of this writing (June 2020), the EU Commission has called for the lifting of all internal border controls and the re-establishment of free movement within the EU by mid-June, but only

some EU countries have followed suit, while others are proceeding according to their own time-tables and with numerous exceptions being made for countries deemed insufficiently in control of the pandemic.

The EU's external border has also been hardened in response to the pandemic. In March 2020, the EU prohibited all "non-essential" travel from third countries into the EU, a ban that remains in force as of this writing. Notably, the pandemic has also affected EU countries' willingness to accept asylum seekers on their territories. Both Italy and Malta, for example, have closed their ports to boats carrying migrants and refugees across the Mediterranean, citing public health concerns. In several instances, this has led to migrants and refugees being stranded at sea for days or even weeks.

Border closures and travel bans in an effort to contain the pandemic have been equally widespread in other parts of the world. The US, for example has banned entry to people coming from numerous countries, including all EU states, China, Iran and Brazil. Australia has even gone as far as to prohibit entry of all non-citizens and non-residents. China, even though being the initial source of the pandemic, has also banned almost all travel to the country. As a result of these world-wide border closures and travel bans, it is estimated that in 2020, global travel will drop by around 50%.

- **WHO position on borders controls**

How can this ubiquitous imposition of entry bans and reinforcement of border controls in response to the pandemic be explained? The most common justification given by policy-makers has been that such measures are necessary to prevent the spread of the disease. Closing borders, it is argued, will prevent infected individuals from entering the country and thus limits the spread of the virus. It is however noteworthy that the World Health Organisation (WHO) has generally argued against the use of border controls and travel bans as a tool to fight the pandemic. To quote the WHO's advice on the matter: "WHO continues to advise against the application of travel or trade restrictions" in order to prevent the spread of the disease. According to the WHO, while entry bans and travel restrictions may "be justified at the beginning of an outbreak, as they may allow countries to gain time", they

are generally considered ineffective “in preventing the importation of cases”, and should be avoided due their “significant economic and social impact” (WHO 2020).

Thus, while from the WHO perspective the wide-spread imposition of entry restrictions might have made sense at the beginning of the pandemic, it should be noted that border controls in most countries have remained in place well beyond that, at a time when the virus was already being transmitted internally. In some countries, such as the UK, entry restrictions—at least in the form of compulsory quarantine—were even only introduced several months into the pandemic rather than at the beginning of the outbreak. Noteworthy is also that some countries have imposed travel bans from countries with significantly lower infection rates than their own. The USA, for example, closed its borders to entries from all EU countries, despite the fact the infection rate of the USA is higher than even the worst effected countries in Europe.

- **A “territorial imperative”?**

If as argued by the WHO, border closures and entry bans are not effective instruments to fight the pandemic, why have practically all countries resorted to this measure? If the ubiquitous hardening of states from a public health perspective does not seem to make much sense, what explains this general trend? Could it be that the general “re-territorialisation” of states is not so much a “rational” response to the pandemic but rather driven by other factors? While addressing this question fully would require a much more elaborate analysis, some initial reflections shall be made here.

The inherently territorial dimension of countries’ response to the pandemic might point to what the anthropologist Robert Ardrey (1966) has called the “territorial imperative”. Basing his argument on an analysis of animal behaviour, Ardrey has highlighted the “concept of territory as a genetically determined form of behaviour”, not only in animals but also in man. Just like other species, man according to Ardrey, is driven by inherited instincts to acquire land and defend territory, ultimately leading to the establishment—often through war and violence—of territorially defined nations. This “territorial imperative” is particularly evident when confronted by “external intruders”. “Chasing off trespassers”, in Ardrey’s views, is not so much an issue of deliberate choice but rather of inherited instinct; we do it not “because

we choose" but rather "because we must". He has underlined the parallel between animal and man as follows: "The dog barking at you from behind his master's fence acts for a motive indistinguishable from that of his master when the fence was built".

While Ardrey's arguments—controversial as they are—have been used mainly to explain human behaviour in war and violent conflict, which typically involve struggles over territory, they might also lend themselves to explaining countries' "territorial" responses to the Coronavirus pandemic as described above. After the all, many leaders have referred to the fight against the virus as a "war" against an (invisible) "enemy" which needed to be "defeated". Indeed, it could even be argued that the common drive towards territorial closure displayed by practically all countries, despite expert advice to the contrary, is even better evidence of the "instinctive", rather than "rational", nature of such responses: while defending one's territory against a military attack by another country might seem broadly rational—even though Ardrey would also highlight the "instinctive" nature of such action—this is much less the case for the territorial defences put in place to fight the pandemic. It could thus be argued that Ardrey's "territorial imperative"—i.e. an innate drive towards securing one's territory when confronted with a (supposedly) existential threat—explains the general trend towards territorial closure in confronting the pandemic, rather than rational calculus based on scientific knowledge.

- **The symbolic nature of state borders**

Apart from being driven by "inherited instinct", the resort to territorial closure to prevent the spread of the virus might also have important "symbolic" rather than "instrumental" functions. This is an aspect of border control policies which has been highlighted by Peter Andreas (2000) in his analysis of US border control measures implemented along the US-Mexico border. Focusing on US efforts to stem the flow of undocumented migrants and drugs across its southern border, he has argued that enhanced border controls, in the form of building walls and other measures aimed at preventing unauthorised entries, hardly ever prove effective, as barriers will be circumvented and smugglers become more sophisticated. Despite this, strengthening borders has remained a popular measure in the US (as well as elsewhere) in order to curb irregular immigration and other "undesirables". In Andreas' view the building up of borders follows not so much an *instrumental logic* of more effective law

enforcement rather than an *expressive logic* of conveying (to the public) the image of a well-controlled border. In other words, border control policies are more about image crafting than about effective prevention of unauthorised entries.

Applying this analysis to countries' response to the health emergency might suggest that the re-imposition of border controls—despite expert advice highlighting the ineffectiveness of such measure—follows not so much an instrumental logic of effectively containing the virus but rather an expressive logic of communicating to the public that "the situation is under control". The image which is conveyed is one of "secure borders" which prevent the virus from entering and thus keep the national territory safe. Moreover, it also gives the impression that the "threat" of the pandemic is coming (mainly) from the outside (rather than already circulating within the national territory), and that by closing state borders, the threat can be effectively held at bay.

- **Conclusions**

While the above is just a preliminary analysis, states' response to the Coronavirus pandemic generally do show that the principle of territoriality is still very much alive. The general trend towards territorial closure in response to the pandemic suggests that border controls remain key policy tools deployed by states to confront this new type of challenge. Rather than having become obsolete or irrelevant, as argued by some proponents of "globalisation", state borders remain core pillars of the international system.

However, the preceding analysis also suggests that the continued relevance of state borders might not simply the result of "rational" or "instrumental" responses to a new type of threat. The fact that states have resorted to policies of territorial closure largely contrary to expert advice points to factors other than rational calculus or instrumental logic which might be at play. This article has highlighted two which would merit further investigation: an instinctive drive towards territorial closure, and the strengthening of state borders for (mainly) symbolic rather than instrumental reasons.

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Security Sector Reform in the MENA Region – the Impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic

Dr. Monika Wohlfeld

1. Introduction

The outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic has a myriad of global, regional and local consequences, which deserve immediate attention from the academic and policy-making community. One of the more visible aspects is the securitization of the response to the pandemic in many countries, with the use of the security sector for tasks such as providing equipment and health –care and enforcing curfews and emergency law provisions. In some cases, this securitization processes also involved clamping down on civil society, opposition and media. The question about what impact such and other related developments have on efforts aimed at security sector reform will be raised in this essay. The author focuses on the MENA region, as following the Arab Spring, the significance of security sector reform processes in the region has been recognized internationally. MENA countries have traditionally relied on the security sector, in particular the military, the police and secret and intelligence services to shore up their authoritarian or semi-authoritarian rule. Since the Arab Spring events, SSR efforts been undermined by conflict (especially in Syria and Libya) and resurgence of military rule (especially in Egypt and Algeria), although some progress has been registered in Tunisia. The fact that most MENA countries securitized their response to the pandemic and relied heavily on the security sector will further affect the SSR agenda in the region.

This paper focuses on the impact of the responses to the health crisis in the MENA region on security sector reform. It does not attempt to provide an assessment of the effectiveness of the measures undertaken.

2. Security Sector Reform

2.1. The Security Sector

The concept of Security Sector Reform is a relatively recent one. While in an early, narrow definition, the security sector was understood to consist mainly of the armed forces and possibly police, the most recent efforts to define what should be included in the understanding of what constitutes the security sector broaden the scope considerably. This development reflects the recognition gained mostly in the context of the reform of the security sector in Central and Eastern Europe and elsewhere, that reforms that do not take into account the broader environment are doomed to failure.

Thus, the concepts of 'whole of government' and the even wider 'whole of society' were developed. To give an example of a corresponding definition of the security sector, the 2005 OECD DAC Guidelines on Security System Reform and Governance define the security system as consisting of core security actors, security management and oversight bodies and democratic governance of security system (which includes civil society), justice and law enforcement institutions, and non-statutory security forces.[1] Other efforts to provide a definition emphasize civil society actors as a significant category.[2]

Those advancing 'whole of government' and 'whole of society' approaches (which includes many development donors) suggest that security sector includes 'oversight bodies like parliament and legislative committees, the executive, financial management, but also civil society, NGOs, media, ombudsmen and customary and traditional justice systems. In other concepts, non-statutory forces – liberation or guerrilla armies, private bodyguard units, private security companies, and private militias – are included and emphasis is laid on the role of civil society. SSR is sometimes seen as including disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) of former combatants as well as initiatives pertaining to small arms and light weapons (SALW).'[3]

DCAF – The Geneva Center for Security Sector Governance provides a broad and detailed chart of security sector actors.

While a narrow understanding of the security sector results in a focus of security sector reform on mainly military and possibly police, often SSR results in improvement of operational capacity of such actors and some efforts aimed at civilian control of the military. A broad understanding of the security sector leads us towards a broad understanding of the definition of security sector reform. According to the 2008 report by the UN Secretary General on security sector reform, 'Security sector reform describes a process of assessment, review and implementation as well as monitoring and evaluation led by national authorities that has as its goal the enhancement of effective and accountable security for the State and its peoples without discrimination and with full respect for human rights and the rule of law.'[4] DCAF argues that SSR is:

• 'A Nationally-Owned process aimed at ensuring that security and justice providers deliver…

• Effective and efficient security and justice services that meet the people's needs, and that security and justice providers are…

• Accountable to the state and its people, operating within a framework of good governance, rule of law and respect for human rights.'[5]

Consequently, authors such as Wulf highlight the role of the civil society or the public in SSR. He argues that '(d)emocratic decision-making requires transparency and accountability. Thus, the public at large needs to be involved. However, democratisation is no guarantee of improved security. ….. Hence, the crux of the reform of the security sector is the

development of both effective civilian oversight mechanisms and creation of institutions capable of providing security'.[6] Thus arguably the concept of Security Sector Reform (SSR) refers to the process through which a society seeks to review and/or enhance the effectiveness and the accountability of its security and justice providers.

Figure 1: A comprehensive definition of the security sector.

Source: Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, "The Security Sector", SSR Backgrounder Series (Geneva: DCAF, 2015).

Figure 1 A comprehensive definition of the security sector.[7]

'The list of countries in need of security sector reform is long.'[8] There is also a large number of states and institutions engaged in supporting SSR in a substantial number of countries. Apart from national governments, the United Nations (UN), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), regional organizations such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), as well as the European Union (EU) must mentioned here.

Noteworthy in this context are significant advances for SSR related the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agreed upon in 2015. SDG 16 goal 'to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels' is seen a central , as SSR's place in international development assistance in fragile and conflict-affected states is underlined.[9]

Important for the efforts to advance SSR is also the work undertaken in the last few years by the EU. The EU has developed an arguably coherent approach to SSR (the European Commission's Joint Communication of April 2015 on 'Capacity Building in support of Security and Development and the 2016 publication of the High Representative's 'EU-Wide Strategic Framework to Support SSR'). After a long debate, the EU also adopted an amended Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP) on 7 December 2017, which foresaw more comprehensive assistance for security sector actors in all partner countries.[10] This Instrument may be further amended in the context of the ongoing debate on the EU multiannual financial framework.

Thus, on the donor side, progress on conceptualization, prioritization and level of support has been registered in the past years, although for example train and equip programs for state security actors receive a disproportionate amount of funding and support over efforts to support civil society actors in addressing SSR challenges. However, the Covid-pandemic will certainly affect the donors ability to support SSR processes, for reasons that range from budgetary and financial constraints that can be expected as a result of the economic fallout of the health crisis to issues related to credibility, as some donor governments have securitized their own response to the pandemic and to issues related to likely shifts of focus in the development agenda.

It is difficult however to assess the overall progress on SSR on the ground in the framework of this paper. Suffice to say that progress has been uneven, and has to be understood in the framework of democratization processes, which are not linear and in many instances quite fragile. However, it is clear that securitization of the responses to the pandemic, as well as economic hardship that follows will affect SSR in a myriad of ways.

3. THE IMPACT OF THE COVID CRISIS ON THE SECURITY SECTOR

The impact of health issues on security, as well as the threat of pandemics (including of a novel coronavirus pandemic) has been recognized for some time as a potential security

threat to rival military threats. Among others, Bill Gates[11] and Stefan Elbe[12] have been drawing attention to the security implications of a possible coronavirus pandemic in the past years. However, governments across the globe seemed largely unprepared for the Covid-19 pandemic and many came to rely heavily on state security actors in their responses to the health crisis. This is not without consequences. As Trenkow-Wermuth argues, '(t)he coronavirus pandemic will have long-lasting repercussions for governance, justice, and security—among many other things.'[13]

The following examination will use a broad understanding of the security sector and security sector reform, but while recognizing that all of the categories of the security sector presented in Figure 1 above are impacted by the pandemic situation, not all of them can be analyzed here. Rather, this paper will focus more on state security providers and civil society actors and in particular their empowerment (or disempowerment) through the pandemic situation and present a number of select trends discernible for these two types of actors.

It is evident that the health emergency has been securitized across the globe[14]. Of course, as Asmi Bishara writes, in times of crisis people look to the state as the organized framework capable of taking enforceable action.[15] And the state's use of the state security sector reflects organizational capabilities and resources, often alongside weaknesses of other sectors, such as health care sector or civil society. However, observing the overall situation, former German EU Commissioner Oettinger felt it necessary to admonish EU states by emphasizing that "(t)he coronavirus may be life threatening, but you don't need machine guns to stop it from spreading."[16]

An important observation is that many states imposed emergency situations, mostly according with the local law, although sometimes outside of the law. In some cases, emergency measures were used to clamp down on civil society actors and opposition and some commentators indicate that such clamp downs may not be lifted in all states even when the main impact of the pandemic has been addressed

Many if not most governments deployed state security providers on the 'frontlines' of battling the epidemic, and while such deployments may have been necessary, a general empowerment of such actors took place, especially in authoritarian and semi-authoritarian states. Military actors were called upon to provide infrastructure, medical care and procure protective equipment. They were also involved in traditional policing tasks such enforcing emergency provisions, curfews, lockdowns and in border management tasks. Often, border management practices were amended to limit or stop cross-border traffic, and in a number of cases the security sector was used by governments to clamp down on migration, including push-back and denying the right to file a claim, as well as exposing migrants to increased risk to their lives, for example by drowning in the Mediterranean.

These developments draw attention to definitions of the role of the military and issues of human rights of members of the security sector, to types of use of the security sector that

are allowed and possible in various countries, and significantly, to the securitization of the response to the pandemic across the globe.

It has been reported that in some settings, security sector actors, especially military, have 'sidelined civilian authorities to strengthen their own position'[17] in the context of the pandemic response. Trenkov-Wermuth suggests that this will have negative consequences that relate to the pandemic but also to conflict, extremism and fragility.[18]

As to the civil society, various restrictions and curfews resulted directly and indirectly in limitations in the right to freedom of speech and expression and being able to gather or demonstrate. Noteworthy here is the role of the security sector's role in enforcing such restrictions, but also the impact of the measures on the ability of the civil society to provide input into SSR. Furthermore, in some cases the clampdown on civil society actors was deliberate, disproportionate and strategic in nature and resulted in disempowerment of civil society actors. Civil society actors, particularly human rights organizations, were often not in a position to respond to SSR-related developments. Even more significantly, numerous crackdowns on media, dissenters and protest movements were registered in the framework of the response to the pandemic, especially emergency provisions.

There are also a number of longer-term considerations that will be of relevance for future efforts at SSR, such as economic developments and corresponding budgetary pressures, the ability of donor countries and organizations such as the EU to support SSR initiatives, shifting understanding of the role of the security sector, and so on. These are difficult to assess at this stage. Most importantly in the context of SSR, all these developments will, for some states, shift an often delicate or already skewed balance towards empowering the state security sector while weakening the civilian oversight and civil society actors. Instead of advancing human security, and creating opportunities for building trust and advancing peace, this shift has the potential of eroding governance, undermining the rule of law, increasing resistance to put into place accountability measures, and setting back efforts at enhancing security sector reform across the globe.

As a DCAF analysis of 66 countries from a variety of regions and with different types of governance (among which were Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia) shows, while all those countries have used extensive executive powers, full democracies were more likely to opt for a disaster management approach while authoritarian regimes were most likely to impose states of emergency. Flawed democracies were also more likely to impose states of emergency. The study concludes also that the less open the political culture and the less it is open to civilian participation in decision-making and accountability, the more likely it is to allow for indefinite emergencies and disproportionate securitization with military personnel assuming control of the decision-making process.[19]

DCAF reports that '(H)ybrid regimes and authoritarian states were most likely to adopt a militarised response to the Covid-19 crisis (…). No reports indicating that 'full democracies'

have had a recourse to the extensive use of military with most countries either being authoritarian or hybrid regimes. Typically, the military is authorised to enforce lockdowns, curfews and/or control public transportation. As a result, the level of securitisation appears to be linked to the prevailing degree of democratic constitutionalism. It also appears through this study that countries characterised by rampant inequalities, socio-economic instability and high levels of unemployment are more likely to witness security sector abuses or excesses whilst addressing the public health crisis.'[20]

Ultimately, these findings imply that states that have problems in the realm of SSR are likely to exacerbate those with the type of response that they assume to the pandemic situation. This is certainly also likely the case in the MENA region where the hope of advancing SSR measures ignited by the Arab Spring events in 2011 has largely given way to disillusionment.

4. Security Sector Reform in the MENA Region

4.1. The situation before the Arab Spring

It has been argued that in particular in weak states, ruling elites tend to opt for short-term strategies of survival rather than long –term state-building policies or policies focused on the well-being of citizens.. 'This entails creating or expanding the security forces, spending large sums of the national income on military supplies, and using violence and intimidation against real and perceived opponents of the regime.'[21] The human rights records of regimes using such tactics are consequently appalling and civil society actors often the targets of such policies.

Arguably all of the autocratic regimes in North Africa employed such tactics, relying on state security providers for their survival, and committing grave human rights abuses, such as unlawful imprisonment, forced disappearances, extra-judicial killings, torture, and violent suppression of political expression. Military and security forces were often the instrument of choice for such abuses of power.

The UNDP Arab Human Development Report 2009 eloquently formulates the problem in the following way:

> 'Executive branches and security and armed forces that are not subject to public oversight present grave potential threats to human security. All Arab heads of state wield absolute authority, answering to none. They maintain their hold on power by leaving the state's security apparatus an extremely wide margin for manoeuvre, at the expense of citizens' freedoms and fundamental rights. Arab security agencies operate with impunity because they are instrumental to the head of state and account to him alone. Their powers are buttressed by executive interference with the independence of the judiciary, by the dominance (in most states) of an unchanging ruling party over the legislature, and by the muzzling of the media.'[22]

It is possible to even go a step further and claim that 'the security sector constituted the backbone of the Arab political system'[23] and indeed, militaries have for a long time been seen as guarantors of regime security, as the ultimate protectors of the regimes. Consequently, most observers, writing prior to the Arab Spring events, argued that introducing SSR in North African countries would not be an easy task. Medhane Tadesse described the situation in the following way: 'The idea of security sector reform (SSR) in the Arab region of Africa seems highly unrealistic, given the sensitivity of the issues involved.'[24]

4.2. The Impact of the Arab Spring

The events that took place in numerous MENA states in 2011 underline these findings in a most impressive way. The conception of security, which focused on survival of regimes, led inter alia to situations in some countries in which armed forces and police, in the name of autocratic regimes, fired live ammunition and killed peaceful protesters demanding social and economic change.

It was the relationship between the military and security forces and the regimes that not only galvanized some of the protest agendas, but also defined the methodology of response of the autocrats to the demands of the demonstrators in those popular uprisings, and significantly also the character and speed of reform in those countries that have embarked upon changes.

Indeed, state security providers have become a difficult legacy for those countries that have embarked upon the course of reform following the Arab Spring. Significantly, it was Tunisia, which comparatively speaking should have had the least difficulty in reforming the security sector that has shown the desire for change first. DCAF reported that already in April 2011, a Tunisian delegation discussed reforms to Tunisia's security sector as part of the transition and democratization process. DCAF suggested that '(b)ringing the security forces under democratic control constitutes the biggest challenge to reformers after the overthrow of former Tunisian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. People expect that reformed security forces respect the law, especially human rights, perform professionally, stay apolitical, and remain accountable for their actions. Tunisia wants change in the minds, texts, institutions and practices in order to get security forces that serve the people'.[25]

As for other MENA countries, Egypt, during after its short-lived democratization processes, continued to rely heavily on the security sector in its political and economic realms. Libya experienced a bitter conflict and was thus out of bounds for any such reforms, although ultimately, there is strong recognition that SSR will be necessary, as evidenced in the provisions of the Conclusions of the 2020 Berlin Conference on Libya[26]. And while Algeria's and Morocco's relationship makes any effort at reform more complex because of their rivalry, Morocco was open to some limited aspects of reform of the security sector. However, Morocco's security sector continued to be a fundamental component of the regime of power in the country[27]. Algeria's political crisis, which came to a head in 2019

continues. While the military forcibly removed the President, the peaceful protest movement — *hirak* —continued. Millions of Algerians marched throughout the country every Friday to demand the dismantlement of the regime and the establishment of a genuine civilian democratic system. Protesters have been calling for the implementation of a civilian state, rather than a military one as 'all governments in Algeria have been accountable to the military as the locus of power'.[28] Unrest has also spread in Morocco.

In addition, other developments, such as the conflict in Syria, and its regional fall-out as well as the increasingly worrisome state of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict also had a dramatic impact on the region, including on the state of security sector reform. To conclude, Tunisia was the one exception in the region, with the Tunisian government starting SSR efforts in earnest in 2011 and diverse donors engaging. These have so far however not resulted in a comprehensive and sustainable reform. In response to terrorist attacks, Tunisian authorities implemented a state of emergency in 2015.

4.3. SSR and the Covid-19 Pandemic

The assessment of the impact of the Covid-pandemic on SSR efforts in the MENA region is a somewhat difficult undertaking. This has to do with the novelty of the threat, the short period of time since its outbreak and unclear future of the course of the health crisis, as well lack of clarity on the economic impact of the pandemic which may have an even greater impact on SSR than the health crisis itself. Furthermore, it must be recalled that the dependence on the state security sector in Covid responses is not only visible in the MENA region but rather is a global phenomenon. Nevertheless, some trends are discernible and the MENA region deserves a closer look, given its specific problems with SSR-related issues prior to the outbreak of the pandemic.

The pandemic response in the MENA region has been heavily securitized and focused on the use of state security providers. Writing about Jordan, but applicable to many other states in the region, Krasna argues that '(t)his dependence on the security forces reflects their singular organizational capabilities and resources, alongside deficiencies of civil state and local government capacity'.[29]

This dependence on the security sector has not always resulted in proportional responses, and in some cases granted special powers to the state security providers. To give an example, 'Egypt's gradual slide into a military dictatorship has led to a deliberate erasure of the political process and a dominance of military elites, which allowed the regime to follow policies that promote the narrow interests of these elites. Such a governmental shift has left the state unable to perform one of its essential functions of protecting the populace in times of crisis.'[30] The health emergency situation has been used by the regime to add on to its powers and to put into place legislative amendments, which will give additional sweeping powers to President Abd al-Fattah al-Sisi and security agencies, without a time-horizon for their withdrawal.

All MENA countries quickly enacted extraordinary legal measures and declarations of states of emergencies. This in itself may not be unusual, but it needs to be seen in the context of the fact that a number of MENA states have had a long history of using and abusing such measures. Algeria was under emergency rules for some 20 years, and Egypt for even longer[31]. Even Tunisia has been under a state of emergency since 2015, following a terrorist attack – although there were obvious differences in the institutional set-up. This extensive use of such states of emergency is problematic. Many observers warned that some of extraordinary measures that have been added on in the MENA region in 2020 could persist beyond the end of the health crisis. Furthermore, they saw signs that such measures are exploited in order to crack down on virtually any type of dissent. It has been noted that a number of governments in the region imposed or continued open-ended states of emergency and used those to instil curfews, home confinement, as well as to crack down on civil society and the media.[32] Lynch argues that '(t)he pandemic response has legitimated escalated state control over society in way which are necessary to slow virus transmission but which incorporate all the tools and modalities for future repression. Emergency laws once put in place are unlikely to retreat.'[33] New surveillance tools and technologies made available to the state security sector will likely continue to be used after the health crisis.

Civil society actors such as civil society organizations, but also protest movements and the media were restricted not only by the exigencies of the health crisis and any necessary containment measures that were put into place but also by heavy-handed interpretations of the measures and direct crack-downs on dissenters. As the Sarah Yerkes argues, 'the strict measures governments have adopted (...) are already having a dramatic impact on the region's people – particularly activists, journalists and anyone critical of the governments' leaders'.[34] The crackdown on the Algerian protest movement including mobilization of state security providers and use of force to stop demonstrations and the prosecution of thousands of Moroccans for violating the state of emergency illustrate this trend further.[35] Writing about Morocco's response to the pandemic, Yasmin Zarhloule suggests that 'the mechanisms of the normalisation of security practices could ensure the continuous institutionalization of state control and regulation of society's movement in the public space.'[36] Marc Lynch goes further and argues that '(r)egimes will seize this opportunity to shut down what had been a robust regional protest wave and seek their recurrence. Movements in Algeria, Iraq and Lebanon, which had demonstrated great resilience by staying in the streets despite state efforts at repression and co-optation, will likely find it difficult to restart protest movements of the same magnitude and focus after the period of closure.(...) The inability to return to the streets will also cripple the power of activist movements attempting to prevent autocratic backsliding in countries such as Sudan and Tunisia.'[37]

As noted in this article, since 2011, Tunisia has been somewhat of an exception in the region when it comes down to SSR efforts. Thus, it is worthwhile looking at Tunisia in more detail. The pandemic arrived at a delicate time for Tunisia, which experienced a period of political

deadlock and a wave of public discontent and which according to some observers was at some risk of backsliding towards autocratic practices. The authorities' initial reaction to the health crisis was to give special powers to the head of government which lacked important checks and balances and relied on the state security sector. While some observers noted with concern that Tunisia's response to the pandemic would have long-term impacts on freedom of expression and political confrontation, most agreed that '(i)n Tunisia (...), the government is unlikely to abuse these powers or resort to excessive force. Rather, what may threaten of strengthen the fledgling democracy is how the state deals with the economic fallout from these outbreak.'[38] One author suggests that 'Tunisian activists have concerns about a potential infringement of civil liberties and freedom of expression (...). But overall, there have been encouraging signs of democratic checks and balances preventing a broader militarization or securitization of the crisis.'[39] The fallout of the economic crisis that is likely to follow the pandemic may however create a different dynamic which Wehrey argues could change civil-military relations in a lasting way, as the military may be called upon to quell social unrest – a role which he argues the military would be wary of. Giulia Cimini thus sees an important role for Tunisia's vibrant civil society and Tunisia's partners, especially in Europe, to watch these developments and support Tunisia's economy.[40]

5. Conlusions

Although the pandemic situation is a relatively recent experience and its full impact cannot be fully glimpsed yet, it is possible to already discern clear trends which exacerbate SSR-related problems globally. These are very clearly visible in the MENA region, which even prior to the Covid health crisis was one of the regions which lagged on SSR. Although arguably there are significant differences among the region's countries, it is possible to say that it had a fivefold effect on the MENA region: it resulted in securitized responses and it empowered state security actors through emergency provisions and expansion of task while at the same time leading to side-lined civilian authorities, disempowered civil society actors and more often than not, to crackdowns on media, dissent and protest movements across the region. These developments further tip the power gradient away from civil society actors towards state security actors, in a region that has been marked by heavy reliance on state security actors, especially the military, in the context of assuring regime security. Tunisia is a special case in the region, as this paper suggests. Despite concerns about a possible slide-back into autocracy and a securitized response to the pandemic, its checks and balances and civilian control of the state security actors appear to be holding up.

