Policy Review

COVID-19 and Change in Global Political Order

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1. Introduction

COVID-19 pandemic has brought about multi-dimensional changes in human lives, including political relations, finance and economy, environment, and finally health. While discussing these issues, this study analyzes how these changes might lead to a bigger change help emerge a new global political order.

The pandemic has hit not only those countries which are struggling to develop their economic and military powers, but also created uncertainties for those which are counted as superpowers, including the US, the UK, and France. China, as an emerging superpower, has a low number of casualties compared to the US and the UK.

In this connection, understanding the role of superpowers after the outbreak of coronavirus is crucially important for Pakistani policymakers, academics, and civil society.

Pakistan is located in a region, which has been geopolitically important for the world powers in the past and will be important in future scenario. It shares its borders with India, Afghanistan, Iran, China as well as Persian Gulf. As the US has had a role in the regional power structure since the inception of Pakistan, so understanding the US role in this region is important for Pakistan. Meanwhile, China has simultaneously enhanced its relationship with Pakistan during the past decade. On the one hand, it was the Pakistan's largest supplier of arms in 2019 (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute [SPIRI] 2020) and on the other, it has strengthened its economic relations with Pakistan while engaging Pakistan in projects such as China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. Therefore, having an actual understanding of China’s position in the region is important for Pakistan as well. Similarly, the European Union (EU), the largest political union, single market, and international aid donor, has also played a role in Pakistan's integration into the world economy by granting it the Generalized Scheme of Preferences (GSP+) status (European Commission 2020). Because of this status, more than 76% of Pakistani exports, including textiles and clothing, enter the EU duty and quota free. This leads to representing almost 20% of Pakistan's exports worldwide. Keeping in mind that Pakistan’s exports to the United States is with a partner share of 16.09 per cent whereas with China it is 7.69 per cent of whole Pakistan’s export (World Integrated Trade Solution 2018), it becomes clear as to why it is necessary for Pakistan to understand the EU role in future global political order.

This paper analyzes the change in global order and its consequences for the global power dynamics after COVID-19 time.

2. Methodology

The contents of this study have been mainly derived from a focus group discussion which was held with national and international academics in an online dialogue series organized by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) in April 2020. The panel consisted of three senior experts (Annexure-A) whose views on global order political have been analyzed through two sets of questions:

1. **Probe questions** (questions which introduce participants to topic of global order and necessity of discussing it in COVID-19 time)
2. **Follow-up questions** (questions which investigate further information from the answers and discussions).
3. Discussion and Analysis

Hippler (personal communication, 16 April 2020) argues that there has always been a steady change in political relations; change is unavoidable whether with or without COVID-19: Power relationships are changing anyway, sometimes it is quick and sometimes slow. The 9/11 was supposed to be a big event in political game change and of course it impacted the world power relations, but it did not change the world. The same applies to COVID-19 pandemic. Change in global political order here may be categorized in seven ways.

3.1 Globalization and multilateralism

COVID-19 pandemic has not only caused casualties like deaths and severe illnesses but also generated uncertainties and fears leading to change of behaviours and beliefs. The states and regional organizations illustrate suspicions; and are less willing to engage with anything that seems foreign. The pandemic has impacted the financial and economic aspects of life, so it may change the course of globalization expressively. Globalization and its paths are changing because of different political decisions of international actors. The pandemic is changing the ways and instruments that businesses, states, international and regional organizations develop. Basically, the pandemic will change the methods of international stakeholders, which would ultimately change the global political scenario.

According to Hussain (personal communication, 16 April 2020), the globalization and multilateralism are both under the threat of coronavirus. The current behavior of global actors like USA imply that there is no guarantee for committing to the global deals and cross-border investments: “the world will not be the same after the pandemic ends, if it ends.” Although, Hussain (personal communication, 16 April 2020) does not claim the end of globalization, he observed the “loose Multipolarity”¹. Globalization has always been a challenge for some governments, which were afraid of weakening their sovereign status in the international relations. The governments prefer to keep power so that they might deal with domestic and foreign affairs according to their own will, without being controlled, and interfered by other mechanism. Theoretically speaking, globalization allows worldwide businesses to find low-cost ways to produce their products. Hence, it can help the developing countries to strengthen their economy, and feel more self-confident in their foreign policy, make a better decision domestically on infrastructures that they need for health and education. Therefore, globalization is not necessarily favourite of a government, which would like to see the benefit of their own business, and not the businesses of countries which are developing their economic policies. For politicians such as US President Donald Trump, who insists on “America first” policy, globalization means: “all the world first” or “the developing countries” first. Even this trend does not reflect “America first” policy, but “Trump first” policy, so it is rather an individual statement.

Rise of protectionism² in times of Trump is also seen as a clear signal of stress on globalization, which started in pre-pandemic time. Original signs of protectionism policy of Trump showed up in his election campaign and then were seen in January 2018 when the US imposed tariffs on all imported washing-machines and solar panels. Later, China became the main target of this policy. Protectionism ultimately has not been in the benefit of USA economy because it leads to a trade war. Countries responded back with their own taxes and quotas. Therefore, Trump’s

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¹ Multipolarity is a distribution of power in which more than two nation-states have nearly equal amounts of military, cultural, and economic influence.
² Protectionism is the theory or practice of shielding a country's domestic industries from foreign competition by taxing imports.
“protectionism at home” would lead to “protectionism abroad” (Irwin 2017). There are studies which argue that although protectionism of Trump can be seen in the context of nationalism, still it failed for economic reasons and “anomaly to the prominent assumption of democratic peace theory” (Bimantara 2019: 189). Protectionism is not only a negative push against globalization and multilateralism, but also ignores at the same time the change of facts, which has made a day for the USA, the superpower of the world. For instance, America has a large military power, but currently it is not the only and the largest military of the world, as China and India are standing ahead of it. In the figure below, you can see that USA is the third large military in the world in 2019.

Although military power still is an important factor to determine political power of a country, latent power (a power which has not yet come forth but may emerge) is as important as military power. Great powers are those that score highly on “size of population and territory; resource endowment, military strength; political stability and competence.” (Waltz 1979: 131). The factors Waltz (1979) reminds illustrate that future of China is brighter than USA when it comes to power relations or at least good potentials for the competition in future.

It is common to see that some countries have controlled the pandemic inside their borders. This behaviour is seen as another stress on globalization and a sign prioritizing nationalist policies, e.g. Germany’s policies to curtail the pandemic at a large-scale, are however just for Germans. Similarly, China’s policy towards the pandemic has been more sympathetic towards globalization: “China in this trend of fading up of globalization has helped more than 80 countries, which is a great lead in terms of Chinese influencing the world politics. More analyses argue that when EU is seen “turning away” regarding sending aid to European countries which are facing difficulties due to COVID-19, China is having a historic shot in “a battle for hearts and minds” by assisting those countries with COVI-19 aids (Crawford, Peter & Bloomberg 2020).

In these two cases, there is a weak role of EU, including Germany, and a strong role of China regarding COVID-19 aids, which should not be neglected.

Firstly, some studies term Chinese aid as “propaganda” instruments promoting China as a “world saviour” (Thanking big brother 2020). The aid’s amount in some cases is unreasonably little. Take the example of China how did it help Pakistan. The medical care was (end of March 2020) 12,000 test kits, 300,000 masks and 10,000 protective suits, an 8-member medical team’s stay for two weeks (Ali 2020). Keeping in mind that Pakistan has 212 million population, the testing kits donated by China cover barely 0.005% of the total population. Besides, there are some news highlighting that Chinese-made medical COVID-19 products do not have a good quality and are accurate only 35–40% of the time (Pakistan Forward 2020).