An expected global (and regional) economic crisis as a result of the pandemic situation, a probable drop in attention to SSR issues globally, and possibly irreversible impact of the additional tipping of the balance in favour of state security actors in some MENA countries do not bode well for SSR efforts. At the same time, it needs to be emphasized that '(t)his is a crucial time for the reform of the security and justice sectors, as they both have a central role to play in implementing and overseeing emergency measures implemented by the

executive.'[41] It is for this reason that SSR cannot be put on the backburner and requires attention from governments and from civil society actors in the MENA and globally.

However, clearly, working with unreformed governments or police and military leaderships is difficult in most places, not only because there may be no particular interest in pursuing a reform agenda, but also because efforts to decouple authoritarian or semi-authoritarian rulers (or even transitional governments) from the formal security sector as well as involvement of civil society actors are likely to be perceived by such rulers and by state security actors as threatening to their raison d'etre and privileges. Such efforts are of course difficult and often dangerous for civil society actors in non-democratic societies, particularly those in which the state security sector (i.e., police, military, and secret services) have privileged access and where human rights are routinely abused. In the case of North Africa, where little reform of the security sector from the top has been observed apart from Tunisia and possibly to a limited extent Morocco, and where the Arab Spring and more recent waves of protest have reflected and indeed been based on active although often unstructured engagement of civil society, this may be a particularly difficult undertaking.

To conclude, the Covid-19 pandemic has further complicated any work on SSR in the MENA region and further empowered state security actors while disempowering civil society actors. The situation deserves attention as SSR should not to slip from the agenda in the region

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The 'Field' of Modern Diplomacy

Professor Jürg M. Gabriel

Introduction

The world of diplomacy was always difficult to grasp –and it still is. Some diplomatic activities are public and for all to see, but many are confidential and shrouded in secrecy. Some diplomats enjoy formal accreditation; others do not. Modern diplomacy is also highly dynamic, with new forms and dimensions. It showed during the 2020 Corona Pandemic when important diplomatic events were carried on via Internet and by video conferencing. Such diversity complicates a serious academic treatment of the subject. But the situation is not entirely hopeless, because some aspects are clear and can be dealt with in an orderly manner. It is especially true for the formal side of diplomacy, for an appreciation of the growing diversity of actors. It is in this area that the present paper wants to make a contribution.

Take the example of the recent Berlin Conference organized to discuss a Libyan ceasefire. From a substantive point of view, the problem is rather complex. It has a political, military, economic, and migratory dimension, to mention only the most obvious. It is not surprising, therefore, that the range of participants was highly diverse. The conference was initiated by Angela Merkel and all kinds of diplomatic actors participated – national, non-national, multilateral, and supranational.[43]

The *national* diplomats came from eight different countries: Germany, the United States, France, the United Kingdom, Italy, Russia, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates. That was not unusual, because beginning with the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, sovereign states have been at the heart of traditional diplomacy. For centuries state diplomats have gathered in all kinds of settings. Most contacts were bilateral, but large conferences were common, too.

Central at the Berlin Conference were the representatives of the parties directly involved, the Tripoli government headed by Fayez al-Sarraj and his challenger, General Haftar. Al-Sarraj is a state actor enjoying international recognition and defending national sovereignty.[44]

Haftar, in contrast, is not a sovereign actor as yet – but is aspiring to become one. He is a *potential* state actor, and for the moment, he wears two different hats. While attending conferences he operates as a diplomat, but at home he is a military commander controlling troops.[45] As the recent contacts between the United States and the Taliban show, the situation is not unusual.

Multilateral diplomats were also present in Berlin. As the head of the United Nations

[43] For a summary of the conference, see https://reliefweb.int/report/libya/berlin-conference- libya-conference-conclusions-19-january-2020; for a critical assessment, see https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3477876

[44] See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fayez_al-Sarraj

[45] See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khalifa_Haftar

Support Mission for Libya (UNSMIL), Ghassan Salamé represented the New York organization. His main objective was to enforce the Security Council resolution calling for a weapons embargo.[46] Delegates of two other multilateral organizations, the Arab League and the African Union, attended as well.

A *supranational* envoy representing the European Union was also invited. Given the nature of European integration, he spoke for 27 member states. For the EU Libya is an important country in its southern neighborhood, but as a failing state, it is associated with a number of problems. Migration is one of them. The absence of a functioning government and the dominance of local militias enables thousands of migrants to use Libya as a (dangerous) route to Europe. The EU has an interest to improve the management of migration.

As stated above, Haftar is a *non-national* actor who, because he is directly involved, was present as well. The same was not true for NGOs like SOS-Méditerranée or Médecins-sans-Frontières. Both have an interest in participating because they are running search-and-rescue (SAR) operations off Libya. It is true that NGO activities are of a private rather than a public nature, but disembarkation and relocation are in the hands of European governments. To be successful, NGOs have to cooperate with sovereign states, and as we shall see, they are often part of the diplomatic scene.[47]

The Libya example reflects the increasing complexity of modern diplomacy and politics in general. Diplomacy and politics have much in common, of course. Diplomacy is part of a highly political world, and as I will show, it is closely related to the concept of public authority and of *sovereignty.* These terms underlie the entire field of modern diplomacy.

This article has three parts. It starts in Part I with a rough presentation of the four basic categories of modern diplomacy. In Part II I discuss the concepts of public authority and of sovereignty, which are related to all four. But there is a problem, because classical sovereignty saw war as a legitimate means of conflict management. After two destructive world wars, that conception changed and opened the way for multilateral, supranational, and non-national diplomacy. The third and concluding part is an effort to discuss specific examples of modern diplomacy. Some, as we shall see, are identical with one of the four spheres, but many are intricate combinations.

Four Diplomatic Categories

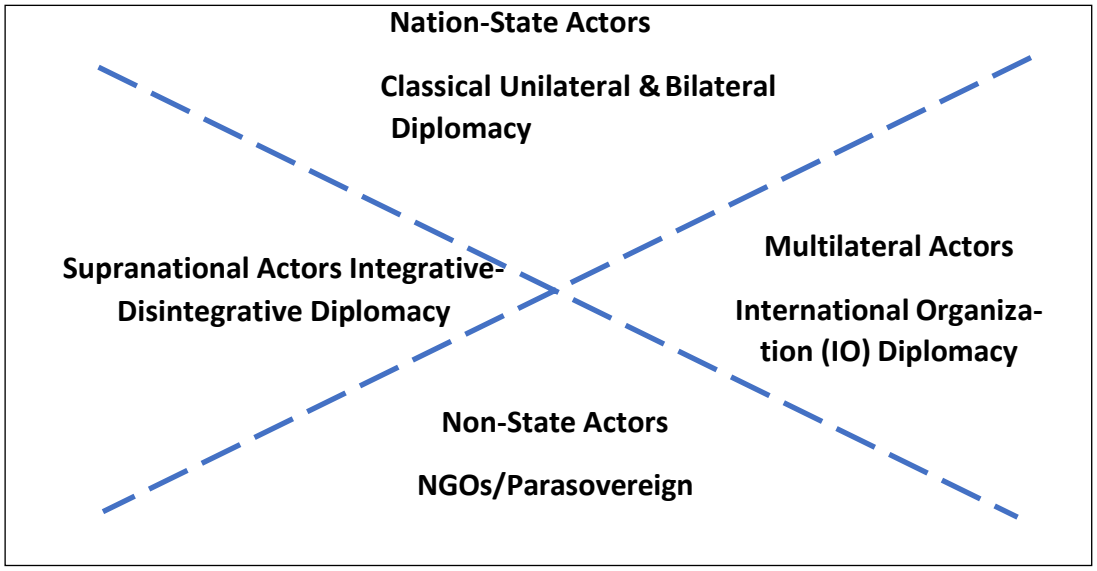
The Congress of Vienna at the end of the Napoleonic Wars was one of the most famous and spectacular diplomatic events. The mammoth gathering lasted from November 1814 to June 1815 and was attended by a multitude of actors. As was typical of traditional diplomacy, it was dominated by state representatives, mainly by ambassadors and their entourages. Count Metternich led the Austrian delegation and was the central figure.[48]

[46] For more about UNSMIL see https://dppa.un.org/en/mission/unsmil
[47] For a view of Libya and migration see my web-page www.blue-borders.ch.
[48] Henry A. Kissinger, *A World Restored*, Grosset & Dunlap, New York 1964; Harold Nicolson, *The Congress of Vienna, A Study in Allied Unity: 1812-1822*, The Viking Press, New York 1967.

Today's situation, as shown, is more varied. From a formal point of view, it is useful to distinguish four different types of diplomacy or, more precisely, to speak of a 'field' composed of nation-state actors, non-state actors, multilateral actors, and supranational actors (Figure 1).

The birth of modern inter-state politics, as hinted at, is usually identified with Westphalia, more precisely with the congress that ended the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648). The emergence was gradual, of course, and paralleled by the growth of classical international law tied to the idea of state *sovereignty*. To this day the concept constitutes the heart of diplomacy. It is no surprise that it is enshrined in Art. 2/1 of the UN Charter.[49] In one way or another, *traditional diplomacy* is practiced today by nearly 200 states. Some are big and powerful, others are small and carry little weight, some prefer to use peaceful means, and others are willing to use force. Economic and military sanctions have become commonplace. Some traditional state diplomacy is unilateral, and some is bilateral.

Figure 1



Multilateral diplomacy is usually identified with the actions of international organizations (IOs) meant to provide services for sovereign member states.[50] Most famous, of course, is the United Nations, a global IO involved in a multitude of different activities. However, the central concern is the maintenance of international peace and security, as Art. 2/4 of the Charter states.[51] The Charter is the UN's legal foundation or 'constitution,' which authorizes and legitimizes its actions. And, because it was created with the consent of sovereign states, UN authority is of a derived or secondary nature. More about this later on.

Multilateral organizations feature two types of diplomacy, and the UN General Assembly reflects it. It is a body comprised of diplomats delegated by member states on the one hand and of diplomats employed and working for the organization on the other. The Libyan

[49] Seehttps://www.un.org/en/sections/un-charter/un-charter-full-text
[50] For more on modern multilateralism, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Multilateralism
[51] See https://www.un.org/en/sections/un-charter/chapter-i/index.html

ambassador to the UN sitting in New York is an example of the former and represents a sovereign state. Ghassan Salamé, as head of UNSMIL, is an example of the latter. Salamé's mandate, as is to be expected, rests on the UN Charter.

Some IOs are limited to a specific activity. As the name indicates, the World Trade Organization (WTO) deals with questions of international trade. The list of functional IOs is long, and many are located in Geneva. Examples are the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is also based in Geneva, but, as we shall see below, it is neither a typically multi- lateral IO nor engaged in typical diplomacy.

Some multilateral organizations are of a *regional* nature. Examples are the African Union (AU) or the Organization of American States (OAS). NATO is also a regional body but has a military character. The European Free Trade Association (EFTA) is also regional but is involved in economics. The same is true of the recently signed United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA). Needless to add that the diplomatic activities associated with these organizations mirror their specific nature.

The EU is a political entity that, in contrast to multilateral organizations, rests on the explicit redistribution of sovereignty from member states to that of the over-all Union and ending in supranational integration. *Supranational diplomacy*, as a result, has two dimensions as well. National diplomats represent members inside the Union, whereas EU diplomats represent the Union internationally.

Most EU diplomats are stationed abroad and work in non-member countries like Switzerland or the United States. Some are active in countries seeking to integrate, such as Serbia or Montenegro. But, as the Brexit negotiations show, the opposite is possible as well. EU diplomats like Michel Barnier sit in Brussels and deal with a state leaving the Union and thus with disintegration rather than integration.

Non-national diplomacy, as the term implies, is practiced by actors without a sovereign foundation. What makes them interesting for the study of diplomacy, however, is the fact that they often operate within a sovereign setting. For their activities to succeed, they have to interact with nations and with multilateral or supranational organizations. They practice what some regard as a *para-sovereign* form of diplomacy. This is true, as shown, of NGOs such as SOS- Méditerranée or Médecins-sans-Frontières. For SAR operations to succeed, the cooperation of EU members or Brussels is vital. The same applies to a private company like Huawei. Although it is a non-state actor, the sale of some of its technology requires governmental approval. Good reason to be present at diplomatic conferences.

So much for the four categories and their basic character. As briefly mentioned, the world of diplomacy is dynamic and constantly changing. It is no wonder that many diplomatic activities are combinations of the four spheres. Concrete examples, as said, will be dealt with in the third part of this article. As an intermediate step it is necessary to add a few words about sovereignty, a concept that is intimately associated with diplomacy and often misunderstood.

Overcoming 'Westphalia'

Diplomacy and sovereignty are closely associated with the core of politics or, as David Easton likes to say, with the 'authoritative allocation of values.' The term 'authoritative,' as Easton emphasizes, must be seen in a public rather than a private context. Political actors, in other words, act authoritatively within a social setting, within traditional collectivities or modern states. And by virtue of their authority, public actors enjoy the *ultimate say in the allocation of public values*.[52]

The list of public values or goods is virtually endless, but among the most important are well-being, security, and peace. As mentioned, to allocate them authoritatively constitutes the core of politics and, as legal experts see it, with state *sovereignty*. Needless to add that the nature of sovereign authority, like that of diplomacy, has changed over time. And, of course, in a democratic state the ultimate say must go hand in hand with the rule of law.

The structure of sovereign politics varies. At one end of a broad scale, the ultimate say is in the hands of a single ruler and at the other end, in the hands of every citizen. The actual distribution differs. The separation of power doctrine demands that public power be shared by the legislative, executive, and judiciary. In a federalist system, authority is divided among various levels of government.

The implementation of authoritative decisions presupposes the functioning of governmental institutions. To be effective, public servants and administrators must possess a share of public authority. Without effective tax collectors and watchful policemen there is no authoritative value allocation. The same is true for diplomats. They, too, have the right to speak and act on behalf of a sovereign authority.

Inside a nation, as said, sovereignty is shared by many. Toward the outside, the situation is different. In principle at least, inter-state authority is in the hands of a single actor – the sovereign nation-state. To emphasize the monopoly, national sovereignty is tied to the concept of *independence*, an indication that no other actor should have an ultimate say. It also means that truly sovereign states must be free to say yes or no. International pressures and tight economic interdependence limit that possibility and check national sovereignty.[53]

As the UN Charter shows, the classical conception is still alive. It constitutes the foundation of

[52] David Easton, *A Framework for Political Analysis*, Princeton-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs NJ, 1965, pp. 47-56; for two commentaries, see Jürg M. Gabriel, *Political Science Concept For- mation (Part II) - David Easton's 'Authoritative Value Allocation'* (June 17, 2013). Available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=2280252; Jürg M. Gabriel, *David Easton's 'Authoritative Value Allocation' - Activating the Definition's Potential* (February 1, 2017). Available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=2909910

[53] For a general discussion of politics as a field of study, see Jürg M. Gabriel, *Defining Politics as a Field of Study* (April 7, 2017). Available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=2948252

much of international law, and as far as diplomacy is concerned, it is represented by the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations.[54] The treaty, signed in 1961, specifies the privileges of diplomatic missions and forms the legal basis for diplomatic immunity. It is ratified by practically all of the world's states.

But the classical conception has a problematic side. The 'Westphalia System' went hand in hand with balance of power politics, a conception of international politics that regards war as legal and rational. As Clausewitz said, war is nothing but 'a continuation of politics by other means.'[55]

The rules of classical international politics were ambivalent and contradictory. They postulated both the respect and the violation of sovereign independence. It also meant that military and diplomatic instruments enjoyed equal weight and respect, a typically 'realist' perspective, as scholars like to say. No wonder that in the history of international relations, sovereignty breaches were com- mon, reason enough for an academic like Steven Krasner to regard sovereignty as no more than 'organized hypocrisy.'[56]

During the 19th century the idea that wars were a rational instrument of sovereign politics became problematic. With the rise of nationalism and the spread of industrialization, wars became more destructive. In the summer of 1914, the Central Powers went to war as if nothing had changed – but discovered the opposite. War had become 'total' and constituted the central problem of the 'Westphalia System' and of diplomacy. In World War II that become more obvious yet.

Small wonder that at the end of two disastrous world conflicts, efforts were undertaken to overcome the incoherent logic of classical sovereignty. At the global level, the League of Nations and the United Nations were meant to have a degree of *multilateral* authority. The creation of the European Union was more ambitious: The aim was to radically redistribute national sovereignty by creating a system of regional *supranationality* (Figure 2).

The implication of the various efforts was clear: If successful, the scope of national sovereignty would be reduced, while the weight of diplomacy would be increased, and as a result, the 'Westphalia System' would lose some of its destructiveness. But a look at history shows that the development and eventual result of the new conceptions was uneven.

The *League of Nations* never stood on solid ground. Its institutional structure was weak. As the term 'League' suggests, it was hardly more than an assembly of states lacking a

[54] See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vienna_Convention_on_Diplomatic_Relations

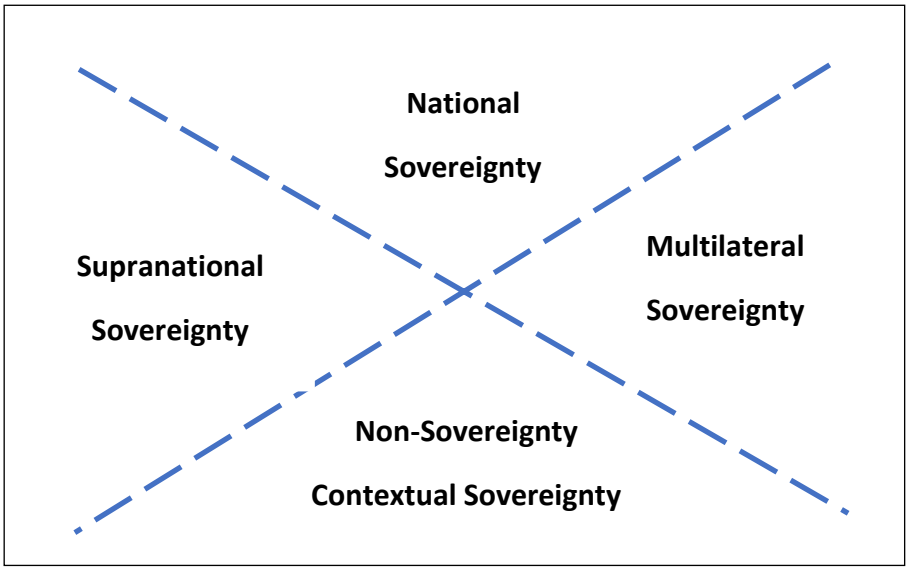
[55] Anatol Rapoport (ed.), *Carl von Clausewitz, On War*, Penguin Books, London 1968; see also https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carl_von_Clausewitz

[56] Stephen D. Krasner, *Sovereignty – Organized Hypocrisy*, Princeton University Press, Prince- ton NJ 1999.

mechanism to effectively allocate an important public value. Engulfed in an endless number of diplomatic debates with few results, the League soon lost much of its credibility.[57] A parallel effort to strengthen the fight against war with the Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928 bore no fruit either.[58] Proponents of classical 'realism' were proven right. They saw both efforts as an 'idealist' Wilsonian dream.

Sovereignty Categories

Figure 2



The failure of global multilateralism showed most clearly during the Italo-Ethiopian War of 1935-1937. Italy's flagrant disrespect for the African country's sovereignty and its League obligations did enormous damage.[59] The League's ultimate say in matters of war and peace was practically non-existent. As it turned out, states were hardly willing to alter the classical notion of their sovereignty. The founders of the *United Nations* conceived of a multilateral institution with greater authority. They opted for 'collective security' and created mechanisms to implement it, if necessary. The Security Council, when functioning, is able to constrain traditional sovereignty. It is true that the UN Charter still recognizes national sovereignty and that its own authority, because second-hand, could in principle be withdrawn. Still, war is no longer seen as a legitimate instrument of conflict management. Art. 2/4 states explicitly that "Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state (…)."[60]

Chapter VII of the Charter is more specific yet. It anticipates concrete action "with respect to threats to the peace, breaches of the peace, and acts of aggression."[61] The conclusion

[57] See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/League_of_Nations
[58] See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kellogg%E2%80%93Briand_Pact
[59] See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Italo-Ethiopian_War
[60] See https://www.un.org/en/sections/un-charter/chapter-i/index.html
[61] ibid., Chapter VII.

is clear: In certain situations, the organization has the ultimate say in matters of peace and war and is able to meaningfully participate in the authoritative allocation of global values. The scope of diplomacy obviously increased.

Supranational sovereignty is radically different. As mentioned, it results from the systematic redistribution of sovereignty accompanied by two levels of diplomacy.[62] And, just as important, supranational actors are associated with the creation of institutions and mechanisms capable of implementing the authoritative allocation of important goods. The prime internal concern of diplomats is no longer war but welfare and security. And externally, as Brexit negotiations show, diplomats like Michel Barnier can speak authoritatively for 27 integrated states.

Let me now return to the field as a whole and focus on concrete examples. Some are relatively simple, because actors and issues typical of one of the four categories are involved. Most cases, however, are more complicated because institutions, actors and issues overlap. Diplomatic reality, as practitioners know, is characterized by an almost endless variety of combinations (Figure 3).

Bilateral relations among sovereign nations are still the rule. The denuclearization talks between the United States and North Korea are an example. Photos show that negotiations take place among persons at the highest level of government, including heads of state, foreign ministers, and ambassadors. But others operate in the background, of course. Some are defense attachés or career officers, and many a combination of both.

Negotiations of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) can also be bilateral and, depending on the issue involved, are conducted by all kinds of specialists.[63]The agreement signed recently between China and Switzerland is an example. How- ever, some trade negotiations involve three parties. This was true of the new North American trade deal mentioned above.[64]

Most FTA negotiations, although basically between two parties, are less simple, because they touch matters regulated by multilateral or even supranational organizations. Take the example of the British that, as part of Brexit, try to sign a treaty with Norway, a country that is an EFTA member and part of that organization's customs area.[65]

The UK will most probably have to accept certain EFTA rules. It could even be that serious discussions will only start if the UK signals a willingness to rejoin EFTA, which it left before entering the EU. It is also possible that an EFTA representative will attend the negotiations. The British-Norwegian talks, as a consequence, have a multilateral dimension. But that is not all. Because Norway is also a member of the EU's European Economic Area (EEA), there might be a supranational dimension as well. The overlap is considerable

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[62] See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_Union

[63] For a general picture of FTAs, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free_trade_agreement

[64] For more on the US–Mexico–Canada Agreement, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States%E2%80%93Mexico%E2%80%93Canada_Agreement

[65] See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_Free_Trade_Association

In the case of the bilateral EU-Canada Comprehensive and Economic Trade Agreement (CETA), the supranational dimension is clearly visible. In the past such treaties would have mainly dealt with tariffs, but that has changed. As products become more sophisticated, qualitative standards gain in importance. The EU's Single Market regulations reflect it, and to guarantee equivalence, the Canadians had to accept many EU rules. It is hardly a surprise that CETA has supranational traits.[66]

With its 36 members the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) is truly *multilateral* and is meant to deal with a number of relatively traditional issues. However, and as a result of the 2008 financial crisis, it also began to handle matters of inter-state finance. Switzerland felt it, because its banking secrecy came under pressure. To avoid appearing on a blacklist, the Swiss caved in. OECD officials had the ultimate say. Multilateral diplomacy triumphed over national diplomacy, although on paper the organization respects the sovereignty of its members.[67]

The World Trade Organization is also multilateral but, at times, exhibits a supranational dimension. It shows at meetings chaired by WTO officials and attended by national delegates – but also by EU representatives. Their mission, as is to be expected, is to defend the rules governing the EU's Single Market, one of the largest trading areas of the world. Multilateral, national and supranational actors sit in the same room.

That is not all. Although basically committed to respect national sovereignty the WTO, like the OECD, has managed to increase its authority. Among other things, it developed a conflict settlement mechanism that in some cases constrains national sovereignty.[68]Small wonder that Donald Trump, as part of his 'American First' policy, is unhappy with the organization and wants to change its rules.

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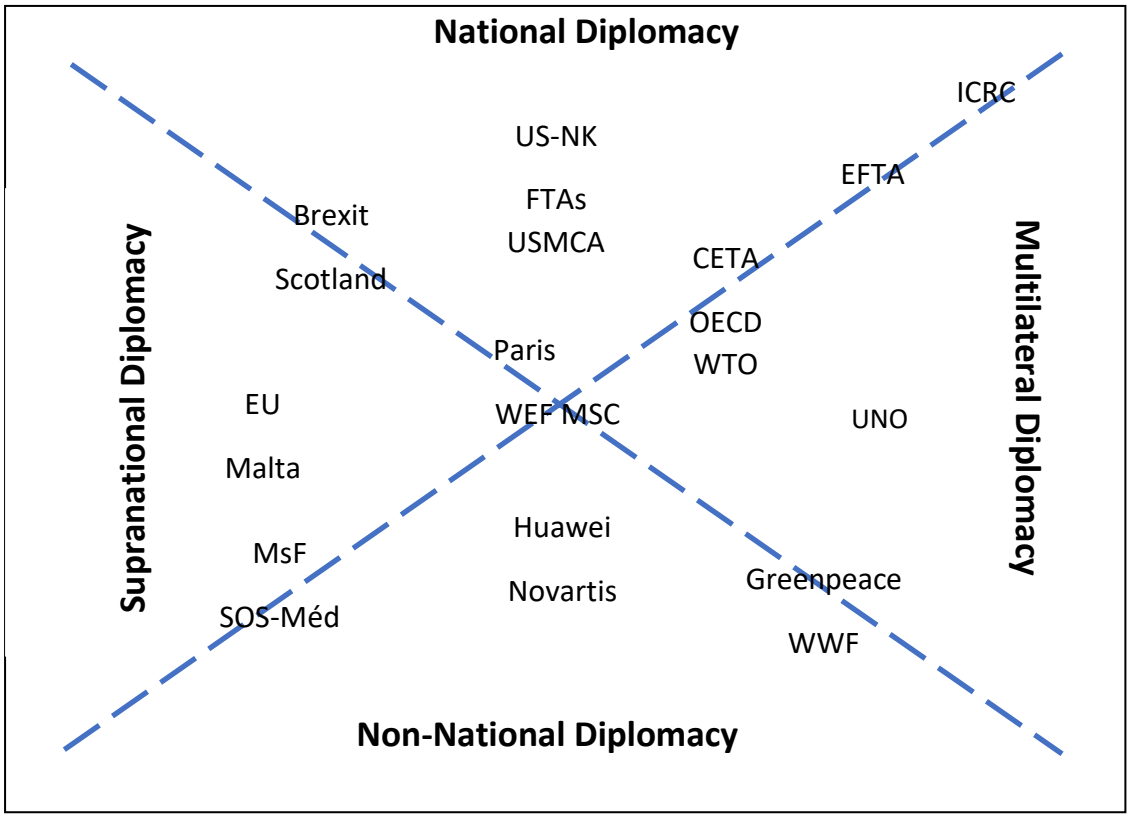
[66] See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comprehensive_Economic_and_Trade_Agreement. Ca- nadian sovereignty may also be affected. The Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) mechanism limits Canadian governmental action. For details, see Jürg M. Gabriel, *Brexit – Road to Sovereign Independence?* (January 18, 2018). Available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=3104390, pp. 10-11.

[67] Ibid., p. 10. See also https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/OECD

[68] For more details, see Jürg Martin Gabriel, *Brexit: Weighing Sovereign Gains and Losses* (October 29, 2016). Available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=2861106, pp. 26-27; see also https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Trade_Organization

Concrete Cases

Figure 3



The examples mentioned reflect today's economic reality and the consequences for national sovereignty and diplomacy. The main reason, as some see it, is the relentless growth of interdependence. The authoritative allocation of values, as a result, is no longer purely national. It begins to assume multi- and supranational traits, and so does the work of diplomats. Some changes are for- mal and have a *de jure* foundation; others remain informal and reflect *de facto* reality.

An international actor with a somewhat special personality is the ICRC. The organization has some multilateral traits, but its institutional foundation is national. Legally speaking, the ICRC is a simple Swiss association. It reflects the organization's origins, which go back to the late 19th century. It was only later that its activities, and especially its finances, assumed a multilateral character.[69]

The 2019 Malta Agreement on Migration is a result of *supranational* EU diplomacy meant to improve the handling of migration in the Central Mediterra- nean. The member states participating were Italy and Malta, joined by Germany and France. The group, at that stage, was no more than a limited coalition of the willing, but the aim, of course, was to

[69] See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Committee_of_the_Red_Cross

come up with a supranational solution.

This was evident in the participation of two officials from Brussels, a delegate of the EU Council and the Commissioner for Migration. Everyone knew that the task was difficult and a quick solution would be impossible, but the attendance of the six showed that an EU-wide arrangement was the ultimate goal. It is only logical, therefore, that later on the plan was presented to the EU Ministers of the Interior at their meeting in Luxembourg – with modest results.[70]

Brexit diplomacy is more truly supranational. From a purely formal perspective it is bilateral but, as the British soon realized, they were dealing with a special counterpart. The EU delegation, after coordinating its position internally with member diplomats, spoke toward the outside with one voice. It functioned this way during the negotiations of the Withdrawal treaty and, most likely, the practice will continue during the transition period when the final arrangement is worked out. The British may try to deal bilaterally with some of the 27 – but so far this has had no visible results.[71]

Brexit stands for disintegration, a somewhat unusual process. Integrative diplomacy is more common, but it has a supranational dimension as well, of course. Countries that joined the EU in recent years have experienced it. It hurts to abandon a portion of national sovereignty, but there is little choice. It would also – ironically – be the case if Scotland first declared its independence and then applied for EU membership.

The direct or indirect participation of *non-national actors* is also typical for the contemporary diplomatic scene. Médecins-sans-Frontières and SOS-Méditerranée, as we have seen, are examples. The same is true, of course, of many other NGOs. If Greenpeace or the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) want to stop environ- mental destruction, they, too, need to influence national, multilateral, and supranational actors. There were good reasons why untold NGOs participated in the negotiations of the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change. As hinted at, an industrial giant like Huawei is in a similar situation. To sell its 5G technology the company needs governmental licenses, and for products with a military dimension it may be useful to attend the Munich Security Conference (MSC). A pharmaceutical company like Novartis is in a comparable situation. To export its products successfully it needs the approval of national (or supranational) health agencies. Why not attend the World Economic Forum (WEF) at Davos?

We have seen that General Haftar is not yet a sovereign actor but aspires to be- come one.

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[70] For a detailed discussion, see Jürg Martin Gabriel, *The EU's Malta Declaration on Migra- tion: Shaping a Coalition of the Willing* (January 6, 2020). Available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=3514517; see also https://www.ceps.eu/wp-content/up-loads/2019/10/PI2019_14_SCRC_Malta-Declaration-1.pdf

[71] For more on Brexit, see Jürg Martin Gabriel, *Great Britain and Switzerland: Circumventing EU Supranationality?* (December 16, 2019). Available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/ab- stract=3504475

To act like a diplomat in Berlin might one day pay off. The strategy is not uncommon. The Taliban are a recent example, but many Latin American revolutionaries pursued similar avenues. For years they fought guerrilla wars before opting for diplomacy. The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) come to mind.[72] The various cases show that parasovereign diplomacy, too, comes in different shapes and forms.

Conclusions

This paper outlined the field of diplomacy by focusing on general characteristics. But any such effort comes at a price, because generalizations, by their very nature, have a tendency to ignore the unique or specific. Let me therefore end by briefly mentioning a few of the topics neglected. *Good Offices* are part of diplomatic reality, an activity with a long tradition, and associated with a number of different services. One of the most demanding is *mediation* because it is tied to conflict resolution. A well-known example is the efforts of several American presidents to mediate between Israel and Pales- tine – without much success, as we know.

The Swiss see a close relation between Good Offices and neutrality, which they regard as an advantage.[73] But it need not be. Norway, a member of NATO and the EU's European Economic Area, is anything but neutral. Nonetheless, in a number of cases the Norwegians have been quite successful. Needless to add that the UN and other multilateral organizations also provide various types of Good Offices. What is essential for successful mediation, as experience shows, is often the quality of the diplomats involved. *International organizations*, as we have seen, are an integral part of modern diplomacy. They have in fact become so numerous that it is impossible to do jus- tice to them all. Some are public, whereas others are private, and at times it is difficult to distinguish between the two. In this area, too, concrete reality is much more diverse than this paper suggests.

The nearly 40 specialized *EU agencies* are a case in point.[74] They are part of an intricate supranational network and interact regularly with governments and multilateral organizations. To do a serious job, Europol needs to work with individual states and with Interpol.[75] Or, when it comes to questions of epidemics, the European Center for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDS) has to cooperate with governments and the World Health Organization.

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[72] See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Revolutionary_Armed_Forces_of_Colombia

[73] Raymond R. Probst, *'Good Offices' in the Light of Swiss International Practice and Experience*, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, London 1989; see also https://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/home/foreign-policy/human-rights/peace/switzerland-s-good-offices.html

[74] See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agencies_of_the_European_Union

[75] See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Interpol

These cases show that it is often difficult to distinguish between diplomacy and purely administrative and professional contacts. For the modern world to function, be it in business, science, or in politics, managers and specialists with global connections are a necessity. Not only do they all use the Internet, in many cases they also work with the same software or web pages. Interconnectedness has advantages, but it also has a price. In some areas, as seen, *interdependence* has become so tight that efforts to maintain sovereign independence encounter serious limitations. It shows in the world of *espionage*, a traditional gray zone of diplomacy. The secret agencies of today engage regularly in electronic eavesdropping and hacking, activities that can help or harm diplomacy. Confidentiality, for one, is no longer what it used to be. And worse yet, it can lead to new types of conflict. Cyber war is an example – as diplomats may have discovered.

Some preliminary observations on the impact of COVID-19 on human rights

Dr. Omar Grech

Introduction

A few weeks after various states in the USA imposed lockdowns in response to the COVID-19, several sizable protests were held in various parts of the USA. The protesters clad in US flags were holding posters and signs claiming they had the right to continue with their lives without hindrance. Phrases like 'My Constitutional Rights are Essential' and 'Land of the Free' abounded. The protesters were using rights discourse to protest against public health measures, which were taken to protect health systems and ultimately human lives.

In this essay I shall argue that the pandemic has brought into sharp relief the difficulties inherent in applying human rights in times of emergency and the need for a fuller understanding of what human rights mean beyond individual claims to freedom. The essay shall be divided into three parts: (i) the legality of the suspension of certain human rights and freedoms in times of emergency; (ii) the types of rights suspended in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic; and (iii) how the pandemic may be an opportunity to promote a more comprehensive understanding of human rights. The main human rights texts that will be relied upon in this essay are the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the International Covenants (ICCPR and ICESCR) as well as the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

Suspending human rights in times of emergency

One of the least generally understood aspect of human rights is that most rights are not absolute. Most rights contain limitations within themselves intended to protect the general public interest and most rights may also be derogated from in times of emergency. The non-absolute nature of most rights was immediately recognised when the first universal articulation of human rights was adopted in 1948 through the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

Article 29 (2) of the UDHR, in fact, states that in the exercise of our rights and freedoms we may be subject "to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society." The protection of public health would be one of the issues of general welfare for which rights may be limited. The idea of limiting rights was further elaborated, inter alia, in

the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). In Article 4 the ICCPR established the principle of derogation of rights in periods of public emergency. The article states that "in time of public emergency which threatens the life of the nation and the existence of which is officially proclaimed, the States Parties to the present Covenant may take measures derogating from their obligations under the present Covenant to the extent strictly required by the exigencies of the situation".

However, the article further provides that "no derogation from articles 6, 7, 8 (paragraphs I and 2), 11, 15, 16 and 18 may be made under this provision". The rights excluded from the possibility of derogation are the right to life, freedom from torture, freedom from slavery, the principle of non-retroactivity of criminal law and freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

The concept of derogation highlights two key ideas: some human rights may be suspended in specific contexts and there is a category of non-derogable rights which may not be suspended under any circumstances. In the context of the European Convention on Human Rights, the same principles are applied.

The European Court has interpreted the meaning of "public emergency threatening the life of the nation" as "an exceptional situation of crisis or emergency which affects the whole population and constitutes a threat to the organised life of the community of which the State is composed"[76]. While it is primarily up to the state concerned to determine the existence of such a public emergency and the Court grants a wide margin of appreciation to national authorities in this respect, this discretion is not unlimited as the Court may decide that a situation does not fall within the parameters of a public emergency even though it is declared as such by the state concerned (European Commission Report on the Greek Case).

This same principle applies to the interpretation of the phrase "the extent strictly required by the exigencies of the situation". What is strictly required in response to the emergency concerned is decided in the first instance by the national authorities. However, here again "States do not enjoy an unlimited power in this respect: the Court is empowered to rule on whether the States have gone beyond the "extent strictly required by the exigencies" of the crisis"[77]

Apart from the issue of derogations in times of emergency, most human rights are not absolute to the extent that they may be limited by law in the interests of national security or public safety, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others. This limitation applies to most rights such as freedom of assembly and association, freedom of expression and the right to

[76] Lawless v. Ireland (no. 3), para 28, ECtHR, 1 July 1961
[77] Guide to Article 15 of the European Convention on Human Rights, para 18, available at https://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Guide_Art_15_ENG.pdf

privacy and family life. These types of limitations are found in the same, or similar, language in most international human rights treaties.

In the case of the European Convention, however, laws limiting the respective rights, must not only be for one of the purposes outlined above but must also be "necessary in a democratic society." In this context, the European Court may determine whether the limitations imposed are necessary in a democratic society or not. Once again, the Court will allow a significant margin of appreciation to the state in determining whether the limitations meets the required threshold of democracy although this discretion is not unfettered and subject to the ultimate control of the European Court:

> Nevertheless, Article 10(2) does not give the contracting states an unlimited power of appreciation. The Court which … is responsible for ensuring the observance of those states' engagements, is empowered to give the final ruling on whether a 'restriction' or 'penalty' is reconcilable with freedom of expression as protected by Article 10. The domestic margin of appreciation thus goes hand in hand with European supervision[78].

What emerges quite clearly from this summary of the types of limitations imposed on human rights and fundamental freedoms is i) that most human rights are not absolute although some are; (ii) that the derogations from and limitations to human rights should only be effected for a genuine public interest; and (iii) that courts have the role of balancing individual rights with the public interest. Two corollaries of these conclusions are that it is important to have an impartial and independent judiciary entrusted with striking this balance and that ideally there should be an external judicial system (such as the European Court) to monitor the national judicial systems to ensure a further element of monitoring as to where the balance between the public interest and the individual right should be located.

The rights suspended in the case of COVID-19

Different states around the world have taken a number of distinct steps at various stages to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, the array of responses taken by states may be distilled into three main categories of restrictions from a human rights perspective. The restrictions affected the right to liberty, freedom of assembly and association, the peaceful enjoyment of private property and the right to privacy.

The main restrictions have arisen in the context of what has been termed as lockdown, which has involved varying degrees of limitations on the ability of persons to leave their homes at will (freedom of movement), meeting in public in groups (freedom of assembly) and offering commercial, trade and professional services (right to the peaceful enjoyment of private property).

[78] Handyside v United Kingdom, ECtHR, 4th November 1976

The right to move freely within territory where you are lawfully resident is protected, inter alia, under article 12 of the ICCPR[79]. Paragraph 3 of this article provides for exceptional circumstances in which the right may be limited. Accordingly, States may restrict these rights only to protect national security, public order, public health or morals and the rights and freedoms of others. These restrictions must be: provided by law, necessary in a democratic society for the protection of these purposes and be consistent with the other Covenant rights. The Human Rights Committee has explained that:

> Restrictive measures must conform to the principle of proportionality; they must be appropriate to achieve their protective function; they must be the least intrusive instrument amongst those which might achieve the desired result; and they must be proportionate to the interest to be protected[80].

In the case of the COVID-19 related lockdown, there appears to be prima facie evidence that the limitations imposed on freedom of movement have been adopted on clear public health protection grounds on the basis of medical/scientific advice and in line with the respective legal orders of the states concerned. The question of proportionality is open to more interpretation as different states and sometimes different regions in the same state have adopted divergent levels of restrictions in terms of freedom of movement. These divergences have depended both on the factual situation on the ground and on different scientific/medical interpretations of these facts. Some states such as Italy have enforced very wide ranging restrictions while others such as Sweden have adopted far fewer restrictions. Once the pandemic is under control, the extent to which restrictions are lifted needs to be monitored closely as well as a human rights based analysis undertaken of the proportionality between the measures taken and the desired public health results.

The lockdown restrictions have not only imposed limitations on the right to freedom of movement but also led to the forced closure of a number of economic activities, such as retail outlets, beauty salons, restaurants and bars. The forced closure of these economic activities impact on a range of economic rights as it endangered and in some cases stopped the livelihood of a huge number of people. For owners of businesses impacted by the forced closures, whether large or small businesses, these closures impaired the peaceful enjoyment of their private property.

The UDHR provides from the right to private property (Art.17) and the ancillary right not to be deprived of one's property. This is a rather generically framed right and is not transposed into the ICCPR. However, the European Convention on Human Rights, the Inter-American Convention and the African Charter on Human and People's Rights as well as a great number of national laws do protect private property. The European Convention system adopted the conception of peaceful enjoyment of private property in Protocol 1.

[79] Also Article 13 of the UDHR

[80] CCPR General Comment No. 27: Article 12 (Freedom of Movement) para 14 available at https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/45139c394.pdf

The European Court has found that the right protects, amongst other aspects, the "economic interests connected with the running of a business" and "the right to exercise a profession"[81]. The right like most other rights is subject to some limitations. In particular, the formulation of this right includes the "right of a state to enforce such laws at it deems necessary to control the use of property in accordance with the general interest…" The protection of public health would, no doubt, fall within the conception of public interest. The European Court has, however determined that the interference with peaceful enjoyment of private property must not only be designed in the public interest but also be proportionate. This was determined in Sporrong and Lönnroth v. Sweden, where the Court established that, "the Court must determine whether a fair balance was struck between the demands of the general interests of the community and the requirements of the protection of the individual's fundamental rights."[82] One needs to await whether the Court will, in the coming months, need to determine the legality of the forced business closures in the context of the right to the peaceful possession of private property.

In terms of human rights and COVID-19, a lot of media attention has been focused on the impact of the lockdown on freedom of movement and economic activity. However, a more insidious threat to human rights from the virus emanates from the access to and use of personal data by national authorities, governmental agencies and business enterprises ostensibly for public health reasons. Article 17 of the ICCPR states that "no one shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence…".

One of the main responses to managing the COVID-19 pandemic is based on contact tracing. Governments and tech companies such as Google and Apple have been developing systems that offer COVID contact tracing opportunities to public health authorities[83].While at the time of writing it is still too early to have a clear assessment on the impact of these technological developments on privacy rights, there are concerns about these developments[84]. The UN has published a series of recommendations on how to have human rights compliant COVID-19 responses and in recognition of the threat which the pandemic response poses to the right to privacy, one of these recommendations relates precisely to privacy:

[81] Council of Europe, The right to property: A guide to the implementation of Article 1 of Protocol 1 of the European Convention on Human Rights, 2001 p. 6

[82] Sporrong and Lönnroth v. Sweden, ECtHR, 23 September 1982

[83] BBC, Apple and Google accelerate coronavirus contact tracing apps plan, available at https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-52415593

[84] The Guardian, Covid safe: Australian government launches coronavirus tracing app amid lingering privacy concerns, 26 April 2020, available at https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/apr/26/australias-coronavirus-tracing-app-set-to-launch-today-despite-lingering-privacy-concerns

> Ensure that safeguards are in place where new technologies are used for surveillance in response to COVID-19, including purpose limitations and adequate privacy and data protections.[85]

International and national human rights organisations as well as UN human rights monitoring bodies will need to be at the forefront of the efforts to ensure that privacy rights are not violated on a permanent footing. The normalisation of the abuse of privacy rights in the wake of the pandemic is a serious peril.

A more comprehensive understanding of Human Rights

A human rights approach to the COVID-19 pandemic also requires a focus on the extent to which the public health measures impact heavily on certain groups rather than others and also the extent to which the pandemic itself has impacted disproportionately on these groups. In particular, the COVID-19 pandemic seems to be taking a heavy toll on groups who live in cramped/crowded conditions and have less access to good quality healthcare. Migrants living in dormitory conditions have been hit exceptionally heavily in a number of countries. In Malta the Hal Far Centre, which houses around 1000 migrants has the highest concentration of COVID cases on the island[86]. In Singapore it has been reported that migrant workers the majority of whom live in cramped dormitories account for at least 60% of its infections[87].In the USA reports show that black and Hispanic communities have suffered from COVID-19 at exponential rates when compared to white communities[88].

This selection of data should suffice to indicate the extent to which the pandemic is impacting disproportionately marginalised groups. From a human rights perspective, it is worth recalling that international human rights documents are based on the "recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family." Another fundamental principle of international human rights law is non-discrimination. Article 2 of the UDHR states unequivocally that "Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration without distinction of any kind…" The principle of non-discrimination is reiterated in various forms in international human rights law. Non-discrimination clauses are found in he International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Article 26) as well as in Article 2 (2) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social

[85] United Nations, COVID-19 and Human Rights: We are all in this together, 2020, p.22 available at https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/un_policy_brief_on_human_rights_and_covid_23_april_2020.pdf

[86] https://lovinmalta.com/news/hal-far-open-centre-is-officially-maltas-covid-19-hotspot-with-34-confirmed-patients/

[87] https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/21/singapore-coronavirus-outbreak-surges-with-3000-new-cases-in-three-days

[88] Black people in NYC twice as likely to die from COVID as white people: Data https://abcnews.go.com/US/black-people-nyc-die-covid-white-people-data/story?id=70208362 and https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/apr/18/the-virus-doesnt-discriminate-but-governments-do-latinos-disproportionately-hit-by-coronavirus

and Cultural Rights were the contracting states bind themselves "to guarantee that the rights enunciated in the present Covenant will be exercised without discrimination of any kind as to race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status". It is important to note in this context that Article 12 of the same Covenant stipulates "the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health."

Likewise, in the context of the already cited European Convention, Article 14 establishes that the enjoyment of the Convention rights "shall be secured without discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status". All told, the centrality of the principle of non-discrimination in the enjoyment of all human rights, including the right to healthcare, is undisputable. The fact that in most countries in the world there are groups who because they belong to marginalised communities (skin colour, migrant status, poverty etc) are being impacted disproportionately by the COVID pandemic.

Moreover, the lockdown with attendant suspension of civil liberties is also impacting more deeply marginalised groups in various aspects. In those countries where total lockdown has been imposed, people living in small or overcrowded apartments have evidently suffered the lockdown conditions more intensely. Being under effective house arrest in a spacious home with outdoor spaces is quite different from being in a small cramped apartment with no access to the outdoors. Access to entertainment such as high quality internet and other digital recreational services is another distinction between poorer communities and the rest. The limitation on the right to liberty is obviously exacerbated for those living in poverty.

A similar impact is envisioned in the aftermath of the pandemic, with the severe economic consequences that are emerging. UNIDO and other intergovernmental and nongovernmental agencies have forecast that the pandemic's economic consequences will effect more severely poorer communities and poorer countries:

> The crisis is expected to hit workers in low- and middle-income countries particularly hard, where the share of those working in informal sectors, and who therefore have limited access to adequate health and social protection, is higher. To make matters worse, the expected massive job losses among migrant workers will likely have knock on effects on economies that heavily depend on remittances. Furthermore, the containment measures in advanced economies have already started impacting less developed countries through lower trade and investment.[89]

In the prevailing circumstances, a human rights framework based on the aforesaid principle of non-discrimination in the access to socioeconomic rights may serve to avoid the worst effects of the economic consequences of the pandemic for the most at risk groups. Governments in considering their economic responses, both individual and collective, should

[89] https://www.unido.org/stories/coronavirus-economic-impact

bear in mind their international obligations in terms of human rights and non-discrimination. International organisations such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights have highlighted the link between governmental budget programming and economic policies and the access to human rights (or lack thereof). In the 2017 UNHCHR publication Realizing Human Rights through Government Budgets, this is immediately acknowledged:

> The close relationship between public budgets and human rights has been recognized by international human rights mechanisms in their assessment of State compliance with human rights obligations.[90]

The complexities of budgetary policy are beyond the scope of this essay. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the need for governments throughout the world to "understand in detailed and concrete terms how they can meet their human rights obligations in the way they raise revenue, allocate, spend and audit the budget"[91].

All told, the public health emergency we are living through provides an opportunity to reconsider and re-evaluate our global, regional, national and individual relationship with human rights. The COVID-19 crisis has reminded us that most individual human rights are not absolute but also that the limitations on (or suspensions of) human rights need to be monitored both in their scope and their duration. It has also reminded us that not "all members of the human family" are impacted in the same way by the human rights limitations brought by the virus nor by the violations of socioeconomic rights engendered by the pandemic. It should also remind us that these are not inevitable consequences but rather the result of global and state policies which have been adopted over the years. Perhaps, the most salutary lesson that may be drawn from a human rights perspective is that found in Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood." The necessity to adopt the spirit of brotherhood or solidarity in how we interpret and apply human rights is more urgent than ever.

[90] United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Realizing Human Rights Through Government Budgets, 2017 p.7 available at https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/RealizingHRThroughGovernmentBudgets.pdf

[91] Ibid. p. 12

COVID-19: The Impact on News Media

Ms. Lourdes Pullicino

On the 4 May 2020, eight weeks into the coronavirus pandemic hitting the Maltese consciousness, the Times of Malta, the legacy newspaper of choice, launched a campaign with leading personalities on the island appealing to the public to support independent journalism. The appeal came on the heels of calls by other organisations, foremost amongst them the journalists' lobby group, l-Istitut tal-Gurnalisti Maltin (IGM); the Opposition Parliamentary Group and media houses themselves insisting that the Covid 19 pandemic and its economic fallout could well signal the death knell of the independent media landscape in Malta. They requested government assistance in the form of financial aid including tax exemptions and the sustainability of journalists' salaries.

The prevalent economic model of independent media, not just in Malta but worldwide, has been in jeopardy for at least the last two decades as advertising relocated to giant online platforms. One surmises that had this been the only challenge aggravated by Covid 19, there may be some space for remedial action. As it is, the pandemic provides what can be termed the perfect storm for news media and journalism as the threats which have long plagued media for the public good take on seemingly unsurmountable proportions. Whether it is the pressure on media freedom, the spread of misinformation and disinformation, the safety of journalists, or shrinking newsrooms, Covid 19 has elevated the risks to a critical level.

Ironically, as is the case in all times of crises, this comes at a time when trusted, accurate, impartial and timely information is more essential than ever. The outbreak converges with unprecedented traffic and increased subscription of key media outlets that have grown as a result of individuals' need for orientation that arise in unfamiliar situations, a theory well documented in communication studies (McCombs and Weaver, 1973; Weaver, 1977; 1980; McCombs and Weaver, 1985).

The object of this paper is to take a deeper look at the formidable challenges that have shaken the news media industry over the past weeks and which threaten the very core of what we have come to associate with good, public service journalism. I use the term public service journalism deliberately because I argue that what is at stake is the loss of accurate and timely information probed, analysed and published and that allows citizens living in democracies to make informed decisions. As with most challenges however, in the midst of the rubble, there may be scope for opportunities. Can any such opportunities be gleaned in this fast-moving, treacherous landscape?

- **Historical roots**

Much of the received wisdom on the democratic role of the media has historical roots that hark back to the 17th and 18th centuries when liberal thinkers such as Paine, Mill, Milton and others, engaged in the revolutionary politics of their time, elaborated the notion that a free and independent press contributes to democracy in pivotal ways by advancing the right to freedom of thought, expression and conscience (Norris, 2010; Curran, 2001; McQuail, 2014). Edmund Burke (1787) famously elevated the press to a fourth estate on the basis of its power over information. These are predominantly philosophic arguments grounded in the Anglo-American tradition of liberal democracy and indeed some have suggested that our received ideas on the democratic role of the media are arcane, derived ostensibly from a time where 'media' denoted primarily small-circulation, highly politicized publications, so that the result today is a conception far removed from the contemporary world (Curran, 2001, 217).Over the past century, other philosophical traditions have given rise to normative theorizing on the link between media and democracy (Curran, 2011, 2001; Christians et al, 2008; Scannell, 1992).

Of these philosophical traditions, the one which is in direct confrontation to the liberal democratic theory is a narrative which posits that media is hardly an agent of empowerment for citizens but rather that the development of media ushered 'more darkness than light', where elite control continued in different ways (Curran, 2001, Christians et al, 2008).

The catalogue proposed by Gurevitch and Blumler (1990) on the normative expectations of a democratic press provide a good introduction to the discussion below. The authors identified the 'right to know' as well as diagnosing the key issues to the citizen as pivotal to the media's role and expect the media to be a platform for a diverse range of views and advocacy. They talk of media providing the incentives for citizens to learn, choose and become involved in the political process while resisting efforts of outside forces to subvert its independence. Crucially they also identify holding officials to account in their exercise of power as an important function of democratic media.

Media have engaged with these expectations in non-optimal ways. The threat brought about by Covid 19 relates to the further hollowing out of these functions. What follows is an appreciation of the challenges that the pandemic has highlighted – the very real danger of media outlets shuttering down or severely limiting their output due to financial upheaval; the threat to media freedom as a result of controversial bills allegedly in defence of accurate information as well as the curtailment of freedom of information (FOI) requests; the heightened risk to the safety of journalists, both physically as well as in cyberspace as well as the consequences of the full-blown spread of disinformation and fake news. In investigating these threats, we may also glimpse some hope arising from a transformed landscape.

1. The Financial Threat

News outlets were quick to grasp the potential for financial disruption that accompanied the pandemic. This is barely surprising since many have been struggling for years as falling sales, the increase in production and distribution costs, and the collapse and translocation of advertising to digital platforms severely tested their resilience. Those challenges had already translated into precarious conditions for media workers, with low salaries and freelance work the order of the day. The calls for special funding for independent media outlets have been echoing for the past years with a number of countries in Europe, such as Denmark and Croatia having endeavoured to provide arrangements for such funding.