Secondly, despite late EU responses to the most affected countries such as Italy, the EU has managed to assist them within the six months of appearance of the virus. Snapshots of European solidarity are listed in a report being updated by the European Commission (2020) every 15 days. The latest report indicates that:
• France has donated one million masks to Italy.
• Germany has delivered seven tons of medical equipment to Italy, including ventilators and anesthetic masks.
• Austria, Germany and Luxembourg have taken in patients from Italy and France.
• Poland, Romania and Germany have sent teams of doctors to Italy to help cure their patients in hospitals (European Commission 2020).

Thirdly, the effectiveness of aid depends on knowledge and information. Still there is no medication to treat this virus. Foreign aid needs firstly understanding what the real aid, at home or abroad is. Of course, part of the aid is by nature domestically. Key necessities to deal with the virus such as infrastructure of health system and hospitals must be constructed and planned domestically. They cannot be constructed by foreign aid. Part of the aid is medications. Effective aid in this category requires accurate data, professional research and evidence-based strategies and more important is time. Effective aid could not come immediately after COVID-19 showed up. It needs time.

Fourthly, any aid regarding pandemic must be unbiased. Each powerful actor helps those who need it and are reachable. So far the virus is not fully known and its vulnerable target groups are not fully understood by the scientists and researchers. This is a crisis situation. It is not logical to leave cases which are near and go for cases which are located further.

Since China has been an emerging power, it pushes the political changes in time of the pandemic significantly to its own benefit. Despite, multilateralism is changing but not disappearing. Hippler (personal communication, 2020, 16 April 2020) argues that previously there were two pillars of power: Soviet Union and the US. This system ended with the cold war. Now, since the beginning of the century, there is a multilateral system. In this era, five to six countries are competing economically and politically. The competition may end to more conflicts and tensions. COVID-19 has pushed some elements and challenged the power of some of these countries, but still, it will be a naïve prediction to claim that one country will be the only superpower. The world after COVID-19 is the world of multilateral powers.

Furthermore, it is unlikely that China makes an alliance with other countries in the new global order. The new era will be an era when individual powers would assist each other to overcome their mutual problems and difficulties.

3.2. Change of political systems and national security
Coronavirus is not only shaping political relationships between the super and great powers but also disrupting democracy and governance systems at domestic level. It has hit at a time when democracy was already under threat in many countries (Brown, Brechenmacher, and Carothers 2020). It will transform other pillars (such as electoral institutions and military power) of democratic governments or emerging democracies more than before the pandemic. Moreover, in countries “where the public sectors are assessed to be highly corrupt”, disasters such as COVID-19 “create and are used as facilitating opportunities to abuse more of what belongs to the public,” (Kamali-Chirani and Malik 2020).

Political systems worldwide are diverse. Europe may be reflected in some news as a whole entity with a single political system, or to say European democracy, but this is not an accurate reflection. There is a variety of political systems in Europe. For instance, in Italy, there is a parliamentary monarchy, in Spain a parliamentary republic, and in Netherlands a constitutional monarchy. It means that just by being European, a country would not have a standard type of government. In terms of COVID-19, Italy and Spain showed frail potentials of controlling the pandemic as compared to Germany.
It is the COVID-19 that brought into light the advancement of some political systems to control the pandemic, says Hippler (personal communication, 16 April 2020). The weakness of USA to control the pandemic has happened primarily because of the government incompetence rather than its military or economic decline. Countries like South Korea have shown better abilities to fight against the pandemic. Hippler (personal communication, 2020) emphasizes that the changes should be understood in the context of coronavirus, but they are not necessarily new trends. Many countries experienced democratic backsliding and authoritarian consolidation even before COVID-19.

Increasingly, China will play its superpower role in future; nevertheless, good governance will be a challenge for China as well. In the new trend, it is significant that how the competent governments would deal with COVID-19, but in deeper layers, the key is how strong they are in terms of leadership, health system, and taking advice of academia. Anyway, incompetent governments will lose their grip on power.