What Covid-19 has unleashed for the press is a veritable deluge. Already by the first week of April it was estimated that 36,000 employees of news media in the United Stated had been laid off, furloughed or had their pay reduced since the arrival of the pandemic (NYT, 10/4). The situation is similarly devastating in Europe. None are more exposed than those working in the newspaper industry.

In early April, the National Union of Journalists contended that the British newspaper industry was facing an existential threat. It warned that hundreds of titles will close down permanently and thousands of journalists will lose their jobs as a result of the pandemic. The warning was echoed by a study of the Enders Analysis (Guardian, 7/4) which predicted that as many as a third of media workers would lose their jobs. National newspapers sales were down by a fifth and although newspaper websites were seeing record readership levels especially in the first weeks of lockdown, this did not translate into income. By mid-April, print advertising collapsed, taking a hit of eighty per cent (80%) since the start of the pandemic (Guardian, 17/4). Advertisers squeezed by their own economic woes and awash with uncertainty, slashed budgets. They also, consistently across countries, blocked promotions from appearing alongside coronavirus related stories. The cost for UK newspapers, where the outbreak to persist for three months, was estimated 57 million pounds loss in revenues (EUObserver, 2/4). Compounded to the breakdown of advertising, newspapers faced also circulation problems, their distribution stuttering as retail stores were themselves closed down during lockdowns.

The consequence is that publishers the world over, struggling for the past decades, looked like they were taking their final gasp to the finishing line. The list of casualties was getting longer by the day in most parts of the world, but by far the hardest hit were local and regional newspapers. The pandemic is a global news story, possibly the biggest news story in a century, but it also remains intimately a local story. People in towns and cities want to know how many cases have been reported in their neighbourhood, how their hospitals and old people's homes are doing, how their elected officials are coping, what their advice is, what facilities and public spaces are open. Little if any of this can be transmitted via national newspapers.

Perhaps the case for local and regional newspapers in Europe and America had already become a lost case before the arrival of the coronavirus. 1800 newspapers have shuttered in the US between 2004 and 2018 as people stopped buying their newspaper of choice and advertising migrated to digital platforms, mostly gobbled up by Google and Facebook (Abernathy, 2018). In the study Penny Abernathy (2018), the Knight Chair in Journalism and Digital Media Economics at the University of North Carolina, revealed that 1300 communities in the US had lost their local news newspapers and their towns and cities had become what she terms 'news deserts' where local information and scrutiny of local elected officials had become non-existent. The study echoes another by Cairncross Review (2019) which found that the business model of local news had collapsed. Local news depended almost exclusively on classified adverts by the likes of estate agents, car dealers, and small local retailers. All this advertising had moved on to the digital platforms leaving a devastating landscape of newsroom cuts and thinner papers when they still managed to publish. The loss of local news titles in the UK from 2005 to 2018 is 245 and an estimate of 58% of the county is now not served by any regional newspaper (Guardian, 29/9/2019).

The consequences for the loss of local news is perhaps best encapsulated in the words of former Director General of the British Broadcasting Corporation and current Chief Executive Officer of the New York Times: 'A society which fails to provide its different communities and groups with the means to listen and come to understand each other's pasts and presents should not be surprised if mutual incomprehension and division are the consequence' (Guardian, 29/9/2019). The loss of local news impacts also the state of local democracy, an appreciation upheld by a 2016 study by King's College London which found that UK towns in which local newspapers had closed down showed a 'democracy deficit' that could be observed in reduced community engagement by people of the locality and an increased distrust of public institutions. More disturbing in these times of crises, the study found that this loss predisposed locals to believe malicious rumour more (King's College London, May 2016).

While the impact of the closing down or of outlets hanging by a thread in democratic countries spells trouble, in countries where governments perceive independent media as potential threats, the coronavirus' impact on access to information is felt more keenly. The knee jerk reaction of some countries in the Middle East and North Africa region as COVID-19 reared its head was to suspend print newspapers (Global Voices, 14/4/2020). This is what happened in Jordan and Morocco in mid-March for fear that newspapers 'help the transmission of the pandemic' prompting the World Health Organisation to announce that there is no evidence of correlation between the circulation of print newspapers and the spread of the virus. In areas where internet penetration is low, like in Yemen, where internet access stood at 25% in 2019, the impact is more dire. In countries like South Africa and India and other developing countries, as print advertising vanished and circulation ground to a halt amid lockdowns, experts talked of a 'media extinction event' (The Guardian, 6/5/2020).

There are signs that the industry is clamouring for this devastation not to be allowed to happen although the alternatives may be bitter sweet and have consequences that impact the very independence that media thrives on. Besides the drive to secure more subscriptions for those with an online presence spearheaded by big names such as 'The Guardian' and 'The Financial Times' which have seen significant increase to their subscriptions, the industry has made multiple calls for funding from governments across the globe. There is the call for greater government-supported advertising, for direct-payroll grants, for bridging loans.

Numerous governments, including the Government of Malta, have pledged to assist news organisations, deeming them as essential industries worthy of support, although the extent of the funding may not be enough to prevent their unravelling.[92] Not for profit organisations have also hastened to put together funds to help public interest media, aware that government funding may come with strings attached and procure a detrimental effect on outlets' independence of reporting. Such an example is Internews' rapid response fund to support local journalism worldwide. It targeted 1 million dollars in donations to provide immediate support for journalists worldwide, noting that the pandemic is also an information crisis in which journalists are the first responders and that trustworthy information can save lives (Internews, 26/3).

The pandemic seems to have pushed to the fore another solution which has been long coming. What may become a game-changer for the bigger actors in the media business is the possibility of platform cash – that is Google and Facebook finally constrained to pay up for content created by news organisations which they carry on their platforms. To be sure the struggle between platforms and publishers has been playing out for the past decade while more and more media outlets went under. With the advent of the pandemic and the crashing blow to those who had somehow survived, the battle has intensified. Some good news came from Australia in May (New York Times, 10/5/2020). The Australian government reacted to its regulator's report, delivered in time to coincide with the closing down of more than 50 outlets in Australia in under two months. The 600 plus report details the decline in local news and public policy reporting of the past decade with charts and graphs, leaving no uncertainty that the causal effect is the platforms' near monopolistic power which it concludes harms journalism and society. The government of Australia has given notice to its regulator to force the platforms to negotiate payments with newspapers publishers – the first country to do so.

[92] Such a list of European Governments' assistance to their news media industry was provided by the Istitut tal-Gurnalisti Malti to make the case for assistance for Maltese news media. https://igm.org.mt/2020/04/03/l-igm-jilqa-l-ahbar-li-l-gvern-laqa-l-appell-tal-igm-billi-se-jaghti-appogg-finanzjarju-lill-gurnalisti-u-inkluda-lill-fotografi-freelancers-fil-lista-ta-negozji-li-se-jingh/; https://igm.org.mt/2020/03/27/l-igm-jappella-lill-gvern-biex-jassigura-li-l-haddiema-kollha-fil-qasam-tal-gurnalizmu-inkluz-il-freelancers-igawdu-mill-mizuri-finanzjarji-u-biex-il-gurnalizmu-jkun-protett/

In Europe, France is leading the way. A European Commission change to copyright law will come into effect across the EU in the next year. France has become the first country to transpose the EU's Copyright Directive's provisions. While Australia has challenged the platforms through competition laws, Europe has based its legal action on copyright laws, so far with little effect. Google has wriggled out of legal action and demand for compensation advanced by Spain in 2014 by simply removing Google News from search results. But the competition watchdog in France is taking none of it. It first ordered Google to negotiate in good faith with local media firms to pay for reusing their content and when Google responded with limiting content in local search and Google News, it claimed abuse of a dominant market position (CoE, IRIS 2020-5 p.37). France has given Google until August 'to negotiate in good faith' with publishers to pay for content. Germany and other European countries are expected to follow.

To be sure, Google and Facebook have also been dodging the demands for payment to publishers in some creative ways. They have in the past few years as pressure mounted provided largesse in the form of multi-million-dollar journalism support programmes (NiemanLab 6/5/2020). And Facebook, following its thrashing for amplifying misinformation has, of last October, launched its news tab by which it claims to facilitate a flow of accurate, trusted news content (NiemanLab 25/10/2019). Rolled out in the United States, some 200 publishers are participating and are being paid licensing fees to participate but the number of publishers being compensated is a drop in the ocean. Most are the large national publications such as the Washington Post, NY Times, Chicago Tribute, Gannett, Buzzfeed and NPR. There are other regional publications but no small local papers which are likely to be in more dire financial needs (Wall Street Journal 30/09/2019).

Funding for journalism from the platforms has been rolled out even more extensively during the pandemic. Google launched in April a Global Journalism Emergency Relief Fund for local news (VP News, 15/4/2020). The initiative is meant to deliver urgent aid to thousands of small, medium and local news publishers globally producing original news for local communities during the crisis. Google also committed one million dollars to the International Centre for Journalists and the Columbia Journalism School's centre for Journalism and Trauma which is helping journalists exposed to traumatic events during the crisis. Through the Facebook Journalism Project, Facebook launched its Covid-19 Community Network 100 million dollar grant to local news, targeting 50 local newspapers in the US and Canada in its first round of grants (Facebook Journalism Project 30/3/2020). Close on its heels came its teaming up with the non-profit European Journalism Centre (EJC) which will administer, on behalf of and independently of facebook, a grant of 3 million euro based on a set of established criteria to small and medium-sized news organizations and journalists in Europe hardest hit by Covid-19 (Facebook Journalism Project 9/4/2020). Notwithstanding these different streams of funding, the amounts are insignificant when compared to the battering to newsrooms and journalists' livelihoods that the pandemic has inflicted.

Perhaps, only a deep transformation can have a more lasting positive effect on journalism and newsrooms around the world. Could this pandemic and its financial ravages provide the impetus for robust experiments in changing the business model of news media to better serve their readers and viewers? One such advocate is Victor Pickard, professor at the University of Pennsylvania and author of a recent book 'Democracy without Journalism'. He contends that the current crisis can be perceived as an opportunity for local news media where the commercial model has abundantly failed. He sees the future of newsrooms as 'owned and controlled by local communities and journalists themselves', thus restructuring themselves and transitioning to a non-profit model (Columbia Journalism Review).

2. The threat to Media Freedom

Reporters without Borders' (RSF) 2020 Index was published right in the middle of the pandemic when huge swathes of countries were under lockdown and shelter-in-place orders (RSF 21/04/2020). For the past decade the decline in media freedom has been well documented by RSF, Freedom House and other international organisations, prompting concern from the Council of Europe, the United Nations and the European Parliament among others. Freedom House's 'Freedom in the World 2020' released in early March shows deterioration in freedom of expression and belief in every region in the world (Freedom House, 3/2020). The reasonable expectation is that an unprecedented crisis similar to the widespread outbreak of the coronavirus would spawn new threats to press freedom. Unsurprisingly, the RSF's 2020 index underscored that Covid-19 has exacerbated the crises that have beleaguered journalism since the turn of the millennium.

Disturbed by the many violations being reported by journalists, RSF launched the #Tracker-19 to monitor and evaluate the impact of the pandemic on media freedom (RSF, 1/4/2020). A similar monitoring instrument was deployed by the International Press Institute (IPI). The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet has since expressed alarm over the clampdowns that are stifling the free flow of information vital for the curbing of COVID-19 (UN News 24/4/2020). She stated that this is no time to blame the messenger and encouraged states that rather than threatening journalists or stifling criticism, they should encourage healthy debate concerning the pandemic and its consequences. As of the time of writing, IPI's monitoring tool recorded 233 alleged violations of basic press freedom (IPI, 27/05/2020). These included 63 verbal and physical attacks on journalists and 84 instances of restrictions on access to information, censorship and excessive regulation of misinformation. It also recorded the arrest and detention of 86 journalists for stories critical of governments' responses to the pandemic or for questioning official statistics on the spread of the virus and deaths. A chilling narrative if there was any.

The threats to media freedom emanating from the pandemic crisis will be divided into three broad themes.

- Disproportionate emergency measures, in particular excessive regulation against misinformation,
- Restrictions on access to information,
- Verbal and physical attacks risking safety of journalists.

Excessive measures against misinformation

Misinformation and disinformation, as will be discussed below, have spiralled uncontrollably during this crisis, a formidable threat in itself. Linked to this is however governments' response for keeping misinformation in check through legislative measures. Some of these measures may have good intentions but it is evident that governments with problematic records on freedom of media have pushed forward with actions that have used the crisis situation as a pretext for the muzzling of the press.

Orwellian 'fake news' laws have proliferated from Singapore to Hungary and from Algeria to the Philippines (IPI/RSF). Take Orban government's 'Bill on Protection against coronavirus'. Enacted in March when Hungary had less than 300 people infected, the bill hands Orban sweeping new emergency powers to rule indefinitely by decree with powers to bypass Parliament and suspend any existing law. The bill also criminalizes the spreading of 'falsehood' or 'distorted truth' about the government's fight against the pandemic with fines and a maximum five-year jail term (BIRN, 26/3/2020). Hungarian NGO, the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union, was quick to warn of the chilling effect that such legislation could lead to, where journalists may employ self-censorship as a tool for their and their outlet's survival. The wording of the bill, including the loose use of the term 'distorted' gives rise to concerns that even merely disputing the accuracy of official statements may land media outlets in hot water. The fight mounted by dozens of human rights groups in Europe which dubbed the bill as a step toward total information in the very heart of Europe; the criticism levelled at Hungary by the Council of Europe, the European Parliament and the OSCE was to no avail and while there have as yet been no arrests under the new bill, Hungarian journalists concede that it has a very real chilling effect (IPI, 10/4/2020). A similar move to introduce prison sentences for spreading what it deems 'fake news' was attempted by the government in Bulgaria but was vetoed by the President. And in Romania, by virtue of an emergency decree, authorities now have the power to close websites that spread 'fake news' about the virus, with no opportunity for appeal.

Further afield, new bills or existing ones criminalizing 'false news' have already been used to hit journalists hard (IPI, RSF). In the Philippines, a new law passed in March, euphemistically entitled 'Bayarihan to Heal as One Act' confers special powers on President Duterte with two journalists being served prison sentences and fined for writing on COVID-19 (IPI, 25/3/2020). In Egypt, Guardian correspondent Ruth Michaelson's press credentials were withdrawn for allegedly exaggerating estimates of infected people in the country (IPI, 18/3/2020). A similar case in Iraq led to the suspension of Reuters' licence for three months (IPI, 3/4/2020). A

state of emergency was declared in Japan (IPI, 7/4/2020), Cambodia (IPI, 9/4/2020) and Algeria (23/4/2020). The latter has detained two journalists for allegedly spreading fake news; the bill punishes violators with one to three years in prison. Algeria has also blocked access to critical online media outlets.

Turkey's repressive press laws preceded the pandemic but IPI estimates that local media are among the leading collateral victims of the coronavirus in Turkey with several local journalists arrested and charged under Article 213 of the Penal Code for allegedly sowing fear and panic (IPI, 11/5/2020; RSF 20/4/2020). A measure which has accompanied COVID-19 restrictions for journalists in a number of countries is governments authorizing one body as the purveyor of coronavirus news. In countries like Turkey where the Public Health Ministry has been given that responsibility, journalists seeking information about cases of infections in their region have been penalized. A similar directive requesting all information be sanctioned by the authorities, which has since been reversed, was partly responsible for the arrest of Serbian journalist Ana Lalić of online news portal Nova.rs who wrote about conditions in a city hospital dealing with COVID-19 (IPI, 10/4/2020).

The list is not exhaustive but throws some light on the lengths which governments are willing to go to squash scrutiny, and the circumstances journalists in many parts of the world are contending with to deliver accurate, timely information to their readers and viewers. Certainly, in countries where censorship is more overt as is in China, and in some parts of Africa and Eurasia, relevant sources have been warned not to talk to journalists. Those journalists, and others who dare speak out, in countries as diverse as Somalia, Bangladesh, Russia, Indonesia and China, face arbitrary detention. Other countries, such as Iran, Ethiopia, India and Egypt have taken even more direct action such as restricting internet access, blocking access to reliable information or even blocking internet speed, prompting a joint statement by the UN, OSCE and the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights urging government to lift all restrictions on internet traffic which is recognized as a fundamental right since July 2016 (OHCHR, 19/3/2020). The subsequent impact on media freedom cannot be understated yet may fail to adequately grasp the negative repercussions on citizens themselves who bereft of factual, appropriate information are unable to take the informed decisions that will keep them and their families safe.

Restriction on access to information

While bills criminalizing fake news are perceived as draconian, governments have also used the Covid-19 crisis to change freedom of information laws. Once again, the proviso that there may be legitimate reasons for amending such legislation in these unprecedented, disruptive times when many employees are unable to access information at their work-place due to lockdowns, has to be borne in mind. Yet, if we are not careful, important stories may go unreported. In news, time is of the essence and a story past its time risks having no

impact. While public health data springs instantly to mind, the stories of this pandemic go beyond health. Governments the world over are committing billions of euros in contracts and grants, while issues related to migration as borders remain closed loom large. The threat that restriction on access to information may cover up incompetence, corruption or even human rights abuses is clear.

As of 2019, UNESCO lists 126 countries as having freedom of information laws which translates to ninety percent of the world population. These laws typically allow journalists and the general public to request information and access documents related to decisions taken by public bodies (UNESCO, 2019). Freedom of Information (FOI) laws are considered a vital instrument in the tool-kit of the free media. In Europe, the Council of Europe Guidelines on protecting freedom of expression and information in times of crisis, adopted by the Council of Ministers in 2007, reiterates that a crisis situation should not be used as a pretext for restricting the public's access to information (CoE, 2007). During this pandemic, countries from Brazil to Scotland have extended the deadlines for getting a response to information requests or have, in practice, become more flexible in enforcing FOI requests. By doing so however, citizens are deprived of timely information while politicians and public bodies whose decisions are more vital than ever during the crisis, avoid scrutiny and eschew transparency.

In Europe, countries which have gone down this path include Hungary and Romania which have both doubled the amount of time to respond to FOI requests from 30 to 60 days. The Scottish government has also put in place until September 2020, temporary measures through its Coronavirus (Scotland) Bill allowing public bodies to extend their response time from 20 to 60 days (Index on Censorship 1/5/2020). Other countries include Serbia, Moldova, Brazil, El Salvador and Argentina although in some cases, these measures have since been overturned. In contrast, countries such as New Zealand have recognized the importance of FOI in this time of crisis (Index on Censorship, 1/5/2020). A tweet from New Zealand's Minister of Justice Andrew Little reads 'The Official Information Act remains important for holding power to account during this extraordinary time' (https://twitter.com/AndrewLittleMP/status/1242278903776870400).

Article 19's report 'Ensuring the Publics Right to know in the COVID-19 Pandemic' (May 2020) highlights the threats to access to information, and details related obligations on governments at this time calling on them to:

- Ensure that delays in responding to FOI requests are limited
- Give priority to coronavirus-related requests
- Provide electronic access for making requests and receiving information while physical requests are not possible
- Proactively publish information about the outbreak and their responses
- Ensure that oversight bodies and appeals processes are still operating
- Maintain access to the courts for important FOI cases
- Ensure public access to information about crucial health and environmental laws

- Maintain full records while staff may be working remotely.

The report further provides governments with a detailed list of information that they should be proactively sharing with the public during the pandemic. This includes the more obvious public health data about coronavirus cases, deaths, testing, facilities, and contingency planning daily. It also highlights the importance, as public spending increased exponentially, of publishing the details of all contracts, grants, loans and support to companies. Governments should also publish all the names and biographies of all experts giving advice to public bodies while also making available minutes of meetings, working documents and advice given. Finally, authorities must also make available information related to governance, human rights and law enforcement (Article 19, 5/2020).

Verbal and physical attacks on journalists

The pandemic has impacted on journalists' safety on multiple fronts. Verbal harassment, both online and offline as well as the threat of physical violence have also impacted on media freedom.

IPI's COVID-19 Monitoring Index reports 63 cases of verbal and physical abuse (27/5/2020). Far from being restricted to countries where gagging of the press is commonplace, reports have proliferated in many countries. RSF USA has compiled a list of major incidents in which President Donald Trump has attacked journalists for their work in relation to his administration's response to the pandemic (RSF 8/4/2020). In Brazil, IPI counted 32 attacks by President Bolsonaro against journalists and media in general in the first three months of 2020 (IPI, 16/4/2020). The systematic attacks in the US and Brazil have impacted on the trust citizens afford to the media worldwide but additionally have the effect of demeaning journalists and exposing them to verbal and physical abuse.

In Europe, organisations working for enhanced media freedom, came together as partners in the Media Freedom Rapid Response (MFRR) to monitor and highlight their concern over the increased violence against media professionals across the European Union and in candidate countries and to call for more protection. The project is funded by the European Commission (MFRR 5/2020). In the space of a few short weeks during the ongoing pandemic, unauthorised protests that have accompanied lockdowns in different states as well as the arrival of migrants in others, have been opportunities for civilians to threaten and attack journalists in Germany, Greece, Italy, and Poland. (MFRR 18/5/2020). As with other threats, these physical threats and attacks on media professionals perpetrated by participants or law enforcement themselves during protests have been on the increase in many parts of Europe but have spiralled during the pandemic even as stay-at-home orders restricted the number of protests. In other parts of the world, from Ukraine to the Congo, from Chad to India, attacks against TV crews have been visceral and have in the very least hindered their work.

RSF considers that online harassment has increased in all parts of the world, often at the behest of politicians (RSF 11/5/2020). The use of social media to attack journalists has become increasingly commonplace and with online activity soaring during the pandemic, expectation that hate campaigns online escalate, is a very reasonable one. Social media platforms Twitter, Facebook and YouTube announced in late March that they were stepping up the use of automated systems to detect and delete content of this kind. But the use of artificial intelligence in identifying such content remains unsatisfactory. Online hate campaigns have been recorded by monitoring organisations in India, Bangladesh, Serbia, Spain, Slovenia and Greece (RSF 11/5/2020). In Italy, newspaper 'Repubblica' journalist Salvo Palazzolo who covers organised crime has been subjected to a torrent of online hate after reporting on ways the Mafia is profiting from the pandemic. In Malta, journalists who have been critical of the government's handling of migrants' arrivals have also been at the end of viscous online threats (Maltatoday, 6/5/2020). In all likelihood, these records represent a very small number of the online threats directed at journalists worldwide.

Whether it is disproportionate emergency measures and 'fake-news' laws or restrictions on access to information, the encroachment on media freedom is patently clear. Verbal and physical abuse and violence are also strongly correlated with media freedom and their escalation during the pandemic has no doubt gnawed away at an already diminished media freedom landscape.

3. Disinformation

In a pandemic, truth matters. While the spread of unverified news can occur unknowingly or deliberately, the outcome is the same. In a pandemic, the spread of misinformation (unknowingly) and disinformation (deliberately) is putting lives at risk. The World Health Organisation and UNESCO have spoken of an avalanche of disinformation accompanying COVID-19 with commentators now creating a new term for it – 'disinfodemic' (UN News, 13/4/2020). This is not surprising. In times of uncertainty and great unknowns, the ground is fertile for fabrications to flourish. Pandemics have historically spawned disinformation (Spinney, 2017).

The pandemic has been branded a perfect storm for conspiracy theories and the full range of issues around coronavirus has been permeated by disinformation - its origin, its spread, unproven prevention, and 'cures'. While much misinformation is inconsequential, this is not so for a public health emergency. The consequences of blaming the coronavirus's emergence on the wrong source, or of doubting its seriousness, could be life-threatening on a massive scale.

What challenges emanate from this deluge of misinformation for news media? What new demands, if at all, has this crisis unleashed for media organisations? Can the sheer scale of the problem also spell some good news in the form of a shift towards more credible voices?

A MIT study has provided empirical evidence that false news spreads significantly faster, farther, deeper and more broadly than the truth (2018). Disinformation's sheer volume and rapidly evolving tactics makes countering it a hopeless task. The tools at our disposal, at such short notice, remain mainly technological solutions and greater government regulation. Both have been deployed aggressively over the past few weeks with varying degrees of success and a potential for negative consequences on media freedom as discussed above.

If the robust reaction of the platforms and governments, even with the caveat of all good intentions is defective, how can a media organisation start to counter this massive onslaught? While much disinformation is shared through social media networks and increasingly through social messaging apps, the concern for media outlets is that their readers/viewers may also view this contaminated information. This presents media with a challenge – should it allow disinformation they have not themselves promoted or shared go unchallenged and assume that readers and viewers are on their own able to verify objectively whether a report is true or false. Recent published research looking at misinformation in the US during the Ebola outbreak in 2014 demonstrated that only 5% of reports were false and another 5% partially true (Sell et al., 2020). The researchers found that it was not simple to label the reports, the distinction being incredibly nuanced. That media literacy is poor world-wide, especially among older generations more likely to trust sources, is also supported by research. In these circumstances, media calling out misinformation, whether that pertains to the link of the virus with 5G technology or that the virus spreads on the basis of race, becomes a responsibility.

Certainly most media outlets lack the resources to investigate misinformation. The exponential increase in fact-checking over the last few years however has meant that media can rely on internationally renowned fact-checkers such as the International Fact-Checking Network (IFTN). The EU has, since 2015, a dedicated task force to counter disinformation from Russia which has more than any other country weaponized disinformation (EU East StratCom Task Force). By virtue of its global reach, the pandemic has meant that mis- and disinformation, wherever they initiate, are likely to spread globally. I would argue that the pandemic has also driven fact-checking to the mainstream. The WHO has taken the lead with its myth-buster section, debunking many of the falsehoods related to the origins, prevention and potential cures of the novel coronavirus. IFCN, among many others, has launched coronavirus fact-checking grants for projects to fight COVID-19 disinformation which were heavily over-subscribed (IFCN 30/4/2020). Fact-checkers are busting disinformation at an ever more rapid pace. The pandemic has provided a positive impact in relation to cooperation among news media and fact-checkers, witnessing a more solid collaboration between the two.

There is coronavirus misinformation which still retains its local flavour. The news of the first casualty in Malta from the virus preceded the actual first death by a few days. The rumour made the rounds on social messaging app WhatsApp but media were quick to seek official

denial. Local media's prompt search for truthful and accurate information using their reliable sources is yet another challenge that the media need to be alert to at this time. The consequence of not doing so and not doing so in a timely manner, presents itself as an even greater obstacle for retaining the trust of readers and viewers. This exacerbates the crisis of trust in media which was already at an all-time low. Those media which fall short of this crucial basic of good, public service journalism may find their reputation devastated during this pandemic.

4. Additional Challenges

During these extraordinary times, reporting itself has become a challenge. How do you report, not putting one's life at risk, when you are unable to enter hospitals and lack the necessary protective equipment? Safety has moreover rarely accounted for the mental health risks that reporting on the ground in this pandemic has exposed for media workers. On a lesser scale, but equally damaging on mental health, is working from home when other family obligations must also be undertaken.

The hazards of reporting on a virus which has shown itself to be highly contagious has meant that many journalists have fallen ill themselves in the process of reporting the outbreak. The nature of the journalist's work dictates exposure to hospitals, frontline workers, and politicians with the risk higher in the beginning of the outbreak when protective measures were not in place and protective equipment was lacking. As part of its #Tracker_19 tool, RSF has compiled advice for media workers to limit the infection risks when out reporting.

For some journalists, this advice was not enough or came too late. According to Press Emblem Campaign (PEC) dozens of journalists have died in March and April (Agence France-Press, 1/5/2020). PEC recorded corona-related deaths of 55 media professionals from across 23 countries as of the end of April although it specifies that they may have not necessarily been infected on the job. Hardest hit were journalists from Ecuador and the United States. It provides a collection of obituaries of media professionals lost during the pandemic. Amongst these are Maria Mercada, a 54-year old journalist at CBS and Zororo Makamba, a 30-year old broadcast journalist in Zimbabwe who was his country's first coronavirus death. In Pakistan, the incidence of infection among media workers was so high that it prompted IPI to issue a set of specific health recommendations to journalists and newsrooms in Pakistan.

The repercussions of COVID-19 affects also imprisoned journalists who are often denied proper care but now risk dying as the virus spreads in poorly-sanitized prisons. This concern was initially highlighted for Iran, one of the countries where the spread of the virus occurred earlier (IPI, 4/3/2020). In April, 80 rights and press freedom organisations wrote to the Heads of State of ten African countries demanding that imprisoned journalists be released (IPI, 7/4/2020).

It has become commonplace for psychologists to advice citizens to limit their media consumption to be better able to keep anxiety in check during these uncertain and stressful times. But what if you are the media? How does a media professional cope with the trauma of reporting harrowing news on so many fronts? The Dart Centre is one of the world's leading authorities on journalism and trauma. It has revised its trauma-related guidelines to apply to COVID-19 (Global Investigative Journalism Network, 24/3/2020). Journalists in many countries but especially those in badly affected areas like New York, Lombardy in Italy and Madrid in Spain have been heavily exposed, delivering the stories and pictures which have left their viewers traumatized. While media workers tend to be more resilient by virtue of their work, it is expected that media professionals' mental health will suffer significantly as a consequence of reporting the pandemic.

A different kind of psychological stress is likely to have been borne also by many journalists worldwide, who are delivering content from their homes. The challenge of delivering on one of the fastest-developing stories ever within strict deadline constraints, at the same time as juggling other obligations imposed by lockdowns such as childcare, must not be downplayed.

Conclusion

COVID-19 has emerged at a difficult time for news media yet the pandemic has exposed like never before the need for news to be reclaimed as a public good. There is the realization that this is a moment of intense global challenges to health as well as to the foundation of democratic societies. The relevance of trusted, accurate, impartial and timely information to the protection of lives and good governance is writ large. This has however not shielded news organisations from the onslaught that has been discussed above - further financial disruption, increased pressure on media freedom, and the scourge of disinformation. In all of these areas, media professionals find themselves with their backs against the wall, sometimes depending on their own governments when it is those same governments they need to hold to account even more robustly. Whether greater collaboration, new business models or better regulation can arise out from this extraordinary experience remains to be seen. History has demonstrated that from the ashes, stronger institutions can emerge. For this to happen, citizens must take a pivotal role. This is not media's struggle for survival but citizens' claim to empowerment through a free and independent media.

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Coronavirus and Brexit: the United Kingdom's 'Double Whammy'

Dr. Nick Hopkinson

Since the end of World War Two, there have arguably been three major transnational threats to Western countries: the Cold War, terrorism and the coronavirus pandemic. The degree to which each has been, or is imagined to be, serious is of course a matter of individual circumstances, analysis and perception. What is clear though is that the coronavirus pandemic has brought Western, and indeed most, countries closer to standstill in a way that neither the Cold War or terrorism ever did[1].

Financial Times studies found the United Kingdom (UK) had experienced the highest absolute number of excess deaths (59,537) in Europe and the second highest death rate per capita in the world (891 per million).[2] Lockdown measures, which were implemented later than other countries (in late March), initially confined people to their homes except for essential external work, shopping for groceries and medicines, medical appointments and 30 minutes essential daily exercise. On 16 April, the *de facto* acting Prime Minister, Dominic Raab, produced five tests for exiting, or at least partially easing, the lockdown: evidence the NHS can cope across the UK; a sustained fall in daily death rates; evidence that the rate of infection is decreasing; confidence that supplies of testing and PPE are able to meet demand; and no risk of a second peak.[3] At the end of May, the Boris Johnson Government announced the gradual easing, some believe prematurely, of the lockdown.

There will be national enquiries as to how respective governments performed during the pandemic. There are many reasons for the wide range of national experiences including: different levels of preparedness, the strategies pursued by governments (with the trade-off between mortality rates and calculations of economic harm being a key metric), how coordinated and effective national responses were, levels of development (GDP per capita), the resilience and funding of national health care systems, population density, social mores and behaviour, individual compliance with government guidance etc.

[1] Disclaimer: The views expressed here are personal and do not represent the views of MEDAC or any other institution.

[2] Giles, Chris. UK Coronavirus deaths more than double official figure. *Financial Times* (22 April 2020). Available at: https://www.ft.com/content/67e6a4ee-3d05-43bc-ba03-e239799fa6ab and Giles, Chris and Burn-Murdoch, John. UK suffers second-highest death rate from coronavirus. 28 May 2020. Available at: https://www.ft.com/content/6b4c784e-c259-4ca4-9a82-648ffde71bf0

[3] Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/foreign-secretarys-statement-on-coronavirus-covid-19-16-april-2020 and https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/dominic-raab-s-five-tests-for-easing-the-lockdown

Each country of course has its own unique political circumstances. In the UK, the departure from the European Union (EU), or Brexit, has been the predominant theme. Given the multi-dimensional nature of the pandemic, this article focuses on the interrelationship of the coronavirus pandemic and Brexit.

The UK's preoccupation with and constant wall to wall media coverage of Brexit since 2016 understandably, and suddenly, vanished as the gravity of the pandemic was widely recognised in mid-March. However, the most virulent global pandemic in a hundred years was already spreading rapidly throughout the UK as Brexiters were trumpeting a perceived great new future outside the EU on 31 January 2020. At the time of writing (end of May), Brexit is again rising up media, business and political agendas as the 30 June 2020 deadline to extend the negotiations on the UK's future relationship with the EU nears.

The UK faces a potential double whammy: coronavirus' public health and economic crisis, and the other an entirely unnecessary government-made No Deal Brexit fiasco. The UK cannot afford to crash out of global order without EU agreements, notably in trade, whilst at the same time as trying to defeat the pandemic. As former Chancellor Alistair Darling stated on the BBC Radio 4 Today programme "It's madness to contemplate shooting yourself in the foot on an entirely man-made political decision at a time when you don't need to do that".

Government machinery, previously bogged down by years of planning for Brexit, is now almost entirely consumed by the urgent effort to defeat COVID-19. It simply lacks the capacity to deal with another major crisis on top of the pandemic. It would therefore appear to be commonsensical for a government overwhelmed by managing the coronavirus emergency to seek to extend the already ambitious timetable for EU negotiations. Although complex negotiations have been rearranged virtually, and other unrelated government programmes have been postponed, the Government continues repeatedly to rule out seeking an extension. The official reason is the Government has already legislated to rule out an extension: Section 33 of the UK's EU (Withdrawal Agreement) Act 2020 prohibits "A Minister from agreeing in the Joint Committee to an extension of the implementation period".

The coronavirus pandemic provides excellent cover for the Conservative Government and its ideological EUphobes to progress their dream of the hardest of Brexits which would leave the UK free of arrangements with the EU other than the 2019 Withdrawal Treaty. The adverse effects of crashing out without a deal could fairly easily be confused with and be blamed on the adverse effects of the pandemic (not to mention the usual EU27 scapegoat), rather than be attributed to the Government's hard Brexit policy.

In an attempt to extinguish any doubts about the Government's determination to pursue a hard Brexit, the chief UK negotiator for the future relationship with the EU, David Frost, stated: "the transition ends on 31 December. We will not ask to extend it. If the EU ask, we will say no. Extending would simply prolong negotiations, create even more uncertainty,

leave us liable to pay the EU in future, and keep us bound to evolving EU laws at a time when we want to control our own affairs."[4]

- **A Hard Brexit will make the adverse economic impact of coronavirus even worse**

The arguments against extension are flawed. Brexit itself is the source of business uncertainty. The UK will have to be bound by international rules anyway, whether or not we conclude new bilateral deals with the EU in the immediate future. Like any country, the UK cannot operate in the international system without a framework of trade, regulatory, security and other arrangements with such a large neighbour and major trading partner with which it has been closely integrated for the past 47 years. In the event of No Deal, the UK would soon have to return to the negotiating table.

While the Government may be concerned an extension could drag the UK into difficult negotiations about how much the UK should pay for EU programmes, continued paid access to the Single Market far outweighs the costs of paying into the EU budget. The government's own January 2018 analysis *EU exit analysis – Cross Whitehall Briefing* looked at the economic costs of three likely scenarios: a comprehensive free trade agreement with EU (the Canada CETA model) would result in UK Gross Domestic Product (GDP) being 5% lower over next 15 years; No Deal (the World Trade Organisation, now Australia, model): 8% lower, and continued single market access through membership of the European Economic Area: 2% lower. In a second study in November 2018, the UK Treasury predicted 15 years after a hard Brexit, UK GDP (assuming the UK is still united) would be 9.3% smaller than if the UK stayed in the EU. The Bank of England predicted a No Deal Brexit would cause a 3-7% fall in GDP in the year immediately after crashing out.

The damage of a hard (No Deal) Brexit would be on top of that resulting from the coronavirus pandemic: the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) projected an unprecedented 35% drop in second quarter 2020 GDP and Morgan Stanley projected a 5.1% GDP fall for all of 2020. [5] Every sector of the economy and every UK region would be negatively impacted, and London's status as a global financial centre could be severely eroded.[6]

[4] see Frost, David on Twitter @DavidGHFrost. 16 April 2020.
[5] Available at: https://obr.uk/coronavirus-reference-scenario/
[6] Petrie, Kathryn and Norman, Amy. Assessing the economic implications of coronavirus and Brexit. Best for Britain (May, 2020). Available at: https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/b4b/pages/50/attachments/original/1590830294/Assessing_the_economic_impact_of_coronavirus_and_Brexit.pdf?1590830294

The magnitude of a hard Brexit is of course in a different league to the pandemic's tragic loss of life and damage to society. However, the economic and political consequences of a hard Brexit would be felt by all in the UK for decades. In the short term, defeating the pandemic should be the Government's sole focus. To compound it with an unnecessary hard Brexit is sheer reckless folly.

- **The UK's vision for future EU relations**

Boris Johnson's Government clearly wants a more distant relationship with the EU. The Johnson Government is more ideologically anti-EU than even Mrs. May's Government – one leading observer refers to this as the Government's "sheer, remorseless antipathy to anything and everything remotely connected with the EU".[7] In his 3 February 2020 Greenwich speech[8], Johnson stated the UK will not honour its commitment to a 'level playing field' on social, environmental and employment regulations in the October 2019 Political Declaration signed with the EU. If the EU didn't like it, preparations for a No Deal Brexit would begin again in June. Although the UK wants to move away from EU rules, "it is unlikely to abandon the sorts of employment and environmental protection rules that have developed during EU membership because that would be politically unpopular at home."[9]

The UK is seeking 11 separate agreements with the EU rather than a single comprehensive agreement. This "reflects a belief in government that a single agreement would enable the EU in future to threaten sanctions against unrelated areas if the UK was in breach of one part of the agreement."[10] The Government's negotiation mandate suggests it wants to negotiate on the basis of precedent EU deals with Canada, Japan and South Korea, but none of these are large economies 21 miles away from the EU. "It would mainly focus on removing tariffs and quotas for goods, with only limited coverage for services, which account for around 80 per cent of the British economy".[11] Such a template is unlikely to be acceptable to the EU given the size and integration of the UK economy and its reluctance to replicate the complexity of the EU's arrangements with Switzerland.

The UK appears to be seeking a slimmed down 'thin' trade agreement for goods under Article 207 of the EU Treaties without rules for services which might be subject to the

[7] quoted in Tony Barber. UK's antivirus measures disguise radicalisation of Brexit. *Financial Times* (11 March 2020).

[8] Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-speech-in-greenwich-3-february-2020

[9] Senior European Experts. Brexit: The negotiating positions of the UK and the EU (February 2020), p. 8.

[10] Senior European Experts, art.cit. Brexit, pps. 1-2.

[11] George Parker, Robert Wright and Jim Brunsden. Boris Johnson to threaten to walk away from Brexit trade talks. *Financial Times* (27 February 2020).

jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice. As experienced in the CETA negotiations with Canada, mixed agreements with regulatory provisions take a long time to complete (8 years), primarily due to delays caused by the need to secure the agreement of both national and regional governments. The UK's preference for a slimmed down goods agreement shows it is putting Brexit ideology before the national interest as a thin agreement will harm the UK's service-focused economy and its export surplus in services with the EU (whilst preserving the EU's sizeable surplus in goods).

Johnson advocates the erroneous view that the UK must diverge from the EU's common rules and standards in order to maximise global trade and investment opportunities.

Unfortunately, new trading arrangements hardly compensate for the considerable trade lost with the EU. For example, the Government's own studies suggest a mere 0.07%-0.016% increase in GDP from any US Free Trade Agreement after 15 years.[12]

Being able to secure acceptance of one's own regulations by the rest of the world is largely a fantasy. In the global order, geography and size matter. The big three economies (the US, EU and China) call the regulatory shots. Global economic actors are simply not going to humour the UK just because it constitutes 3% of the world economy. As former Foreign and Commonwealth Office Permanent Under Secretary (PUS) Simon Fraser argues "Brexit will not change geography, nor liberate Britain from the gravitational trade effects of the EU's orbit".[13] Business similarly argues "maintaining (our) ease of trade with the (EU) single market is more important than being able to diverge from EU regulations".[14]

Fraser further argues "Brexit has revealed many paradoxes that have left the British government doing the splits by simultaneously advocating a more deregulated economy while pledging to uphold the highest social and environmental standards".[15] This reflects the fundamental flaw in the Brexit project – there was never a single agreed Brexit vision. The leaders of the Leave campaign knew Brexiters would lose the 2016 referendum if they ever defined a single vision for Brexit because they would never be able to agree one. The prevailing version of Brexit was to be settled once in Government.

- **The Government changes its focus from Brexit to fighting the pandemic**

The Johnson Government was initially too preoccupied with Brexit to take the COVID-19 threat seriously: "(Eurosceptics) waged a generation-long battle against imaginary threats,

[12] Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/869592/UK_US_FTA_negotiations.pdf

[13] Fraser, Simon. The UK does the splits, *The World Today*, Chatham House. April/May 2020, p. 22-23.

[14] quoted in Tony Barber. The political, ideological and commercial logic of Brexit. *Financial Times* (28 February 2020).

[15] Fraser, art. cit., p.23.

claiming victory on the eve of meeting a real one. Coronavirus has not just pushed Brexit down the political agenda, it makes the whole project look parochial and self-indulgent."[16]

Perhaps ironically, preparations for Brexit actually helped the UK's initial response to the coronavirus pandemic. For example, "Operation Kingfisher was designed to help business cash flow and supply chain disruptions following a hard Brexit, but in the end it was used to mitigate the economic fallout from the pandemic. Nevertheless, it had to be revised three times." [17]

Radical Brexiters have even suggested the pandemic has made Brexit easier to deliver. Former Brexit secretary David Davis, known for his statements detached from reality, suggested "The unfortunate COVID-19 events means cross-border traffic will be depressed and customs will be more than able to handle the traffic".[18] He later argued the "pandemic would limit the damage of failing to secure a deal because trade would already have been reduced to a minimum".[19] Nonetheless, the government has had to create 50,000 new customs jobs (which at least has the seeming benefit of absorbing some of the mass unemployment caused by the pandemic).

- **The ventilator fiasco**

Two specific incidents, the EU procurement fiasco and the Prime Minister's chief adviser's rule-breaking trip to Durham, illustrate the intersection of the pandemic and Brexit.

The Government's failure to participate in EU-wide procurement programmes for hospital ventilators and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for healthcare professionals exposed how Brexit ideological purity may have put British lives at risk. After the government missed the deadline to participate in an EU procurement scheme to meet equipment shortages, Cabinet Office Minister Michael Gove argued there was 'communication confusion'. EU officials however confirmed they informed the UK authorities a number of times about the programme.[20] As the Health Secretary admitted in a February BBC Question Time

[16] Behr, Rafael. Coronavirus is the first crisis Johnson has faced that can't be played for laughs. *The Guardian* (24 March, 2020).
[17] Rutter, Jill. Have Brexit preparations made it any easier for government to tackle COVID-19? The UK in a Changing Europe (27 March 2020).

[18] Quoted in Sebastian Payne and Jim Brunsden. Brexit transition deadline in doubt as talks called off. *Financial Times* (17 March 2020).
[19] Quoted in Daniel Boffey. UK-EU talks on post-Brexit relations in deep freeze. *The Guardian* (26 March 2020). Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/26/covid-19-puts-post-brexit-relationship-talks-in-deep-freeze

[20] available at: https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/coronavirus-ventilators-eu-scheme-email_uk_5e7e2df8c5b661492266938f

programme, it appears the Government decided not to participate in the EU programme even though it was still entitled to do so during the EU transition period. Critics charged the Government of putting 'Brexit before Breathing'.

The head of the UK Diplomatic Service confirmed on 21 April before the Foreign Affairs Parliamentary Select Committee that the decision not to participate in the EU scheme was a 'political' one (i.e. taken by Ministers and therefore not a bureaucratic mix-up as Gove had alleged). Apparently under political pressure, he retracted his testimony suggesting his initial remarks were "inadvertent and wrong."[21] The Government has since confirmed it will aim to opt into future EU schemes.

Part of the Brexit psyche is that the UK will be more self-sufficient. Gove argued "there's nothing that participating in that scheme would have allowed us to do that we have not been able to do ourselves". However, many established UK based suppliers said they offered to make ventilators, but never received a response from procurement officers.[22] Instead, the Government awarded ventilator contracts to Brexit-backing Conservative donors such as James Dyson, even though his firm had never produced ventilators before. Ultimately Dyson's firm never produced any ventilators.

- **Cummings and goings**

While the ventilator fiasco attracted the ire of Remainers (who constitute roughly 53% of the UK population in late 2019), the episode did not cut through into the consciousness of wider public opinion. It was always going to be hard for Remainers to trust anything the Boris Johnson government did after systematically misrepresenting, if not lying about, the benefits of EU membership during and since the Brexit referendum.

What however did gain wide public traction was the rule-breaking trip of the Prime Minister's chief adviser to Durham in the midst of the pandemic lockdown. Dominic Cummings, the acknowledged mastermind behind the Vote Leave campaign, was caught disobeying the lockdown rules which he himself had helped design. After making considerable personal sacrifices obeying lockdown rules (e.g. not attending the bedside of dying loved ones, family funerals etc.), many citizens were outraged to learn there was one rule for those at the top of government and another for everyone else. In a high profile and unprecedented press conference, Cummings not only refused to resign but also failed to apologise for breaking the Government's lockdown rules. The widespread fear was that Cummings' action would undermine the credibility of the Government's lockdown programme and weaken the public's willingness to abide by Government rules. Anecdotal

https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/21/uk-refusal-of-eu-ventilator-offer-was-political-decision

[21] available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-52369916

[22] Mason, Rowena and O'Carroll, Lisa. No 10 claims it missed deadline for EU Ventilator Scheme, *The Guardian* (26 March 2020).

evidence suggests lockdown rules after the incident were being widely flouted by the public. The Cummings affair prompted the Government to accelerate the easing of lockdown rules prematurely, in spite of expert advice not to do so, in a bid to divert media and public attention. However, a late May *Guardian* opinion poll found overwhelming public support for Cummings to resign, or failing that be sacked, and a large drop in approval for Boris Johnson because he had failed to sack Cummings. [23] How the scandal will end is uncertain but it has undermined the Government's efforts to defeat the pandemic. For the first time, the credibility of Brexit politicians was damaged in a way that never happened during or since the 2016 referendum.

- **Will there be an extension of the transition period?**

It was always ambitious to complete post-Brexit trade and other deals before end of 2020. In a leaked letter, Michael Clauss, German ambassador to the EU, argued the "December timeline for agreeing a deal with the EU "was already hopelessly optimistic". [24] The coronavirus pandemic has however made concluding a UK-EU trade deal even more difficult.

The Government has repeatedly argued seeking an extension would not be honouring its key election promise to "Get Brexit Done". For example, Foreign Secretary Raab stated "we're confident that we can get this done and actually, I don't think delaying Brexit negotiations would give anyone the certainty on either side of the Channel that they need."[25] It is perhaps worth noting Raab stated publicly in 2019 that he didn't realise how important Dover was as a trade hub for the British economy.

UK Public opinion increasingly supports an extension of the EU transition period. A 19-20 March 2020 YouGov poll found a majority (55%) supported an extension to the transition period (with 24% opposed). [26] A Parliamentary petition to extend the transition had gained 75,000 signatories as of 31 May. [27]

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[23] Helm, Toby. Tory poll lead collapses as voters say Cummings should go, *The Guardian* (30 May 2020). Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2020/may/30/tory-poll-lead-collapses-as-voters-say-cummings-should-go

[24] cited in Daniel Boffey. UK plan to agree trade deal by December is fantasy, says EU, *The Guardian* (8 April 2020).

[25] Payne, Sebastian and Brunsden, Jim. art.cit. (17 March 2020).

[26] Buchan, Lizzy. Majority of Britons support extending Brexit transition period amid coronavirus outbreak, new poll shows, *The Independent* (21 March 2020). Available at: https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/coronavirus-brexit-transition-period-extension-when-eu-poll-a9415701.html

[27] See https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/300412

Those arguing for an extension of the transition period are not seeking to stop Brexit (the UK left the EU at the end of January), but mitigate the damage of the hardest of all possible Brexits. Yet the Conservative Party, whose capacity for self-preservation is legendary, fears an extension might rekindle divisions within the Conservative Party over Europe, and deny some of its wealthy disaster capitalist backers the opportunity to buy Britain on the cheap in the economic crisis which will follow a Hard Brexit.

Unofficially Government plans for an extension do exist in light of the all-consuming pandemic. [28] A further act of Parliament would be necessary to rescind existing legislation. This appears possible under the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Act 2020, section 41 (1) which states "A Minister may make regulations such transitional, transitory or saving provision in connection with the coming into force of any provision of this Act".

- **Will the EU support an extension?**

Many in the EU27 believe an extension is common sense, desirable and even inevitable.

There is political will in the EU to extend the transition period. The biggest political party (the EPP) in the European Parliament has stated it would respond positively to any extension. However, the EU doesn't want to be seen to be telling the UK what to do and it cannot force the UK to agree it.

Article 132.1 of the Withdrawal Treaty states "the Joint Committee (of UK and EU representatives) may, before 1 July 2020, adopt a single decision extending the transition period for up to 1 or 2 years." Although 30 June is not a point of no return, an extension is legally and politically more difficult thereafter. A monthly flextension, floated by Conservative insiders in the 12 April *Sun*, would be legally difficult as it is not available under the Withdrawal Agreement.

Michael Barnier, then EU chief Brexit negotiator, stated in 2019: the less harmonisation with EU rules, the less deep the trade deal. Based on the 2019 Political Declaration, the Commission's negotiation mandate for the future relationship seeks non-regression from EU standards in environment, social and labour standards and on state aid rules. UK backtracking on its commitment to a level-playing field which it agreed in the Political Declaration has raised considerable concern amongst EU negotiators.

EU parliamentarians are also puzzled, if not shocked, by the UK position. On 30 March 2020, Christophe Hansen MEP of European Parliament's Committee on International Trade said "Under these extraordinary circumstances (of the coronavirus), I cannot see how the UK

[28] Barber, Tony in *Financial Times* (24 March 2020).

Government would choose to expose itself to the double whammy of the coronavirus and the exit from the EU Single Market, which will inevitably add to the disruption… I can only hope that common sense and substance will prevail over ideology. An extension of the transition period is the only responsible thing to do".

Fabian Zuleeg similarly argues "Extending the transition should no longer be a question - it has become a necessity, given the impact of COVID-19… there will simply not be any bandwidth to focus on the negotiations… in a situation with major healthcare challenges in the short- and long-term and economic challenges already requiring urgent action, there will not be enough political time and attention to successfully conclude this EU-UK agreement." [29]

The EU knows it has greater negotiating leverage as the larger economy and that Brexit would have a disproportionately greater adverse impact on the UK. However, EU observers can underestimate the will of many inside and outside the Conservative Party who do not want a deal. The political realities within the governing Conservative Party suggest the UK's actions are less determined by the UK's national interest or sense of its relative negotiating weakness, and more by internal Conservative party dynamics.

Zuleeg does however acknowledge such real practical and political obstacles to agreeing an extension: "Without a deal on the (EU's Multiannual Financial Framework), there are no clear financial parameters for the individual EU programmes, making it difficult to determine what the UK's financial obligations would be… It is possible that the UK continues to have no intention to ask for an extension. This would clearly demonstrate that the UK's overarching priority is Brexit 'at any price', whatever the economic and societal consequences". [30]

- **Conclusion**

Brexit cannot be cited as an obvious major reason for the UK's relatively poor record in combating the coronavirus pandemic. However, Brexit and its implications have certainly not helped the Government's coronavirus response. The Government's Brexit preoccupation appears to have diverted it from focusing on the pandemic at an early stage. Brexit policies and prejudices exacerbated shortages of EU-27 health care professionals, protective equipment and could delay UK access to any EU certified COVID-19 vaccine. As the Cummings' fiasco demonstrates, leading Brexiters continued to bend rules and the truth, thus undermining Government efforts to defeat the epidemic. Any form of Brexit will make the UK less able economically to combat future pandemics.

[29] Zuleeg, Fabian (2020, March). The need for a longer transition. Policy Brief, European Policy Centre. Available at: https://www.epc.eu/en/publications/The-need-for-a-longer-transiti~30cc30
[30] Zuleeg, Fabian, 2020, art. cit.

The Government's slow response to the pandemic, its premature exit from lockdown, and the UK's excessively high per capita death rate should add pressure on the Government to abandon its insistence on completing negotiations with the EU this year. However, government pronouncements to date suggest that the Government will stubbornly stick to the course it has already set, and walk away from negotiations if necessary. Whilst agreeing a two year extension would appear be common sense, it may simply just not happen owing to the Governing party's Brexit ideological obsession and internal imperatives. Willingly causing another major shock on top of the coronavirus pandemic would be both irresponsible and reckless.

However, in spite of the current rhetoric and political posturing, one might hesitantly conclude the UK and the EU27 might still conclude a 'thin deal' this year. Faced with the economic and social fall out of the pandemic, should pragmatism prevail, the Government may conclude a face saving framework agreement which includes a future process for detailed sectoral and other negotiations. Such a deal would be little better than crashing out with No Deal, but it would minimise border and other chaos, provide greater predictability for business and provide the political cover for the Government to claim Brexit has been 'done'.

Both the coronavirus and Brexit crises have exposed the shortcomings of the over-centralised British system of government, notably insufficiently devolved powers to its component nations and local councils, and an antiquated electoral system without proportional representation. Powerful right wing tabloids have filled the void left by the secondary educational system whose curriculum inculcates the past rather than the present (i.e. modern British and European politics is hardly taught).

The harder the Brexit, the less likely the United Kingdom will remain united. A future generation of leaders in an isolated Brexit Britain could in a decade or two deliver the change Brexit promised, but which ultimately it did not deliver. After hard experience outside the EU, the English in particular might at last conclude Europe is their home after all.

Multilateralism key to global health and economic recovery after Covid-19: For the EU, this means getting its own house in step, at an institutional, national, regional and local level.

Mr. Tom Mc Grath

"Europe will be built through concrete achievements which first create a de facto solidarity."

Robert Schuman, 9th. May 1950.

At the time of writing (27th May, 2020) over 200 countries have been visited by the Coronavirus pandemic contributing to a total of 5,600,00 million infections and 350,000 deaths. The global pandemic has shifted the tectonic plates of an interconnected and interdependent world, with seismic repercussions at human, societal and economic levels. It has underlined the fallibility of human constructs.

The report card, thus far, of the six month old virus makes chilling reading; economic data point to the World economy heading for its steepest plunge in living memory; there are increasing North/South and East/West divisions; geopolitical fault lines are expanding; multilateralism and international cooperation are undermined; inequalities are rising and societies remain under tension; the fragility of lives, economies and societies have been underscored by the Coronavirus.