The pandemic changes the rules of national security. It does not respect any sovereignty. The world citizens are facing a single problem that whether they are Americans or Chinese or Pakistanis. Protecting “own” nations and providing them security in the backdrop of COVID-19, is not enough. In other words, if a country ignores “other” countries’ problems during pandemic, it cannot protect its own national security. National security in the time of COVID-19 is part of the worldwide security. Despite all policies that the US President has devised, including attempt to hire a German company to make COVID-19 medication exclusively for American nation (Hernández-Morales 2020), still the experts and scientists of this country have come to an agreement that international cooperation is required to find a cure for the disease. The cooperation of Chinese and American researchers in this regard is an example.

Expecting political alliance to overcome COVID-19 or next natural disaster is too optimistic to transform. American power is declining; this is not a secret anymore, as some analysts have already warned about it. Nevertheless, Hippler (personal communication 2020) says that a political power takes time to collapse. Decline of Roman Empire took about 270 years (Mark 2018).

3.3 Benefits of soft power in new era

Power has both the hard and soft aspects. Soft power is important because it is an ability to shape the preferences of others. According to Nye (2012:166):

"When one country gets other countries to want what it wants might be called co-optive or soft power in contrast with the hard or command power of ordering others to do what it wants."

In this information age, 'credibility' of countries is the 'scarcest resource', and 'the best propaganda is not propaganda' (Nye 2012).

The Soft Power 30 Index, which measures the soft power of the countries based on the objectives of government (e.g. individual freedom and human rights), digital ability (e.g. level of connection to digital world and digital diplomacy), culture (e.g. international tourists arrival and music industry exports), enterprise (e.g. corruption level and ease of doing business), engagement (e.g. global diplomatic footprint) and education (international student exchange and academic output of universities) (McClyor 2018). It ranked United Kingdom, France, Germany, USA and Japan as the first five countries with the highest soft powers in 2018 and 2019 (McClyor 2018 and 2019)\(^3\). Ranking of China in both years was 27.

\(^3\) However, the order of highest superpower in 2019 was changed to France, UK, Germany, Sweden and USA. Japan in 2019 was not among the first five countries.
China is fully aware of the importance of soft power to institutionalize its worldwide power and has spent a lot to shape it worldwide. Aid programmes to Africa and even supporting cultural activities there like “media interaction” and “constructive journalism” are the part of this attempt (Zhang, Wasserman and Mano 2017). In Pakistan also, China has not only been actively supporting Pakistan in economic development projects in the form of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), but is also initiating activities to promote its own culture by establishing Pakistan-China Friendship Centre and the Confucius Institute, Islamabad. Despite all these attempts, China is having ’soft power deficit’ (Nye 2012). Although the time Nye argues the deficit is before COVID-19, still main cores of his arguments are valid. Promotion of soft power is not easy to reach “when the message is inconsistent with their (Chinese) domestic realities” (Nye 2012). Nye (2012) names the forced limitations over Internet and jailing human rights lawyers as reasons of “torpedoing its soft power campaign”. Moreover, there are studies which argue that China’s ’global cultural strategy’ needs flexibility (Yiwu 2018: 70) and the actors must not only concentrate on classic culture but also consider pop-culture to reach more audience especially the youth around the world.

The increasing power of China can help counterbalance the power of the US and some other countries. Nevertheless, this trend can provoke critiques to come hard on Chinese policies or actions.

Since the beginning of coronavirus pandemic, China has made two steps towards institutionalizing its political power in a destructive way, i.e. 1) suspending some imports from Australia along with raising pressure on the Australian government for proposing an international investigation into the origins of the novel coronavirus (Shih 2020), and 2) putting pressures on the EU to ‘soften’ the report on COVID-19 with reference to China (Apuzzo 2020) while there has been facts proving that China runs ’disinformation campaigns’ regarding the pandemic inside the European Union (Rankin 2020).

If China repeats the same mistakes of previous superpowers, it will also step in to the trend of deterioration. In other words, being overwhelmingly powerful is a risk. Keeping the position needs to be aware of factors such as constructive relations with other political actors.

### 3.4. Weak role of ideology

Considering the global responses to the pandemic particularly by the USA and China, a question arises whether a specific ideology could shape governance models to dominate the political order during and after COVID-19. Can anyone claim that the USA, because of having democracy model, responded to the virus weakly whereas China responded quickly because of the Communist regime in place?