The crisis has exacerbated many of the fault-lines that beset the world economy. Indebtedness is even higher, wealth inequality more extreme in countries such as the US, and globalisation is now in retreat. The Coronavirus pandemic has broken once immutable laws and exposed the fragility of so much that was taken for granted. A once accessible and small world with unimpaired mobility now seems vast again from quarantined 'prisons' with little travel by air or sea. States have unilaterally closed their borders and imposed export bans.

Where is the light in the dark and dystopian scenario briefly outlined above?

- **Towards a more hopeful landscape**

Other analyses posit that the Corona pandemic has frozen and interrupted a world, whose dynamics will be altered profoundly, and might witness epiphanies of renewed values, pared expectations and increased solidarity. Responses to the virus in many parts of the world have seen a momentous shift from competition to cooperation, from individualism to group endeavour and from privatised to public and state means of working together. The crisis is

an argument for closer cooperation, stronger international structures, more flexible and robust supply chains and lower barriers - for goods and people - between partners. The crisis is rehabilitating the idea of a global community, not undermining it.

- **Europe responds to the crisis**

The past few years have not been kind to the proponents of the European project - with the Brexit debacle; the wrangling over the Financial Framework/Budget for the next seven years and the moves towards nationalism and populism in some of the Member States. Now Europe, like the rest of the world, has been convulsed by an unprecedented crisis. President Emmanuel Macron of France has called this *'a moment of truth'* for the European Union amid criticism of the slowness of Europe's response to the growing crisis. However, there now appears to be - albeit belated - more vigour and determinedness in the EU approach and actions.

The first movements in that response are outlined in the recent European Commission Communication – 'Joint communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions' that frames the approach with multilateralism at its core.

"The EU supports international cooperation and multilateral solutions in this crisis. We are taking a leadership role in the coordination efforts undertaken by the United Nations, the G20, the G7, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the international financial institutions. The EU will put its full weight behind the UN Secretary General's efforts to coordinate UN-wide response.

The EU's response follows a Team Europe approach. It draws contributions from all EU institutions and combines the resources mobilised by EU Member States and financial institutions, in particular the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). Working together, Team Europe can muster a critical mass that few others can match.

In line with the approach agreed at the G20 and promoted by the UN, the EU's response addresses the humanitarian, health, social and economic consequences of the crisis. It addresses short-term emergency needs as well as the longer-term structural impacts on societies and economies, thus reducing the risk of destabilisation. It reinforces both governmental and non-governmental actions."

Communication on the Global EU response to Covid-19, 8th April, 2020

- **Multilateralism reaffirmed:**

This spirit of multilateralism and global solidarity was compounded in a recent speech by HRVP Josep Borrel to the Non-Aligned Movement:

"Defeating the pandemic requires a global approach and a coordinated response. The' Coronavirus Global Response. A pledging marathon to raise Euros 7.5 billion to develop fast and equitable access to safe quality effective and affordable diagnostics, therapeutics and vaccines against the virus.' Fighting the pandemic together will be essential to pave the way for stronger more multilateral cooperation during the recovery phase and a more multilateral world after the pandemic."

Josep Borrell speech at online Summit of the Non-Aligned movement on 4th. May, 2020

In a message to celebrate the International Day of Multilateralism and Diplomacy for Peace, Europe's adherence to multilateralism was reaffirmed: 'As we tackle the Pandemic crisis the European Union reaffirms its longstanding commitment to international cooperation and to the rules-based international order, with the United Nations at its core. The coronavirus pandemic reminds us how interconnected we are and how crucial multilateral cooperation is. To win the battle against a virus that knows no borders, there is no other option than to join efforts to find global solutions. Multilateralism is the only effective way to face a threat with which no country can cope on its own and which affects us all. Nobody will be safe in any country as long as the pandemic rages in different parts of the world.'

- **After slow beginnings the European Union moves up some gears in its response**

Responding recently to the European Parliament's urgings for the European Commission to set up a €3 trillion investment package to tackle the fallout from the coronavirus pandemic that would provide "mostly" grants and be financed through recovery bonds, Commission President Ursula von der Leyen outlined a recovery plan that is not far from what the EP is seeking. She informed MEPs that the plan would have three parts and would be financed by raising money on financial markets, and "all funding would be channelled through EU budget programs and thus subject to parliamentary oversight. The plan would include grants and the possibility to front-load part of the investment."

The European Commission is now launching a major recovery plan designed to help the European economy rebound from the devastation of the coronavirus pandemic. There are current estimates that the EU economy will contract by 7.4% in 2020.

Combined with €540million already agreed by Member States, this could bring the overall financial rescue to over Euros 3 trillion. This new money would be on top of that €540million already available by way of the EU's bailout fund, soft loans from the EIB and money mobilised by the EC to help companies keep workers on their books.

The plan will partly revolve around re-purposing the EU's seven-year budget. The budget's ceilings would be increased allowing the EC to use the extra headroom to borrow large sums at low cost on the markets and then target the money at countries worst hit, help kickstart the economy and learn the lessons of the pandemic.

The recovery fund would overall have to conform with the Commission's long-term ambitions of boosting the digital economy and to make Europe carbon neutral by 2050. Money would, thus, also have to go towards research and development, stockpiling medical equipment and protective clothing.

- **Internal strains**

However, strains and tensions within Europe are rivalling those from the 2010-12 debt crisis. Within the EU there are two schools of thought in a north-south divide; 1) those MS that want a pared back EU that is primarily an economic and trade agreement, or 2) a better funded bloc that smooths economic inequalities between members and promotes European interests worldwide.

These fault lines and fissures of the intergovernmental versus Communitaire approach are exposed once again. There is division among Member States whether the new money to combat the Pandemic should be in the form of loans or grants to those regions worst hit, with the South arguing that loans will only add to the indebtedness of the poorer countries.

Countries (Ireland, Italy, Spain, France) appeal for a shared debt, arguing that a structural shift is more appropriate to the scale of the challenges posed by the pandemic. However, a bloc of Northern states, including the Netherlands, Austria, Sweden and Denmark, has ruled out the idea.

Ireland's position was voiced by Foreign Minister Simon Coveney:

"Even after the virus is defeated, its aftershocks and the new constraints it imposes will define what Member States and the Union do for the next decade. All of the Union's great projects – difficult before the pandemic, now doubly testing – have to be revisited and recrafted through the prism of the pandemic and facilitating recovery."

The deadlocked budget has to be reoriented to that single end – facilitating recovery. The radical Green Deal (carbon-neutral by 2050), until March, the EU's new great purpose, must be reimagined as an engine of that recovery. More orderly migration, a new imperative. And the Brexit challenges, with their likely trade and social disruptions, are now only a sideshow in the slipstream of Covid-19.

- **Bringing Multilateralism and EU cohesion together**

Speaking recently on the 'International Day for Multilateralism and Diplomacy for Peace,' HRVP Josep Borrel said:' "There is no doubt that the world that will emerge from this crisis will look very different from the one we know but we do not know what will these differences be. It will depend on what we are going to do now. So, let us use this opportunity to make sure that we shape a better version of the world tomorrow, a world where we reinforce multilateralism, not isolationism. A world that embraces the richness of our diversity and protects our citizens and our planet.

This crisis has reconfirmed that multilateral cooperation is the only path. And it is our collective responsibility to work together to this end for future generations. We owe it to the victims of the coronavirus." In an edition of Politique Etrangere, HRVP outlined some of the challenges emanating from the Pandemic:

- The pandemic will likely magnify existing geopolitical dynamics and test the strength of Europe's democratic systems.
- Europe needs a new kind of globalisation capable of striking a balance between the advantages of open markets and interdependence, and between the sovereignty and security of countries.
- Europe should work to prevent the US-China rivalry from having negative repercussions in certain regions of the world – particularly Africa.
- European leaders need to focus on meeting the immediate needs of healthcare systems, providing an income for people who cannot work, and giving businesses guarantee

- **Regional and Local aspects**

As Europe takes the battle against the pandemic to the Global Multilateral stage, the EU

was also reminded of the importance of its own DNA and construct in this battle. The importance of Europe, as a cohesive actor, the sum of its many parts at institutional, national, regional and local level was emphasised by Apostolos Tzizikostas, President of the European Committee of the regions,' in an address to mark Europe Day.

"What is clear is that the actual two-dimensional Europe — focused on Brussels and national capitals — has shown its limits and the EU fundamentally needs to change, giving local and regional governments the role of the true partner, they really are.

It is clear that centralized power cannot answer all the challenges from such an emergency. Saving lives and our economies is synonymous with supporting all local and regional authorities. The contribution of local and regional governments has been, is and will be key

to stop the pandemic, guarantee basic and health services, help protect jobs, support SMEs and prepare the ground for the economic and social recovery.

All new measures and the next long-term EU budget must take into account the experiences of regional and local authorities. They will be indispensable in rebuilding our economies, and in implementing the ecological transition and social innovation, so no places and no people are left behind.

The EU recovery fund must therefore help address the needs of Europe's local leaders. It must set up an EU Health Emergency Mechanism and create an EU Pandemic Coordination Center. The EU must offer loans and grants directly to help local and regional authorities to cover the tax income losses. It needs to accelerate the digitization of public services, to set up an aid program for SMEs, and to develop a plan to help rural areas."

- **Conclusion**

Europe has a unique opportunity to lead the world out of this crisis as a major power on the multilateral stage — but only if it remains united. United in its approach, united in its own many-roomed house, and united in its vision of the new world it wants to lead. The example Europe set of casting aside differences for the greater good over 70 years ago should be the guiding principle again now. A concerted, cohesive and cooperative Europe is the actor the world stage needs now as it faces this unprecedented challenge. Self-interest should have no place in this brave new world.

The Coronavirus Shutdown in the Republic of Cyprus

Mr. Costas Apostolides

- **Background**

The Coronavirus crisis has come at a difficult time for the Republic of Cyprus for several reasons. The first is that the Republic of Cyprus is not in complete control of its territory with respect to entry and departure of people, and second Cyprus is in the middle of a process of creating a National Health Service. The third reason is the large number of refugees in Cyprus mainly from Syria and the Middle East (5% of the population of the Government controlled area).

Since the Turkish military intervention in 1974, 32.6% of the Republic of Cyprus (ROC) has been held by the Republic of Turkey which established a subordinate local administration on the island. The 1973 population of this area was 162,041 Greek Cypriots, 72,495 Turkish Cypriots and others (mainly Maronite) 4,954. According to the 2019 UNSG Report on UNFICYP, there are now only 300 Greek Cypriots in the area, and 90 Maronites. The Greek Cypriots are in the panhandle of Cyprus known as the Karpass. This is an area that was affected by the Conronavirus. Buses driven by Turkish citizens who were found positive with the virus drove German tourists through the Karpass and many of the tourists caught the virus and the population of 15 villages was affected. Unfortunately there was no cooperation between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriots Communities, even though the authorities north of the Green Line placed the 15 villages under quarantine.

In addition the United Nations Peace Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) was established on the basis of UN Security Council Resolution 186 1964, with functions agreed by the Republic of Cyprus, with a mandate to keep the peace with special powers within the UNFICYP buffer zone (2.7% of the ROC). Furthermore, the 1960 Treaty of Establishment of the ROC provided for 2 military areas on Cyprus directly under the United Kingdom control known as Sovereign Based Areas (SBA's). These are the airbase of Akrotiri in the West of the Island, and the Dhekelia SBA in the East of Cyprus. The area taken by the Turkish military extends to the

boundary with the western SBA controlled by the British. The ROC figures for Coronavirus cases include 10 British soldiers from the 2 SBA's.There is also one case of a UNFICYP soldier.

For 28 years between 1974 and 2003 the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot Communities required permission to cross the Green Line which was greatly[1] restricted by Turkey (i.e. for Greek Cypriots). In April 2003 following mass movements by both communities for access across ceasefire lines, the two communities agreed to allow crossings across the Green Line (a line within the UN buffer zones with a length of 180 kilometers). The Green Line is the UN line of control within the buffer zone. In this way some limited access from one side to the other was achieved across the division of the island. Two check points for crossings were established by the Republic of Cyprus and Turkey, one in the capital Nicosia and another at the eastern UK SBA by the UK and Turkey.

An additional problem is the fact that refugees from Syria, the Middle East, Afghanistan and Africa are allowed by Turkey into northern Cyprus and are guided across illegal pathways and uncontrolled parts of the Green Line. This is a major factor that has led to the ROC having one of the highest levels of refugees in the European Union (5% of population south of Green Line). It also poses a risk for control of COVID-19.

- **Initial Lock Down Measures in Cyprus**

In this section I will give a brief and general overview of the initial measures adopted to control the spread of the pandemic in Cyprus. To leave one's home an SMS message had to be sent to government authorities for permission to do one movement per day stating the activity, identity card number of person, and postal code number. Failure to notify by SMS would entail a €150 on the spot fine, approval or rejection was provided within seconds of sending the SMS. All Schools from kindergarten to Universities have been closed and the public was encouraged to avoid overcrowding in the work place.

A ban on gatherings of more than 75 people, restricting restaurants, bars, cafes, religious services, cinemas and concerts was introduced and a general standard of 8 square meters per person was applied for all indoor activities. The result was that all cultural activities were

[1] The Greek and Turkish Communities were established in the 1960 ROC Constitution separate from Government.

restricted, and there was controversy with church services over the process of Holy Communion and the restriction to 10 persons in attendance at liturgy. As a result the Attorney General proceeded with 2 cases before the courts against Bishops who did not keep to the COVID-19 regulations. All private & public sector dentistry services were closed in view of international professional regulations, owing to close proximity of dentists to the mouth of patients when patients came in for treatment, with the high risk of passing on the Corona virus.

After 15th March 2020, all incoming travelers were obliged to self-isolate under phone supervision. Travelers arriving from 16th March needed a certificate that they were free of the corona virus, before they could board the plane to come to Cyprus. Unfortunately the UK and other countries did not issue corona virus free certificates. As a result it was decided that travelers should get written confirmation from Cyprus Embassies and overseas offices then issued certificates. Admission to Cyprus was only allowed for citizens and legal residents. Eventually passengers were allowed to disembark but were sent to quarantine (for 14 days). The first batch of travelers sent to quarantine were transported to the Troodos to stay in what is normally summer accommodation, without proper facilities for winter or spring heating or blankets when the temperatures are low and there was still snow in the mountains. This was corrected by placing the travelers (mainly Cypriot students, British residents in Cyprus, and off season tourists) in mountain hotels which do not have many visitors off season. After 21st March Hotels were closed and, passenger flights were banned, except for those repatriating citizens stuck in other countries (mainly 15,000 students).

The Government of the Republic of Cyprus Announced on 29th April 2020 that the Lock Down and the restrictions on movement and employment sectors will be gradually lifted in two phases, depending on the Committee of Experts assessment of the situation, and confirmation that the situation regarding the Corona Virus and public discipline has been maintained, and progress was continuing. In the Economic Sector, construction and other affiliated industries, retail shops, department stores and traditional open air markets are set to open as long as they apply protocols of Ministry of Health. Furthermore, tourist and travel Companies are to prepare for the resumption of flights.

The Entire Public Sector is to reopen, but operating hours are to be set by each Ministry and must strictly apply the protocols established by the Ministry of Health. Public officials with children under 15 have the option to work at home and are entitled to vacation leave or extraordinary sick leave until schools open again. Staff that are over 65 years or have health problems may have the option to work on line from their homes. The Public and Private Health Sector, on adoption of Ministry of Health protocols, may open for surgical operations, to take in patients and arrange to see patients.

- **Lessons From Covid-19 Lock Down in Cyprus**

The key to any policy relating to the Corona-virus crisis has been testing to confirm whether someone has the virus, or is a carrier but with none of the expected symptoms of the disease. If someone is confirmed as a carrier a policy of 14 days quarantine was imposed to see whether the disease was still present in them or that the patient had recovered and was no longer a carrier. However, immediately on confirmation that someone was a carrier or suffered from the disease, a specialist team of trackers obtained information of the person's movements and contacts. In Cyprus this was successful in isolating those who may be at risk so as not to spread the virus to others.

After the relaxation of lock down restrictions, procedures were implemented to enforce control of the epidemic in schools, shops, building sites, offices, and hairdressers and other retail outlets. On the whole the businesses in question kept to the regulations regarding spacing, cleanliness etc. set by the Ministry of Health. Very few establishments were reported by the police for ignoring the regulations. Overall effectiveness of restrictions and the effect of the relaxation are evaluated by a committee of experts, but the number of virus cases who recover are not calculated, and the dead are not subtracted. This is necessary to do in order to understand the magnitude of the problem being faced at any one time.

There is a general need for organizational changes in the health provision services, educational services, cleaning services and warehouse organization and procedures. During the shutdown the hospital staff (especially the nurses and cleaners and others) complained that they were not provided with the necessary protective masks, gloves and clothes. TV footage showed cleaners improvising with plastic rubbish bags tied over their shoes. The

Minister on TV said these complaints are not justified because the ministry had had millions of masks, gloves etc. flown 5 times from China. He stated “what am I expected to do go down and talk to all the warehouse keepers?” He was eventually proved wrong because while the protective clothing had arrived, the arrangements for distribution to the staff were incomplete, and the staff were not all equipped. Tests for the corona virus done on 20,000 employees in various sectors found that health workers had the highest proportion of staff having caught the corona virus (at 19%).

- **Public Sector Health Services in Cyprus**

There are 2 completely separate public health services in Cyprus, that of the Republic of Cyprus south of the Green Line, and a Turkish Cypriot public health service north of the Green Line that is subordinate to Turkey. In the area under the control of the Republic of Cyprus there are three different health authorities, because the health sector has been going through a period of restructuring with the aim of setting up a National Health Service (under the name of a General Health Service). This health reorganization has been held up by the Coronavirus crisis and is incomplete.

The Ministry of Health has overall responsibility, but has to work through the Boards of Management of the other institutions, that is the newly formed General Health Service (a national health service financed by its own tax system) which has recently established a personal doctor service where most doctors, both in private practice and under the Ministry of Health, have joined. Most of the population has signed up with a GHS listed doctors.

The state hospitals were due to join the General Health Service on 1st June 2020 but are still under the Ministry of Health, and a separate public health body for state hospitals was established until the reorganization is complete. In addition the planned incorporation of private hospitals into the General Health System has also been delayed by the corona virus crisis. After 19th March all doctors private or public were placed under the Ministry of Health in order to coordinate actions arising from the Coronavirus crisis.

From the beginning of the Coronavirus health crisis the Government established a Committee of Experts (epidemiological and health experts) to monitor developments in the world and EU, and analyze statistics relating to Cyprus, and advise the government on Covid-19 policy.

- **Policy recommendations in restructuring of health services in Cyprus**

It is clear that the Government must create high ranking management positions for technically qualified persons (not administrators). Managers should be technically qualified and be able to computerize all health related data to provide regular reports to the relevant Directors and Minister. The cleaning procedures of hospitals, including floors, offices, rooms, wards, toilets, baths etc. must be carried out with the appropriate chemicals and equipment. Managers and staff must be provided with training from the beginning in cleaning protocols. Furthermore, management must establish clothing and equipment protocols including shoes, arrangements for changing clothes and cupboards for safe keeping for each staff member. The management must ensure that these procedures are carried out regularly and effectively.

As stated above Coronavirus cases should not be allowed in the hospitals and should be kept in prefabricated hospitals or other buildings close to the hospital but not in the hospital itself. For instance, Pafos Hospital was closed for long periods because it was also used for Coronavirus cases. Noteworthy is that the high rate of corona virus cases among hospital staff and health workers in general leads to staffing problems in hospitals. The fear of contagion also tends to cause low staff attendance rates. Lastly, one aspect that was ignored during the corona virus outbreak was the involvement of Cyprus industry to produce the requirements for health staff, or the pharmaceutical companies which are the lead exporters in Cyprus.

Small States as COVID-19 Persists. Reflections on Malta.

Mr. Thomas Attard

- **Introduction**

COVID-19 or Coronavirus has impacted countries all across the world, large or small, coastal or landlocked, developing or developed in an unprecedented way. There are 7 million reported cases globally and over 400,000 deaths and counting. Beyond the fatal health crisis, a pandemic also brings with it negative social, economic, and political consequences. A pandemic could therefore be a potential catalyst that weakens many societies, political systems and economies simultaneously (Davies, 2008).

This paper offers some initial reflections on how the pandemic impacts small states by considering two levels of analysis. The state level of analysis will focus on how small states have coped with the pandemic by looking at the human cost of the crisis on small states through measurable criteria, mainly the number of tests that were carried out, and the number of infections and deaths registered. The analysis will also outline the consequences of the Coronavirus pandemic on the economy of small states. The international level of analysis will look at the role of multilateral diplomacy for small states in the time of the Coronavirus pandemic and will examine the utility of multilateralism to small states in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The central thesis framing this part of the paper will argue that the declining relevance of the international rules-based order could potentially exacerbate the situation for small states. Malta, the smallest state in the European Union (EU) with a population of 0.49 million, will serve as a case study grounding this paper.

- **The concept of small states**

The literature concerning small states is extensive and diverse. The most common point of agreement distilled from this body of literature is the absence of a universally accepted definition of what the concept of small states translates to (Amstrup, 1976). Small states are a diverse group of actors in the international system with considerable variations in size, population, economy, and resource endowment. This makes it very difficult to adopt a well-organized and consistent theory for all small states.

The question of definition of small states is sometimes further complicated due to the various terms different authors use to refer to small states. Terms such as ‘small nations’, ‘micro-states’ and ‘weak states’ often refer to the same type of actor in international relations (Pace, 2009). The concept of small states is generally employed to identify a state’s measure of power in the international system of states. As Stephen Calleya notes, the terms small states and small powers are often used interchangeably (Calleya, 2016). In this sense, the concept is better understood as making part of a set of conceptual definitions that

indicate a state's power in the international system. Such a family of definitions also includes middle powers, great powers, and superpowers.

A central element that characterizes the field of small states in international relations is the accentuation on the variable of size (Thorhallsson, 2018). This variable is used to provide a clear-cut quantifiable measure that outlines a country's size in relation to other countries. Absolute size based on demographic, geographical or economic factors constitute the variables of a quantitative definition of small states. This type of definition seeks to focus attention on the vulnerabilities which in one form of another are the biproduct of smallness. Andrea O'Suilleabhain cites the Forum of Small States' (FOSS) population threshold of 10 million people for a state to be eligible to join this informal network at the UN. The World Bank and the Commonwealth define small states as those nations that do not exceed the threshold of a population of 1.5 million (Súilleabháin, 2014).

The report 'Small States: Meeting Challenges in the Global Economy' by the Commonwealth, provides a comprehensive list of factors that add to the size related challenges of small states. Among other factors, It illustrates for instance the element of remoteness and insularity of some small states. (Commonwealth and World Bank, 2000). Noteworthy is that the report mentions small states' limitations in institutional capacity. In a reference to this report, Calleya places significant emphasis on the effects that limited institutional capacity produces on a small state's Foreign Service and effective participation in international affairs (Calleya, 2016). Diana Panke shares the same concern, while emphasising the negotiating deficit small states contend with in international negotiations settings. Due to restricted financial resources, understaffed small states' ministries are more likely to contend with capacity constraints when it comes to formulating and executing the country's foreign policy (Panke, 2012).

For the purposes of this paper, the concept of small states refers to those countries in the international system with a population of 1.5 million or less. Small states are inevitably vulnerable actors in the international system with an inherent power deficit. All states, big or small, must contend with certain situations which puts them in a vulnerable position. Although the term vulnerability in this way is applicable to all forms of actors in the international system, it is inherently applicable to small states (Baldacchino, 2016). The insufficient resource endowment of small states causes a power disparity in relation to stronger and larger states. Despite their inherent vulnerability, all options for small states are not zero. History shows us several instances where small states managed to withstand pressure from larger actors. It is therefore possible for small states to devise resilience strategies that allow them to cope with changes and disruption that occur in the international system (Briguglio et al., 2008).

- **Small states and Covid-19. The case of Malta.**

Malta is an island state located in the centre of the Mediterranean and in the southern-most part of the European continent. Malta is the smallest member of the EU in population terms. It hosts a population of 475,700 people on a surface area of 315km^2 (National Statistics Office Malta, 2019)¨The Maltese authorities reported the first confirmed case of Coronavirus in March of 2020 and at the time of writing (June 2020), 650 people have tested positive with few patients requiring intensive treatment. In total, Malta registered 9 deaths from COVID-19 (Reuters, 2020). While the usual demand for routine healthcare services remains, COVID-19 places a significantly greater burden on Malta and other small states that are hit by the pandemic. The Maltese government has responded rapidly to the Coronavirus outbreak, by swiftly mobilizing the healthcare system and implementing measures aimed at containing the spread of the disease, including the closure of borders, social distancing and closure of various sectors including schools, sports centres, non-essential shops and services as well as the prohibition of all mass gatherings (Debono and Sansone, 2020).

A report published by Investment Migration Insider measures the quality of countries' COVID-19 response performance until April, 2020 based on the number of positive cases and number of deaths in relation to the rate of testing per million (Nesheim, 2020). Malta's response performance will be compared with the figures that show the COVID-19 response performance in Italy, Malta's closest neighbour, with a population of 60 million. According to the report, Malta had 1,006 cases of infection per million citizens. This is dwarfed by Italy's 3,043 COVID-19 cases per million. The report shows that Malta's death rate among those infected stands at 0.01% whereas Italy registered a 1.78% death rate among those infected. It is worth noting that Malta's smaller population has allowed it to test a greater percentage of their population and has conducted 59,220 tests per million citizens while Italy was only able to carry out 23,985 tests per million citizens.

Small size can thus be an advantage when it comes to controlling and managing the spread of a pandemic. Indeed, Malta ranked fourth globally for testing a great share of the population (Nesheim, 2020), an outstanding achievement for Malta, especially when one considers that the vastness of testing has been touted by the World Health Organization (WHO) as an essential measure to assess the preparedness and capacity of a country's healthcare response to the pandemic (World Health Organization, 2020). Moreover, in March 2020, the WHO's Regional Director for Europe, Hans Kluge, wrote that despite its size, "Malta is on the right track and an example to follow"(Cocks, 2020). This indicates that despite their size, small states need not suffer disproportionally in a pandemic, on the contrary, the COVID-19 response performance of small states can be more effective in controlling the spread of a pandemic than larger states.

While the preliminary assessment of the human cost of the COVID-19 pandmeic on small states is encouraging, a look at the economic consequences on small states suggests that they will be severely hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. Small states are limited in their

productive capacities and have a deficit in economies of scale. Their trade openness makes them inherently vulnerable to external economic shocks (Briguglio et al., 2008) as they depend on large countries as their main trading partners, both in terms of import - due to insufficient resource endowment - and in terms of exports due to the small size of their domestic market (Briguglio, 2016). In addition, small states generally depend on a narrow range of exports and this adds to their vulnerability and exposure to external shocks. This dependency increases their sensitivity to dysfunction and disruption incurred in other economies.

Malta's economy will be seriously hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. As a small open economy, Malta's prospects are especially vulnerable to international economic uncertainties. Its' real GDP growth rate in 2018 and 2019 was 7.3% and 4.4% respectively (European Commission, 2020). This economic upswing is expected to turn negative in 2020 as a consequence of the pandemic. Although Malta's economic growth was already decelerating before the onset of the COVID-19 outbreak, the island's leading industries, particularly tourism and financial services, contributed significantly to GDP growth (Ernst and Young, 2018). Small states that have a strong tourism industry as the main driver of the economy will sustain a sharp decline in this sector. The tourism industry is among the sectors that today forms the basis of the Maltese economy. Due to closure of the country's borders, Malta registered a sharp decline in this sector of the economy, impacting hotels and their employees, transport providers, the food and beverage sector and manufacturers amongst many others (European Commission, 2020).

In the commercial sector, the necessary restrictions on the movement of Maltese citizens have led to a sharp decline in the demand for goods and services. Several businesses have had to close their operations while others could only afford to retain minimal staff. Employment in Malta is set to decline in 2020, leading to an increase in the unemployment rate from 3.4% to 5.5% in 2020 (Central Bank of Malta, 2020). This means that Malta will likely experience a very high demand on its National Insurance and Social Security Systems. When the above economic factors are placed into reality, the exigencies surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic has and will continue to require Malta and other small states to increase the level of public spending in order to cushion the economic impact produced by the pandemic. In June, the Maltese government has announced a €900 million (7% of GDP) package to help the economy recover from the impacts of the pandemic.

This brief analysis demonstrates that when pandemics hit, small states need not suffer disproportionally. Malta's handling of the COVID-19 crisis demonstrates that despite their size, small states can effectively manage and control the spread of a pandemic. It was also argued that due to their inherent vulnerability to external economic shocks, small states will be negatively impacted by the crisis in fiscal terms. It is however important to state that in trying to formulate preliminary reflections on small states and the Coronavirus pandemic, one must not focus too heavily on domestic responses at the expense of international and

regional dynamics. While the implementation of government responses certainly have implications on the extent to which a small state's exit strategy from the pandemic is effective, the structural properties of the international system are crucial when it comes to assessing the future prospects for small states coming out of the pandemic.

- **Small states in the international system**

In *Man, the State, and War*, Kenneth Waltz defines the world of international relations in terms of anarchy. In the absence of a central international authority or a world government, all states must fend for themselves against threats to their security, including the Coronavirus (Waltz, 1959). Thucydides' account of the Melian dialogue exhibits arguably the clearest example of the consequences of a self-help system on small states (Thucydides, 1959). This diplomatic exchange is of great value to the study of small states, as it is an early description of how inherent powerlessness causes small states to be perceived as weak actors in the international system. It sheds light on the idea that powerful states in the international system pursue their interests while the small and vulnerable states are simply left to suffer what they must.

Contrary to Waltz's views, Robert Keohane and Joe Nye argue that certain threats in the international system cannot be resolved by states on their own and therefore require a cooperative and multilateral solution (Keohane and Nye, 2001). Multilateralism is essentially cooperation amongst three or more countries and it entails states getting together and adopting cooperative solutions to transnational challenges (Gerard Ruggie, 1993) Pandemics are a transnational security threat because disease outbreaks do not respect international borders. Similarly, the looming threat of climate change and the problem of irregular migration are other examples of transnational security challenges that essentially require coordinated multilateral action.

Indeed, participation in multilateral organizations is a widely recognized foreign policy strategy adopted by small states to compensate for their inherent vulnerability. An essential benefit of multilateral organisations to small states is the universal recognition of their sovereignty, regardless of their size (Steinsson and Thorhallsson, 2017). This is better exemplified by international organizations like the UN, which provide each of their member states with a single vote in the General Assembly. International organisations that champion the principle of equal states place small states on an equal footing with their larger counterparts. Roderick Pace argues that multilateral organisations provide small states the unique opportunity to pursue their interests further and play an active role in the formation of the international environment (Pace 1999). For instance, the Maltese Ambassador Arvid Pardo played a central role in formulating the conceptual framework underpinning the 'common heritage of mankind principle' which was eventually incorporated into the UN Law of the Sea Convention in 1982.

- **Multilateralism in practice**

When it comes to navigating the Coronavirus pandemic, for a country like Malta and many other small states, multilateralism is not an option but a crucial necessity. Due to limitations in resource endowment, small states have no recourse to unilateralism. This part of the paper will examine the role of multilateralism for small states by looking at how information sharing, capacity building and international cooperation allow small states to compensate for their size related challenges when it comes to dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Soon after its independence in 1964, Malta became a member of the UN and was accepted as a member of WHO in 1965. Malta has since been a very active member of the Organization and it has hosted several technical meetings and two Regional Committees (Azzopardi-Muscat et al., 2016). Membership in WHO helps small countries like Malta by providing them access to critical information and helping them build their capacity to develop essential policies for health promotion and disease prevention (WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2016). WHO technical experts for instance coordinated high-level policy dialogues with Maltese government ministers in 2014 and supported the drafting and launching of a national health systems strategy (WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2016). In recognition that many small countries encounter specific challenges in the governance of their health systems, small states under the auspices of the WHO European Region have established a Small Countries Health Information Network (SCHIN) to enable small states to strengthen their health information systems by sharing experiences and good practices. Malta hosted the first meeting of SCHIN during March 2015 (Azzopardi-Muscat et al., 2016). This means that cooperation with the WHO helps Malta and other small states to share information and increase capacity to advance policies that bolster their national health systems.

In addition to capacity building and information sharing, cooperation through regional governing bodies, such as the European Union, allows Malta and other small states to compensate for their size related challenges. The collective sum of the member states' economies makes the EU a global trading power which opens opportunities for small states to expand their economies further by providing them access to the EU's single market (Thorhallsson, 2006). To a large extent, the EU is essentially a peace project, with the mission to prevent an escalation of armed conflict in Europe by promoting cooperation between the member states. It is a supporter of multilateralism and actively encourages international cooperation (European Commission, 2019) and it attempts to mitigate international anarchy by promoting the international rule of law. EU membership increases the security of its small members because small states do not have the necessary means to combat the spread of the virus in isolation. Hence why small states in the European Union "have a triple interest in strengthening the process of European integration" (Pace, 2009)

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the EU is especially relevant for its small member states. To secure economic continuity, the EU coordinated with its member states to establish priority lanes for transport of essential goods and services (Europa.eu, 2020). This measure provides small states a lifeline that maintains a flow of essential goods and services. The EU coordinated the conversion of production lines to increase the quantities of medical equipment and it is working to set up a common European reserve of medical equipment by stockpiling masks and ventilators (European Commission, 2020). Besides providing medical equipment to those member states that are hit hard by the crisis, the EU has mobilized funding for research programmes to help identify a vaccine against the COVID-19 virus (European Commission, 2020). The overall impression one obtains from this assessment is that EU membership provides the small member states access to a Europe wide cooperative effort that goes far beyond what small states can obtain in isolation.

- **Multilateralism in crisis**

A review of the international system highlights the tremendous challenges the spirit of multilateralism and interdependence are facing in the international system. Recent trends suggest that nations are becoming increasingly concerned with their national interest at the expense of considerations concerning the wider international interest. The formal withdrawal of the US from the Iran Nuclear Deal and the Paris Accord on climate change are examples indicating that the multilateral system is facing strains and challenges. In addition, increased competition and rivalry between the United States (US) and China signals an alarming escalation of the intensity with which larger actors in the international arena conduct their relations. More recently, President of the US Donald Trump announced that the US will terminate its relationship with WHO. Of all the countries, the US is by far the largest WHO donor (BBC, 2020).

In Europe, the UK's withdrawal from the EU and a rising tide of far-right nationalism signal the weakening of the EU's multilateral system. More recently, a group of nine EU Member states, namely Italy, Spain, France, Belgium, Luxembourg, Portugal, Greece, Slovenia and Ireland, have put forward the proposal during a virtual Council meeting to introduce Eurobonds (or Corona Bonds) with the intention to share the fiscal burden of the COVID-19 crisis (The Guardian, 2020). The provision of Eurobonds would allow member states to borrow at low interest rates to finance economic, social and health expenditure. However, the idea of mutualisation of debt emerged as a much-disputed issue which has caused a stepping up of divisive rhetoric and increased friction between the EU's member states. According to a survey of 1000 Italians conducted in April 2020, 42% of respondents said they would vote to leave the EU, up from 26% in November 2018 (Financial Times, 2020).

Various analysts have made snap assessments, indicating that this crisis is a strong marker signaling the collapse of multilateralism (The Economist, 2020). An increase in international

competition and divisive rhetoric could potentially weaken the relevance of global and regional institutions. It is becoming increasingly clear that the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic has caused the multilateral system its greatest challenge since its inception at the end of the Second World War. The retreat of the US from global institutions, the chief architect of the multilateral system, requires other countries to fill in the void and take more of the work themselves. France and Germany have taken action by launching an alliance for multilateralism (Alliance for Multilateralism, 2019), an initiative that aims to protect and reform the system created seventy-five years ago in San Francisco as enshrined in the charter of the United Nations. Although the alliance for multilateralism is still in its infancy, it promotes the idea that the middle and small powers sometimes must work together to defend the international order.

The extent to which small states appreciate this reality is crucial as the continued relevance of multilateralism for small states, especially in a time of crisis, is a crucial necessity. The declining relevance of multilateralism could therefore exacerbate the situation that small states are in today as they will find it very difficult to respond to the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic without international cooperation. In the face of this threat to the multilateral system, small states must step forward and double down on their efforts to promote and support the rules-based international system.

- **Conclusion**

This paper offered some initial reflections on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on small states. It provided a state level and international level of analysis of Malta's response to the outbreak. The analysis first shed light on the human cost of the crisis by examining the amount of reported cases and the registered COVID-19 related deaths in Malta. These figures were then compared with Italy's response performance. Malta's case suggested that small size can be an advantage when it comes to controlling and managing the spread of a pandemic. Secondly, the consequences of the Coronavirus pandemic on the Maltese economy were assessed. It was observed that although Malta's economy managed to stay afloat despite the shock impact caused by the Coronavirus pandemic, it is expected that it will take a negative turn due to small states' inherent vulnerability to international uncertainties.

The paper then shifted its analytical lens to the international level by examining the role of multilateral diplomacy on small states in the time of the Covid-19 pandemic. The paper examined how through its relationship with the WHO and EU respectively, Malta benefits from information sharing, capacity building measures and cooperation between states. It was observed that before the onset of the pandemic, the multilateral system was in crisis. The decreasing relevance of multilateralism could potentially exacerbate the situation that small states are in today.

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The post-Coronavirus world. A future research agenda in a dynamic multi-level mode

Professor Ludger Kühnhardt

- **The end of the two cultures**

The post-corona world is a different world, yet still the same. The 2020 Coronavirus pandemic must be viewed as an historical world turning point of its own kind.[1] The more or less simultaneous new disease worldwide broke out on humanity like a biblical visitation. The Coronavirus intervened in the multitude of world affairs and human lives. The Coronavirus pandemic has shaken the lives of many and the coexistence of everyone like few events before. The pandemic did not follow on from an ongoing global conflict. The pandemic was not the event everyone was waiting for after everyone had already been through a lot of other things. It overran humanity unprepared and spread around the earth at the speed of the rotation of the earth. The Coronavirus pandemic became a global media event that opened a new era in world history.

The Coronavirus pandemic has pressed the world together and at the same time it has torn it apart. Practically every country is affected. People in all parts of the world - except for researchers in Antarctica or in space - were infected, died, were scared. The health shocks were instantly overlaid by economic and social consequences. The long-term details of political and cultural consequences remain unpredictable. Without being a human-made event, the pandemic became a world event. One should be economical with superlatives. But since the images from space in the 1960s, which let us humans discover the world as a small blue planet, mankind has not seen such a powerful picture of our unity, but at the same time of our collective vulnerability.

The importance of the COVID-19 pandemic, its causes and its effects will occupy academic research for a long time. The academic classification of the Coronavirus pandemic will only succeed through transdisciplinary networks of sciences. Research on this topic will line up like new epidemic waves in the coming years. One hype will replace the other, just as one

[1] See: Michael Corsten/Michael Gehler/Marianne Kneuer (eds.), Welthistorische Zäsuren. 1989-2001-2011, Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 2016.

crisis report chased the next in the crisis itself. The human brain is a multi-level system and so is the world in which we live. Therefore, we can separate different levels, just as the doctor has to dissect precisely if he wants to diagnose the patient in all its complexity and, even more, treat it well. To understand where the post-corona world could head, this ability to dissect is a great blessing. Because it helps to understand what we only see in parts. Even after the death of people, dissection is carried out during post-mortems. However, to assume that the post-corona world would be a post-globalization world, a world in which only a skeleton would remain of the globalization of the previous decades, would be as hasty as the news of Mark Twain's death in the newspapers at the time. When in doubt, the good old saying also applies here: Those who are said to be dead live longer. The globalized world will continue. But it will be different, more realistic and more serious. The post-corona world will have to learn how to set new priorities.

Historian Michael Gehler is to be thanked for his fresh and inspiring contributions to the development of scientific terms. Already in 2001 he coined the term "contemporary history in a dynamic multi-level system".[2] The academic processing of the Coronavirus pandemic will prove the accuracy of this perspective. Beyond the social sciences, the dynamics of the task and the inevitable need to cover several levels of analysis will have to include natural sciences. The Coronavirus pandemic is a golden opportunity to overcome the scientific divisions of the two cultures that C.P. Snow, with his powerful 1959 study, seemed to have irreconcilably opened for all time.[3] Neither natural sciences nor social sciences alone can provide the necessary and comprehensive insights mankind needs to learn from the 2020 Coronavirus pandemic. By all standards, the pandemic refutes the arguments in favor of a separation of the sciences, which Snow regarded as inevitable and irrevocable. Any scientific approach that deviates from the unity of the sciences is responding incorrectly to the COVID-19 pandemic. For now, at least ten levels can be identified on which transdisciplinary work in the post-corona-world has to take place.

[2] Michael Gehler, Zeitgeschichte im dynamischen Mehrebenensystem. Zwischen Regionalisierung, Nationalstaat, Europäisierung, internationaler Arena und Globalisierung, Bochum: Winkler, 2001.

[3] C.P. Snow, The Two Cultures, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959.

- **Ten levels**

Level 1: The value and unworthiness of the media snapshot.

With the COVID-19 pandemic, humankind came to understand itself as a single unit through mass media for the first time since the moon landing in 1969. The moon landing could have taken place without television. But only with television did Neil Armstrong's sentence become a powerful icon: a small step for a man, but a big step for humanity. The Coronavirus has fueled the “Armstrong paradigm” like nothing before and far more vigorously than in 1969: a small event for many, but a big event for humanity. Every minute of the day, Internet and TV stations brought every conceivable message to mankind's home office and quarantine locations. While pictures of the moon were uplifting, the news about the Coronavirus made people fearful or depressed. The Coronavirus pandemic was a slow-motion global crisis. The processing of this phenomenon provides material for many reconstructions and theories - about the events themselves and their classification as a subject of a media-driven crisis. Counterfactual models would be stimulating, as if in a variation of the premise of the philosopher John Rawls, who viewed the “veil of ignorance” as the decisive condition for a justice-driven human society.[4] What, if the world had not known about the corona virus before it disappeared or could be defeated? How would the relationship between unnecessary suffering and unavoidable suffering have been under conditions of a “veil of ignorance”? The question can only be asked counterfactually and at best simulated, for example with the help of average mortality tables and the number of cases[5]. Socio-psychologically oriented media research as well as clinical psychology will have to deal with the effects of continuous global reporting and social media on the emergence, reaffirmation and globalization of world fear and its manifestations in every single person. It will not be enough to reduce the media question to comparative studies about the ways in which open and autocratically governed societies have reacted with their usual reflexes. Nor will it be sufficient to use the dictum of transparency as the top reference point, which seems to be a matter of basic foodstuff for a globally active, open-minded world media

[4] John Rawls, A Theory of Justice, Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971.

[5] According to the Federal Statistics Bureau, in 2019 Germany experienced 945,900 deaths. Between two-thousand and two-thousand-five-hundred people older than sixty-five years of age die on an average day in Germany. Online at:https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Bevoelkerung/Sterbefaelle-Lebenserwartung/_inhalt.html.

society. Even if it is inconvenient and unpleasant, a sober question has to be discussed: Were media part of the solution or were they also part of the problem? Did the media of the world help mankind and its decision-makers to alleviate the profound moral dilemmas present in the crisis or did they only exacerbate them?

Level 2: Health as a priority to cope with unfinished globalization

Globalization, so far, was a technologically induced and largely economic process. An unprecedented culture of political "Summits" developed. It raised legitimate questions about the relationship between effort and profit, yet it mushroomed. In the absence of mechanisms for global rule enforcement, non-binding declarations of intent, recommendations and best practice advice usually dominate when world conferences present their decisions. The Coronavirus pandemic has reversed the vector. Everyone's health was suddenly at stake. Individual fear became a collective driver like never before, all over the world and almost simultaneously. Governments worldwide instantly called for the contribution of every human being to safe human lives and regain control of the crisis, which affected everyone but required local responses.

Coronavirus became a sovereign, a legislator, a driver for the implementation of human crisis responses. A virus drove the executive bodies of this earth, produced emergency decrees and longer-term agendas, parliamentary resolutions and profound measures affecting the everyday life and freedom of humankind. This time, decision and state of emergency, to recall Carl Schmitt's language, did not come from the reservoir of political will and human words.[6] They came from nature, which is stronger than any individual. Nature was hunting down the vulnerable human society. The collective fear of incurable illness and excruciating death, generated quarantine, curfews and emergency orders instantly and in a way that was previously thought to be possible only under conditions of civil war or a coup d'état. A ubiquitous fear justified restrictions on freedom for the majority of mankind in the name of collective health threats. This singular phenomenon was based on the unconditional will to protect the lives of the infected and the not yet infected. Instructions how to wash

[6] Carl Schmitt, Political Theology. Four chapters on the concept of sovereignty, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005 (original German edition 1922).

one's hands replaced permanent advertisement for consumer products. Will the exception global education program on basic hygiene measure prevail? Will the states of the world be ready to upgrade the establishment of resilient health care systems in all countries as their future Summit priority? Will they learn and accept what is to be done to avoid that health crisis lead to failed states? Will the salaries of the health personnel be increased, in accordance with the value of their work for human survival? Without more intensive global cooperation and a thorough transfer of resources these questions cannot be answered.

Psychology, moral-philosophy and theology will have to address the moral dilemmas for which there was hardly any time of reflection at the apex of the crisis itself. Are there limits to the individual protection of life if the collective price, not only but also in terms of individual and public health, could be as high or even higher than the price to protect factual and presumed victims of a new disease with unknown effects. What is the value of related spheres of life, especially the economy, when weighed upon the limitations and infringements of basic human freedom in the name of protection of life and public security? Massive moral conflicts of aims have become evident. With hindsight knowledge, these questions have to be addressed in a sober manner and without any blame games about decision-making in the midst of the crisis.

Level 3: The economic and monetary consequences.

It quickly became clear that the more global health problems arise, the greater is the economic and social price. One could speak of a reverse utilitarianism generated by the Coronavirus pandemic. According to utilitarianism, the greatest happiness arises from the greatest number of happy people.[7] The COVID-19 pandemic suddenly provided mankind with a new and reverse definition of how to look at the world: the greatest misfortune is produced by the sum of the possible misfortunes of all. Man cannot escape this spiral through inclusion, but only through exclusion. Only those who have gone through the illness and have recovered are freed from the misfortune that it can bring. Dealing with this paradox led to the forceful overriding of the laws of rational economics. The consequences of lock down and interrupted production, mobility and supply chains disrupted the mechanism of the market, which is based on supply and demand. Economic crises usually

[7] See: John Stuart Mill, Utilitarianism, first edition 1863.

arise when demand decreases. The corona pandemic reversed cause and effect: The prescribed reduction in supply enforced a stop in demand while people needed to continue with their daily lives and expenditures.

The OECD calculated that a month of economic freeze would mean a two percent loss in each country's gross domestic product. Other economic calculations and models varied. The spectrum of negative scenarios soon ranged from losses in gross national product, jobs and wealth to between two and twenty percent per country. Accurate empirical studies will be useful to understand how such forecasts and, more importantly, the factual circumstances eventually will affect countries of different levels of development. The fact that people themselves have deliberately brought about reductions in demand for production, goods and services, and massive mobility suspensions out of fear of the collapse of health systems, in order to minimize the greatest misfortune to the greatest possible number, must raise multiple questions regarding the economic rationality of crisis reactions and subsequent behavior.

The immediate question was whether, when and with what effects the deliberately self-induced shrinkage of the gross national product could be absorbed and, possibly, reversed, globally and on the level of each country and region? In-depth questions require professional economic expertise. Currency policy issues and questions regarding the economic and regulatory consequences are touched on a massive scale. Well-known topics were soon discussed in a new light in the political sphere (e.g. communitarization of European debts, debt relief for the poorest countries on earth and the particularly shaken emerging countries). But criticism was also quickly articulated about the immediate crisis winners in the sphere of financial and currency markets. Economic and other social sciences would have to deal with conceptual and theoretical questions. The simple basic questions were evident: Who would end up paying for the trillion-dollar aid packages that governments put together at lightning speed to slow down an even worse and faster crash in economic life? Who would protect the weakest and poorest of mankind and who would help strongly divided societies to avoid civil war and breakdown?

Fundamental systemic questions included ideological potential: How and with what consequences has the relationship between market instruments and state-based

intervention, protection and livelihood options been changed? What would be the consequences of the inevitable devaluation of money, in which places on earth and for which people? Would nationalization of key industries in market economies follow? Stronger states and weaker markets? Would this strengthen state interventionist, state capitalist models of order? Or, conversely, would the markets in the long run be able to push the states back to their sovereign duties so that revitalized market mechanisms can overcome the crisis as satisfactorily as possible? The question as to which economic and political system would best be suited to deal with the post-corona-world was raised again loud and strong, in different sharpness at different places. Social sciences were advised to provide arguments helpful in balancing conflicting aims. Their mandate is to speak against all sorts of unavoidable ideological battles.

A fundamental regulatory paradigm has been confirmed worldwide: Shrinking economic power leads to all the conceivable ingredients for a deficient economy, which in turn exacerbates the economic problem and increases social tension. The Coronavirus pandemic became a stress test for the market economy. But were state interventionist and state capitalist economic models really better off in the end? Comparative research on the economic and monetary implications of the Coronavirus pandemic would have no shortage of orders in the long run. The academic tasks will include not only examining the immediate and long-term consequences of the economic lock down. Research will also have to deal with the intensity of exit strategies of slowing demand, closure measures and lock downs that were chosen very differently around the world. Lessons had to be learned about sophisticated and differentiated criteria how to lock down on human freedom and how to overcome emergency rules again. The post-corona world requires comprehensive global criteria for emergency planning which facilitate contingent local actions.

Level 4: The non-globalized life-styles and ideas about the future.

The fear of poor economic conditions and the experience of restrictions on fundamental freedoms, which were introduced so naturally all of a sudden in liberal and autocratic societies alike, will remain the subject of studies on the post-corona world for a long time. Life itself suddenly raised well-known research questions to a whole new dimension: How long would people accept their fate in situations of being locked up? Emotional outbursts

already in the first stage of the corona crisis suggested rapid consequences. Resentment, worry and fear, hoarding, business looting, riots, police counter-measures, breakouts from prisons and refugee camps, outbreaks of violence and civil war scenarios - all of this was suddenly present and will generate both empirical and theoretical follow-up research. The basic question is: How does a person deal with ubiquitous fear, which is rampant as a collective probability? Where are the limits of human resilience in the face of fear, isolation and uncertainty? Why was the psychological effect of the Coronavirus pandemic already so strong at the very beginning of a relatively small spread of the virus compared to previous influenza waves or heat waves with tens of thousands of deaths, which never became a world event and were forgotten a short time later? Psychological and clinical research on fear and anxiety in all its shades will be in demand for a long time. It will need to also address political science issues regarding the reaction of different political systems and governance regimes to the crisis without resorting to stereotypical academic repetitions of prejudices and pre-conceived assumptions.

Research will also include questions that arise for the human disposition of possible changes in lifestyle. Was the anecdotal belief substantial according to which younger people are more willing to accept a simpler life style and more permanently satisfied with a decelerated and easier social life compared with the generation of their parents? Did they really see the effects of the crisis as beneficial to live more mindfully and with less consumption? Which youth was looked at when such thesis was being discussed? Youth in affluent societies surely differs from young people in poor and emerging societies. What would happen if the poor and unsanitary people in the favelas of Brazil and the slums of India moved to the inner cities and living quarters of the wealthy, passing collapsed health facilities? One could understand the temporary optimism of some presidents in the midst of the first phase of Coronavirus shock. They know only too well about the fragility of social stability in their societies, which has little to do with the cultural affinity of affluent Western youth to slow down their lifestyles. One cultural aspect should not be overlooked: surely, resourceful and imaginative thriller authors will present their titles soon.

Level 5: Judging the political management.

Along with social psychological and clinical research on fear factors, political science studies will emerge about the mechanisms and decisions of different political regimes and decisions in light of different political preferences. They should refrain from resorting to stereotypes serving with unwavering reflexes the methods and judgements of pre-corona times. The call for “do-ers” and trusted leaders soon became loud after the COVID-19 pandemic started. Crises are the hour of the executive all over the world. Hierarchical decision-making processes and enforcement constraints do not differ as greatly as is repeatedly emphasized when Western democracies and autocratic orders are compared in their reactions to the Coronavirus pandemic. The key difference relates to two aspects: normative questions of transparency and truthfulness on the one hand and pragmatic matters of decision-making competences and hierarchies of commanding orders on the other hand. Western democracies prefer decentralized decision-making mechanisms and favor a pluralistic coordination in their search for public preferences that goes beyond what is common and desirable in autocratic countries. This is why democratic systems preferred to call for voluntary actions at the outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic, while in autocratic countries instant curfews and emergency decisions were taken. In addition to the horizontal level of decision-making, federal systems also had to take into account a vertical level. The rubber truncheons used by Indian police officers against unemployed rural migrant workers symbolized the dilemmas of liberal societies facing extremely serious social tensions. On the other hand, the mistrust in the West about COVID-19 figures reported from China and Russia (and the figures not reported from North Korea) was not surprising. In the end, all of the world's most affected countries pursued more or less the same strategy. They advocated lock downs to slow the spread of the corona pandemic and eventually they resorted to a gradual exit from the lock down. In doing so, they wanted to avoid the trap of a new outbreak of the virus because of premature reopening while at the same time they searched for a responsible return to normalcy in order to limit the social and economic costs of the pandemic. Any political management was confronted with the same moral dilemma, the longer the corona pandemic remained without any vaccination in sight: Which reaction to the disease would in the end be more threatening and, may be, even more destructive than the pandemic itself? China was no role model for any other country because of the nature of

the Chinese political system. China simply was the first country to test and try a reasonable strategy of COVID-19 crisis management.

Actors in all political systems were aware of the speculative nature of their political decisions. All of them had to put hope into the competence of medical experts. The media presence of epidemiological and viral experts was not just an asset in Western societies. Autocratic states were also prompted to use expert information to reassure citizens and to manage expectations among citizens. The professional competence of virological and epidemiological experts was hardly questioned, while dissenting opinions among virologists were sometimes exaggerated by the media, leaving the layman helpless. Most scientific experts refrained from pronouncing explicit political opinions and preferences, recognizing the enormous burden of the crisis for political decision makers in the absence of historical precedence. Since the days of Plato, the rule of experts has been philosophized, primarily understood as the rule of philosophers in ancient Greece. In antiquity, the point of reference and the goal of all reflection was the concern for the good life, the bonum commune. The task of the experts was reversed in the Coronavirus crisis. They were no longer high priests of a therapy for the good life, but they became the longed-for snake charmers, from whom fear reduction is hoped and yet everybody knows that, despite all their specialist knowledge, they cannot conjure up a crucial question: the production of effective vaccines and optimizing medical care. Time is needed for both.

Research questions in the post-corona world will deal with systemic implications, including the question of the emergency powers in democratic orders. Given the sovereign power of the Coronavirus, local conditions have to be respected in all fairness when judging the political management anywhere on earth. Research will also have to look into the relationship between expert knowledge, vodoo worship of factors of hope and fear, and the importance of global cooperation in relevant areas, especially related to available protection gear and slowly emerging vaccines. Media hypes and accusations should not be the guiding marker for sober analytical research in a post-corona world.