Firstly, it might be clear that the US policy regarding COVID-19 was not appropriate. However, it does not mean that Chinese response was free of errors. China not only reacted to the virus with delay but also procrastinated in letting other countries know about the disease for two weeks. So, putting China on top of states which hold a perfect response is not a correct argument. China has a mixed record of dealing with this crisis. In next stage, it showed extreme efficiency and that was the phase when the government efficiently imposed lockdown in Wuhan city of Hubei province.

Secondly, neither the Chinese state applies communism fully, nor the US political system is a best example of applying liberal democracy. Chinese political system practice rather an authoritarian model. In the US, the president is an individual who doesn’t know or care about liberal democracy and follow his own political wish. The protest demonstrations against the
murder of George Fluid, a black American who was killed by a white police officer, is a recent indication that still after five decades of civil right movements, the minority (blacks with about 13% population) does not have equal rights of majority (white Americans with about 60% population). Lack of equal rights is one of the main challenges of liberalism.

As a result, no specific ideology will help shape the political systems of global powers during and after COVID-19.

3.5 Climate change

COVID-19 has exposed the collective inadequacies of the world in terms of addressing a problem that spanned over political borders and affected the global population in equal measures. It has put into stark context the challenges the global community faces vis-a-vis mitigation and adaptation to climate change. Even as the world comes to terms with COVID-19, we are seeing the climatic challenges pose a serious threat to governance across the world. From the onset of the hurricane season in North America to the resurgence of locust in South Asia, we are once again witnessing the climate crisis. However, we are still at an early stage whereby if our greenhouse emissions were significantly curtailed, we could still keep the temperatures from rising beyond two-degree centigrade mark. As things stand, we have crossed the one-degree centigrade threshold in comparison to pre-industrial era. Business as usual, when it comes to meeting our energy needs which are primarily met via fossil fuels, will take us beyond three-degree centigrade mark. That can be catastrophic for the world. This makes it imperative that the world should rethink its strategy.

COVID-19 has laid bare the inadequacies of the system in terms of responding to a health crisis. Given the fact that the climate crisis will become significantly worse as temperatures rise, it can have far-reaching consequences for the global governance system whereby it will become exceedingly difficult to respond to extreme weather events in an effective manner.

The postponement of the Conference of Parties-26 (CoP-26), which was to be held in Glasgow in 2020 presents a window of opportunity to the countries to set aside their differences for jointly addressing the climate challenge. Whether that can be possible is still a question mark given the differences between the key stakeholders. Take the case of the United States, for example, which is set to exit the Paris Climate Agreement on 4th November 2020. That may change however if Joe Biden wins the presidency. Regardless of what happens at that time, the uncertainty will make it difficult for countries to work together to address some of the issues that have resulted in the failure of recent negotiations in Madrid.

The situation does present an opportunity for China, India, and the European Union, the three largest contributors to greenhouse gas emissions, to take lead in terms of addressing some of the challenges of climate change. However, given the recent India-China clash in Ladakh and the ongoing pandemic, it is likely that any substantive discussion in terms of the way forward will be left to 2021 when the pandemic is expected to subside.

3.6 Health policy change

Despite many calls from experts for an enhanced surveillance and global preparedness to deal with pandemics, the world at large was unprepared to deal with the crisis.

The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare the inadequacies in the global health care system from Italy to the United States and from the United Kingdom to Pakistan. In fact, the virus has proven to be an equalizer in terms of how it affects the health care systems, the economies, and the governance systems across the world.

The sudden surge in corona cases saw countries rushing to gather protective gear for hospital staff. The lack of infrastructure to deal with infectious diseases has also been a major concern. The pandemic has been particularly concerning for Pakistan whose health care system was
already under great amount of stress. The country is also one of the last countries in the world where the polio virus has not been eliminated (Khalid and Akram 2020). The onset of COVID-19 has resulted in the suspension of the polio eradication campaign and there is a risk that this will result in a spike in polio cases in the months to come.