What seemed certain is that the excesses of discursive democracy will flatten out after the corona crisis. A new sense of seriousness and decision, relevance and predictability will prevail in Western democracies: jobs instead of gender, hygiene instead of “fun society”,

health instead of wellness, regulation instead of permanent discourse. As long as the primacy of accountability is maintained, this should not harm rule of law and moderate democracy, to pick up on a term that has been developed all the way from ancient theories of anacyclosis to Guy de Montesquieu.[8] Once the first shock of the Coronavirus pandemic was absorbed, the guardians of the zeitgeist were ready again to speculate about crimes against political correctness. Others were not too silly to disseminate fake news trying to undermine public security in the West. Post-corona crisis research would probably learn most from comparing the different crisis management methods used in politics all over the world on the one hand and the crisis management in the various economic sectors all over the world on the other hand. Academic research will always be most helpful if it applies a sober assessment of criteria and reasonable judgement of facts and evidence.

Level 6: Research into the causes and the question of guilt.

The spectrum of questions about causes and guilt have various aspects. The neglect of elementary hygiene conditions, or to put it another way: priorities in premodern societies, in which hygiene control mechanisms are obviously considered peripheral, would have to be extensively researched. This also includes a deepening of research on the time and again problematic relationships between humans and animals, whether dead or alive, in the dissemination of diseases in which humans have always been weaker than animals. This issue has been significant for many years due to the exponential expansion of pet animal practices in western and modernizing societies, but remains a taboo in public and academic discourses.[9] The seriousness with which phyto-sanitary measures are imposed in public markets must also be recorded and examined worldwide. The fact that the EU has made phyto-sanitary standards an admission criterion for new members has long been laughed at. Today we know that only the highest standards worldwide protect mankind against the transmission of new viruses and new diseases. The same applies to the relationships between global forms of expansion of human interaction and the potentiation of health risks, which may not have been given the necessary attention parallel to the expansion of global society. The relationship between globalization, human interactions, hygiene and medical preventive measures of all sorts, should be explored in all aspects that go beyond

[8] See: Manfred Schmidt, Demokratietheorien, Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 1995.

[9] A laudable exception: Jared Diamond, Guns, Germs and Steel. The Fates of Human Societies, New York: W.W.Norton, 1997.

the questions of mobility and law. It required synoptic studies examining the situation in all countries of the world. Industrialized countries have obviously neglected preventive emergency protection during the long and happy years before the Coronavirus pandemic. Sober lessons have to be learned all around the world.

The bundle of causes and aspects of guilt cannot avoid the question of China's role and behavior during the immediate outbreak of the Coronavirus in late 2019. It is in no way about conspiracy theories or general judgments. But it must be permitted to ask how systemic realities in China - both in terms of food hygiene and in terms of information transparency - have played a role in the explosive spread of the Coronavirus. It should come as no surprise that these questions will be linked to China-critical insinuations, including polemical and conspiracy-theoretical arguments, even if it is not expedient to dig into the abyss of suspicion of fake news and allegations. The question of who is to blame for the COVID-19 world crisis requires multidimensional research. Social and natural scientists have to work together, supported by journalists and contemporary witnesses. The question of guilt is only constructive if it is immediately transformed into the question of what the world can learn from past failures. The next epidemic is likely to come sooner than the implementation of any conspiracy theory and punitive expeditions derived from it against the alleged culprits of the 2020 corona pandemic.

Level 7: Formation of ideology and narratives: a boost for humanity or for tribalism?

Never before has an assumed threat to human life had such an instant global impact. This relates to the immediate as well as the indirect and long-term effects of the corona crisis. In the midst of the crisis and its aftermath, it had to be left open to what only long-term research could possibly understand and answer: Would the unique experience of human community in the threat of a new virus give rise to a boost in humanity and, possibly, even organized solidarity? Or would the retreat into tribal existence be promoted, the demolition of general humanistic ideas in favor of atavistic and tribal behaviors, for which the modern nation-state offers today's framework? In his famous study "The Open Society and Its Enemies", Karl R. Popper reflected in detail on the dichotomy of tribalism and humanity[10].

[10] cf. Karl R. Popper, The Open Society and its Enemies, London: Routledge, 2002 (original 1945); Ludger Kühnhardt, The Global Society and its Enemies. Liberal order beyond the Third World War, Cham: Springer International, 2017.

The times of ideologies of communism and national socialism are a thing of the past, but the Coronavirus pandemic has what it takes to serve as an ideological surrogate and generate new ideological concepts. Tribalism or humanity? Darwinism or global cooperation? The sharpness of the question immediately points to the ideological dimension of this topic. It draws attention to the political interpretations and narratives offered on the Coronavirus world crisis. The questions remain unanswered for the time being, and yet the lines of rupture already became apparent in the middle of the crisis itself. When every country calls on its citizens to return home, it is clear the only one who can help when it comes to an existential threat: one's own state. Even if it were only instinctive initial reflexes that were soon corrected: Those who only let their own national citizens fly on evacuation planes, or those who wanted to produce vaccines for their own population, or those who banned exports of medical protective clothing showed what should be expected if the situation were to become even more dramatic. Anyone who let their employer down, or vice versa, their employees or their landlords and customers, showed what fear had quickly made of him or her. Our intuitive behavior, due to the sudden pressure of an unexpected crisis, did not have to give rise to unsolvable doubts about our assumptions that human and intergovernmental forms of cooperation are beneficial.

But the signals of a new Darwinism could not be overlooked. From the beginning of the crisis, toxic opinions and conspiracy theories arose. They supported the most massive mutual blame-games and tribalist attitudes. Those who had doubted the usefulness and meaning of globalization for a long time not only felt confirmed, but saw an upswing of support for their attitudes, which would reinforce the simmering ashes of the crisis frenzy. Those who put their hope in humanity and global coexistence felt encouraged and commissioned to think further in this direction and to act wherever possible, even if the facts once again seemed to prove the skeptics right. The "war" metaphor (war against a virus), which was not infrequently used, lead to research-based reviews of its function and its effect. The post-corona world would surely become a world struggling for narratives and interpretations of the epoch break. Symbolic metaphors and comparisons, such as the Lisbon earthquake in 1755, the Spanish flu immediately after the First World War or the Great Depression in the run-up to the Second World War in 1929, were quickly sought after following the outbreak of the corona pandemic. Ideology-based political thinking could not

be stopped, not even in times of a virus. Long-term research would be needed to keep track of its meandering path.

Level 8: Power issues and power shifts.

The question of who is to blame for the Coronavirus crisis will always contain elements of speculation and allegation. The question of who are the winners and who are the losers of this crisis can be examined empirically. The speed of the spread of the crisis points to the relevant reference point: globalization. The closer the interactions worldwide, the faster and stronger the spread of the Coronavirus and its sad consequences. Unsurprisingly, the poorest countries and those least involved in global production processes and personal mobility were the last countries where the virus started to rage. The post-corona world may have far-reaching consequences for the balance of power in the world. This relates to economies and their industries, including financial services. It refers to states and to regions. Finally, the question of power shifts in the post-corona world relates to the organizational forms of global economic interactions and the structures of intergovernmental or multilateral political cooperation. In the area of economic power arithmetic, research will have to examine issues related to the behavior of hedge funds and the purchase of companies that have become illiquid or insolvent, as well as to phenomena of market foreclosure and new variants of protectionism.

Soon after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, some analysts boldly argued that the consequences of the crisis would make China the leading global power. This assessment often does not take into account that China's stability and progress depends on the wellbeing of all of its global partners. China, it soon appeared, would quickly seek to emerge stronger from the crisis due to its resilience to suffering and the unbroken will of its people to rise. The doubts about the truthfulness of China in dealing with the outbreak of the crisis only strengthened the assertiveness of the Chinese leadership. Soon, aid was offered to the world, only to be immediately denounced by some as Chinese propaganda by critics. China also suffered, but at the end of the crisis it would continue its economic rise and strengthen its global positions of power.

The forecasts for the United States of America remain less clear. The US's internal powers and autonomy are greater than those in many other parts of the world. Nevertheless, the US

was hit as hard by the health crisis and its psychological consequences as it was by the economic downturn. America struggles to deal with defeats and crises more than other Western countries. The instability of a society that had been experiencing self-doubt for years intensified in the Coronavirus crisis and further reduced the country's political ability to act. Projections of American leadership in global management of the post-corona crisis continued to diminish. America, too, was affected by the decline in multilateral cooperation and a broken globalization dynamic. But it was harder than ever for the United States to project its power beyond its own shores. America was first and foremost struggling with its own internal survival. The post-corona world accelerated the farewell to the American century that began with its entry into the First World War in 1917.

The emerging economies are likely to suffer particularly hard from the consequences of the pandemic for investment flows and distributions of future global political weight. Countries such as Brazil and India, Indonesia and South Africa, Turkey and Vietnam have been particularly affected. The gap between their expectation to advance towards the First World and the persistent facts of poverty and backwardness attributed to classical developing countries immediately translated into new social turmoil and political tensions in several places. Russia remained a special case. The cold power-political calculation of Russia’s political leadership seemed to negate the social costs of the crisis. The only thing that mattered was resurgence as a world power that, in the absence of other projection possibilities, can acquire respect through fear. After the victory in Syria and more than two dozen new military contracts with African countries in previous years, Russia had less to fear from the temporary, rigorous lock down and isolation than other countries. The Russian power vectors would be strengthened regardless of whether Russia's international influence - or even the country's veto capacity vis-à-vis international organizations - would grow. The EU was soon confirming fake news disseminated in the social media aimed at undermining morale and stability in Europe. And yet: Russian aid to other affected countries should not only be blamed as an act of propaganda. After all, also Russia and its innocent citizens experienced its share of the global ordeal.

The handling of the crisis in the Islamic Republic of Iran was also idiosyncratic. Absurd conspiracy theories about the alleged American origin of the Coronavirus united the country behind a leadership that could only hide its own impotence with lies and nebulization. A rise

of the country into the management team of the world remains a long way off. The poorest countries in the global south - like the more marginalized sections of the population in the global north - are likely to suffer the most. Those in the poorest countries experiencing civil war were particularly at risk, especially in Yemen and Afghanistan, Syria and Libya. The low resilience of the local economy, combined with fragile health systems and little hope of political stability was reflected and multiplied among the refugees from these countries. Appeals by the UN Secretary-General for a global ceasefire were really well-meant and appropriate. But reports of terrorist attacks in Mali and Afghanistan and news of violence between Palestinians and Israelis appeared in the news at the same time and soon thereafter.

The question of power, which will dominate the post-corona world, touches the basic parameters of future globalization and the associated global political architecture. For decades, globalization was based on the assumption of mutual benefit through market expansion while at the same time all constitutional orders and regimes were mutually accepted. Even more than the UN, the G20 community of states is characteristic of this modus vivendi in contemporary global management tasks. After the global financial crisis in 2008, the G20 group proved itself to some extent. The worldwide non-aggression pact held.

A new age has begun with the Coronavirus. Strategic research is required to pay attention to the possible security implications. Future power struggles for honor, influence and resources will have to reckon with the use of biological weapons. The atomic bomb, considered deadly for all mankind, was only used selectively in 1945 in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, has not once been used since. The selective use had a global deterrent effect, despite the proliferation of nuclear weapons technology and tests. In the post-corona world, an inverse effect would have to be expected. The ubiquitous fear that the Coronavirus triggered, without the entire human race actually being wiped out, must raise concern that the selective use of biological weapons could become more likely in the future. Biological weapons – for instance through the targeted use of viruses – could have the same effect as targeted hacker attacks and cyber-crimes. The politically motivated hacking attacks on Estonia in 2007 demonstrated for the first time that the Internet is ubiquitous, but that its targeted damage can have large and yet localized consequences.

As long as human nature is the way it is, evil must be expected, also in order to cultivate good. The consequences of corona-like hybrid and local attacks must be studied more intensively in order to increase the possibility of avoiding them. Strategic research will be needed to compare the varieties of power politics that emerge in the post-corona world with the well-developed categories of analysis, which include hard and soft power factors as well as smart power factors.[11]

Level 9: European Union: fragmentation or concentration of competences?

The consequences of the post-corona world for the European Union are likely to be felt for a long time. But for just as long, there will be limited clarity about the implications of the Coronavirus pandemic. The intra-European fragmentations in the area of state-like decision-making constellations, including the crisis response mechanisms, came to light early on during the escalation phase of the corona pandemic.[12] Each country initially reacted alone in the crisis. There were the usual excuses. But why are language deficits argued if patients and protective clothing are not distributed among each other more quickly, but Chinese and Russian relief supplies do arrive at certain points? The COVID-19 pandemic confirmed what was already visible in the 2015 refugee crisis: the borders of intra-European solidarity are not broken by rhetorical idealism about Europe, but only by mutually accepted and crisis-proof clarifications of competence and regulatory mandates. In the absence of a comprehensive, robust “Emergency Union”, it should not have come as a surprise, that deplorable national border closures across the EU undermined the single market. There will only be a bright future for the European Union in the post-corona world if common European sovereignty is legally binding and sanctioned in all areas of life where one's own and the common European well-being is at stake. A state-like expansion of functions, for example in the field of a joint European crisis and disaster management, is urgently needed.

In the post-corona world, it is premature and superficial to accuse the EU, as usual, of failure and loss of power. In fact, the EU is always the focus of these allegations when a preventive

[11] See: Xuewu Gu, Theorien der Internationalen Beziehungen. Eine Einführung, Berlin/Boston: de Gruyter, 2018 (3rd revised edition); Hendrik W. Ohnesorge, Soft Power: The Forces of Attraction in International Relations, Cham: Springer International, 2020.

[12] On the cautious initial efforts during the years under Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, see: Christos Stylianides, European Emergency Coordination, ZEI Discussion Paper C , Bonn: Zentrum für Europäische Integrationsforschung, 2020, online: https://www.zei.uni-bonn.de/dateien/discussion-paper/DP-259-2020-Stylianides.pdf.

joint reaction chain cannot be activated in the event of a crisis. This is hardly to be expected because it would require an assignment of competences on the part of the EU member states beforehand. Such a transfer of sovereignty is rarely approved when it is not urgently needed and if so, then it is often rather poorly framed. An example of this attitude was the way by which border agency, Frontex, was established. Way too long, Frontex remained without a relevant mandate until the migratory pressure on the EU had become unbearable for all member states and had generated a high, also personal, political price for actors in several member states. Only then, finally, Frontex was strengthened. Without a high level of crisis awareness, the EU primarily acts in the mode of harmlessness and indefinite rhetoric.

Realistically, this is how it will continue: The EU usually experiences pushes towards integration and further development of its competence patterns when the existing balance between intergovernmental coordination and semi-Europeanized supranationalism has proven to be inadequate. In this respect, the post-corona world should enforce the further development of a geopolitically relevant, internally and externally projectable and operational architecture with solid competences and budget resources. In principle, this transfer of competencies in the areas of relevant state sovereignty must also apply to the completion of the euro area by a budget union, even if this can only be achieved step by step. The European Commission was right in enhancing the spirit of a social Europe that cares ("Sure") and in activating the existing instruments of financial support for those countries affected most by the corona pandemic (ESM, European Investment Bank). But in the long-run, this cannot be the only European answer in the post-corona world. Otherwise, under conditions of yet another existential crisis Europe may experience its collective death for fear of the suicide of its nation-states. It will be up to research to test this hypothesis as well as conflicting, dissenting views in the future.

Level 10: Speculation and the Effects of the Unknown.

Globalization continues because globality does not disappear.[13] In the future, the interdependency in all areas of life and social contexts will continue to become more visible. Globalization is no longer just a matter of summit diplomacy and financial market transactions. The importance of a vaccine, available worldwide, in the event of the outbreak

[13] See: Ludger Kühnhardt/Tilman Mayer (eds.), The Bonn Handbook of Globality, Cham: Springer International, 2019.

of a new, globally intervening disease corresponds to the importance of functional structures of political multilateralism. Being a fire brigade and a precautionary actor at the same time is not easy. But there is no other way to combine resilience and shaping the future together. The experience of the world media event 'Coronavirus pandemic' can be summed up in a nutshell: Unity experience and world fear are interdependent.

When it comes to climate change, fear is still limited to the world itself, it was "only" about the earth. When it comes to COVID-19, fear is directly related to human life and our personal survival. Fear of the world has become an inevitable collective suggestion because it concerns everyone, everywhere and immediately. This experience will need anthropological, psychological and theological research to make us understand retrospectively why in 2020 the corona virus could become the sovereign legislator all over the world. In times of normality, public statements can often be predicted because they include known knowns and, at best, unknowns knowns. Intuitive statements that tie in with previous statements generate the known knowns. Carefully conjectured assumptions based on past experience and careful forecasts generate the known unknowns. The corona pandemic as a world event has uncovered another, third dimension of human dealings with the speculative: the unknown unknown, which has never been there before and therefore does not provide or allow any proven responses, forecasts or speculations. Academic research could hardly have found a better breeding ground for new experimental questions.

- **Fragility and resilience**

In the midst of the Coronavirus pandemic, the German newspaper "Welt" quoted a virologist, stating that the corona virus had "triggered an experiment with the entire world population" for which it was not prepared.[14] Virologists have repeatedly warned of global epidemics, he stated, but like most unpleasant prognoses, they remained unanswered. Suddenly, however, the shock hit and it hit the entire world population at the same time. Since then, predictions about the good end of the bad experiment have been sucked up like

[14] Coronavirus Pandemie: „Ein Experiment mit der gesamten Weltbevölkerung. Alles ist möglich", in: Die Welt, 27.März 2020, online: https://www.welt.de/vermischtes/article206833027/Coronavirus-Pandemie-Ein-Experiment-mit-der-gesamten-Weltbevoelkerung-Alles-ist-moeglich.html. When the article was published, there were 652.092 confirmed cases of Covid-19, 137.591 cured patients, and 30.313 deaths.

nectar by bees. Diseases usually end when sixty to seventy percent of the population are infected. Hence, the outcome of the corona experiment will be very different locally. There will be victims and losers, survivors and winners in most places around the globe.

Some world-changing certainties immediately outlasted the daily Coronavirus hype. The 2020 Olympic Games, the games of the world's youth, were postponed to 2021. The youth were invited to begin to adapt to the post-corona world. It could be assumed that in most cases the young, post-Coronavirus generation would succeed with creativity and cheerfulness. At the top of the earth's pyramid of prosperity, many young people might even succeed if the post-corona-world would mean a reduction in affluence compared with the generation of their parents. Their ability to adapt and to creatively organize new parameters of a good life would remain endless. But another certainty survived the Coronavirus pandemic, too: the global population continued to grow by 2.5 percent in 2020. The growth of the world population would continue, open ended. It is without any doubt that many young people in the lower and middle levels of the earth's pyramid of prosperity want to continue to ascend and strive to improve their chances in life. By no means will they settle for a world of renunciation and shrinking economies in the aftermath of dilapidated globalization. They remain hungry for life and better life chances. New opportunities, but also new conflicts, if not catastrophies, are inevitable when the different ends of the global pyramid clash more and more in the years and decades to come. Unless viable forms of global governance prevent and deter conflict, the world remains more uncertain than before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Obviously, the world's population of all generations will have to reinvent itself as a learning community in order to be able to cope with the future of globalization that humanity has created itself. Globalization has remained incomplete and contradictory, as the Corona pandemic has shown more graphically than any other phenomenon before. The agenda for the global learning community includes the hope that the world population will practice changes in attitudes and behaviors and begin with what the Coronavirus has so successfully done: with the individual. Human individuals and their dignity were advanced in the list of priorities for humankind that was too used to structures and statistics. The post-corona-world can only be a human centered world or it will fail the experience of this most drastic experiment in modern times.

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Costas Apostolides studied at Lancaster University where he received a B.A. Hons for studies in Economics/Politics with specialization in Foreign Policy and Conflicts. He returned to Cyprus in 1969, and in 1970 was appointed to the civil service within the Planning Bureau. He received a Fulbright Scholarship and obtained an M.A. at Boston University in Economic Development. On returning to Cyprus to the Planning Bureau he was responsible for the Housing Program for persons displaced during the 1974 Turkish Military Intervention. He was then assigned with overall responsibility for the World Bank funded "Pitsilia Integrated Rural Development Program", and appointed by President of Cyprus to be responsible for the "Office for the Study of the Cyprus Problem", and became a member of the Cyprus team for the UN Negotiations for a Cyprus Settlement. He undertook teaching "Negotiation for Conflict Resolution" for the joint Conflict Analysis and Resolution MA, of the Collaborative Dual Degree program of the Universities of Malta and George Mason.

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Prof. Jürg Martin Gabriel was a full professor of political science (International Relations) at ETH Zurich from 1995 until his retirement in 2005. He was a founding member of the Center for Comparative and International Studies (CIS). Prof. Jürg Gabriel studied political science at the American University in Washington, D.C. He received his doctorate in 1971 with a dissertation on Clausewitz and his relevance for the nuclear age. Subsequently, he was assistant professor at the University of Yaoundé (Institut des Relations Internationales du Cameroun) for three years. He held various part-time posts and later became a permanent lecturer at the University of St. Gallen, where he also wrote his professorial habilitation. In 1991-92 he spent two terms as a visiting professor at Stanford University (Palo Alto, California) and in 1992 became full professor at the University of St. Gallen. In March 2003, Prof. Jürg Gabriel became Director of the Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies (MEDAC) at the University of Malta. He returned to Switzerland in the fall of 2005 and is now the Swiss member of MEDAC's Board of Administrators.

Dr. Omar Grech

Dr. Omar Grech was appointed as the first Director of the Centre for the Study and Practice of Conflict Resolution at the University of Malta in September 2007. He holds a BA, an MA in Diplomatic Studies and an LL.D in Law from the University of Malta and a Ph.D. in Human Rights and Conflict from the University of Limerick, Ireland. Within the Univeristy of Malta, he lectures in international law, international human rights law as well as human rights and conflict at the Centre and the Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies. He has lectures at the School of Conflict Analysis and Resolution, George Mason University, USA where he was a Fulbright Scholar in 2010. During the Maltese Presidency of the Council of the European Union Dr. Grech served as Co-Chair of the COJUR Working Group on International Law and the COJUR-ICC Working Group on the International Criminal Court. Dr. Grech has also delivered lectures and papers at numerous international conferences, summer schools and seminars. His latest publications are Human Rights and the Northern Ireland Conflict: Law, Politics and Conflict published by Routledge and an e-book edited by him entitled Contemporary Issues in Conflict Resolution published by the Centre for the Study and Practice Resolution.

Mr. Nick Hopkinson

Nick Hopkinson is a writer, rapporteur, international lecturer and broadcaster specialising in European Union (EU) politics, trade policy, financial regulation, and government for international organizations, academic institutions and think thanks. He is a former director and acting chief executive of Wilton Park. In his 23 year career at Wilton Park, Nick Hopkinson wrote almost 100 published policy reports (largely on EU and international economic policy issues) and the volume *Parliamentary Democracy: Is There a Perfect Model?* published by Ashgate/Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (2001). He was awarded a M.A. (International Affairs), Norman Paterson School, Carleton University, Ottawa; a Graduate Diploma, John Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS, Bologna, Italy and a B.A. (Honours), Political Studies, Queen's University, Kingston, Canada.

Professor Bichara Khader

Professor Bichara Khader is the Director of the Arab Study and Research Centre (C.E.R.M.A.C) at the Catholic University of Louvain. He majored in Political, Economic and Social Sciences and obtained his Master's degree in international relations from the John Hopkins University, Bologna Centre. Bichara Khader earned a Ph.D. in Political, Economic and Social Sciences from the Catholic University of Louvain, where he was appointed Professor at the Faculty of Political, Economic and Social Sciences. He was a member of the Group of High Experts on European Foreign and Security Policy (European Commission 1998-2000), and a member of the Group of wise men on Euro-Mediterranean cultural dialogue (European Presidency 2003-2004). He has written extensively on the Mediterranean, Middle East and Euro-Mediterranean relations.

Mr. Tom McGrath

Mr. Tom McGrath studied political economy, international relations and development economics at University College Dublin and the University of East Anglia. He is a regular visiting lecturer on aspects of the EU, international relations and media in universities in the Euromed region and is the author of educational modules on different aspects of media as well as international relations and human rights. During his EU career from 1977 – 2017 he worked for the European External Action Service, under HRVP Mogherini, where he was head of the Civil Society, Media, Culture, Youth, Education and Training sector in the Middle East and North Africa department. He has also been head of the Press, Information and Culture Department of the European Commission's Delegation in Tokyo and before that communications advisor to Emma Bonino, Commissioner for Humanitarian Affairs. Since retiring from the European Union at the beginning of 2018 Thomas McGrath has been engaged as a freelance consultant / counsellor for international and academic institutions, as well as an Advisor for Non-Governmental Organisations networks.

Prof. Ludger Kühnhardt

Professor Dr. Ludger Kühnhardt has been Director at the Center for European Integration Studies (ZEI) and Professor of Political Science at the Institute for Political Science and Sociology at the University of Bonn since 1997. Professor Kühnhardt's research focuses on European integration, the global role of Europe, comparative research on regional groupings worldwide as well as on topics of political theory and philosophy. He studied history, political science and philosophy in Bonn, Geneva, Harvard and Tokyo. He received his PhD in 1983 and his “habilitation” in 1986, both times specializing in political science at the University of Bonn. Between 1985 and 1987 Kühnhardt was research assistant for Prof. Dr. Drs. h.c. Karl Dietrich Bracher at the Institute for Political Science at the University of Bonn. From 1987 to 1989 he worked as speechwriter for the President of the Federal Republic of Germany, Richard von Weizsäcker.

Dr. Derek Lutterbeck

Dr. Derek Lutterbeck has been Deputy Director, Holder of the Swiss chair and Lecturer in International History at MEDAC since 2006. He previously worked as a programme coordinator at the Geneva Centre for Security Policy, where he *inter alia* was responsible for a training programme for junior Swiss diplomats, as well as for the Centre’s training activities in southern Mediterranean countries. Derek Lutterbeck earned a Masters and a Ph.D. in Political Science from the Graduate Institute of International Studies, as well as a Masters Degree in Law from the University of Zurich. His research interests include various contemporary security issues, such as transnational organised crime, recent developments in policing, and security sector reform issues, as well as migration and refugee policies. He also published recently an edited volume entitled Migration, Development and Diplomacy: Perspectives from the Southern Mediterranean (Red Sea Press).

Ms. Lourdes Pullicino

Lourdes Pullicino is an academic at the University of Malta where she specializes in Media and Conflict and Public Diplomacy. She studied at the University of Malta and is now finalizing her PhD with the University of Kent. She is a former journalist and broadcaster and produced an award-winning current affairs television programme. Her writings include a chapter on "Media in North Africa: Case Study of Egypt" in the MEDAC publication *Change and Opportunities in the Emerging Mediterranean*, a paper on "Migration and the Mediterranean: the nexus with Media" in MEDAC's publication *Perspectives in a Changing Mediterranean* and a concept paper for the Anna Lindh Forum held in Malta in 2016 on the theme "The Potential of Media for Inter-Cultural Understanding in the Euro-Med Region".

Dr. Monika Wohlfeld

Dr. Monika Wohlfeld holder of the German Chair in Peace and Conflict Prevention, established at the Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies (MEDAC), University of Malta by the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Previously, she was Deputy Director of the Conflict Prevention Centre of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), responsible for the Organization's field operations. She served as Head of External Co-operation of the OSCE and, prior to that, as Senior Diplomatic Adviser to the OSCE Secretary General. She has been a Senior Fellow at the Western European Union (now European Union) Institute for Security Studies in Paris, and Researcher at the War Studies Department at King's College London. She holds a Masters degree in Political Science and Strategic Studies from the University of Calgary and a Ph.D. in War Studies from King's College London. Dr. Monika Wohlfeld has published widely on matters related to European Security, European institutions, regional cooperation, conflict prevention and crisis management.