One area, which has seen a surge, is telemedicine whereby doctors are reached via telephone or internet by potential patients for advice. In fact, the government of Pakistan has also officially advertised telemedicine venues as it is perceived to help in terms of lowering the pressure on the health care system.

The Chinese Ministry of Health played a crucial role by sharing the genetic sequencing of the virus within days of isolating it. This information was very helpful for the rest of the world in terms of embarking on a plan to develop a testing mechanism. This highlights the importance of coordination and communication. Although it has to be said, the delay at the very onset of the pandemic contributed to the risk of spread.

A major focus in the coming months and years needs to address how we communicate about the health risks during such epidemics. The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the World Health Organization (WHO) both stated initially that masks were not required. Yet, it came to be that the masks were indeed an important component of social distancing. Moreover, uncertainty regarding herd immunity also resulted in a delayed response in certain cases.

Our knowledge, when it comes to be the pandemic, has evolved over the past few months. This has repercussions in terms of communicating the risks. As such it would serve the global community well if risk communication was made the centerpiece of crisis response mechanism.

3.7 World economy

According to the World Bank’s Global Economic Prospects report (2020), it is expected that a 5.2% contraction in global GDP will occur in 2020 due to the effects of COVID-19. This is the most significant recession to hit the world in nearly 80 years. Moreover, it is approximately three times the size of the last global recession that hampered the world economy in 2009.

The pandemic impact has affected the developed and developing countries alike. The financial and commodity markets, supply chains and global trade have all been highly affected. Resultantly, central banks have cut interest rates. Advanced economies are expected to shrink by 7%. China, which has experienced a high growth rate for decades, will experience a 1% growth rate in 2020, that is the lowest in four decades.

As is the case with the health system, the pandemic has placed in stark contrast the inefficiencies of the current economic system that benefits a select few. While larger businesses have survived and some are even thriving, it is the smaller setup, including startups, that are facing hurdles in terms of long-term stability.

In the meanwhile, a number of countries, including Pakistan, have embarked on a plan to provide people with emergency cash transfers through Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) and Ehsas Program. Yet, the emergency cash transfers are the bare minimum that can be done to support the vulnerable communities in these difficult times. If the pandemic lingers on than expected, this might result in more people being forced to live below the poverty line. That, in turn, will necessitate an increase in the scope and scale of such initiatives.

This is exactly why Banerjee and Duflo (2020) have called for a “COVID Marshall Plan” similar to the American initiative that supported Europe in the aftermath of World War 2. They
argue that the pandemic is similar in terms of devastation it causes and as such outside intervention will become necessary for many states.

Yet, it is difficult to foresee such a plan being materialized given the differences and conflicts amongst some of the great powers. This will make it imperative that countries continue to make the poor and the vulnerable key focus of their plans and policies to move forward. In addition, this will necessitate an upgrading of safety nets so that no one, who requires the necessary help, is left behind.

4. Conclusion
The year 2020 will long be remembered as the year when status quo changed. COVID-19 has brought forth multifarious challenges to global polity that has already been affected by local, regional and global differences. In addition, China has also tried to use its soft power to signal its arrival on the world stage by providing some needed medical equipment and personal protection equipment to countries across the world. Moreover, the pandemic has highlighted our collective inadequacies in terms of the non-traditional security threats such as health. The economic impact has caused recession, the likes of which have not been seen in many decades. Furthermore, the challenges of the pandemic have shed light on the global inadequacies in terms of addressing the specter of climate change. Yet, it will be our collective response, or lack thereof, that will eventually determine whether we are successful in addressing these challenges. A world divided by a new cold war will certainly find it difficult to do so while a world that is able to overcome its differences might still be able to make some headway in terms of future crisis. The choice is clear.

5. Recommendations

Cooperation between states: The inability of leadership to control the virus has challenged the power structure of classic and emerging superpowers. Globalization and multilateralism are under pressure. Political powers may face more complicated challenges. In COVID-19 time, they need to cooperate with each other in all respects to overcome the challenge.

Strong health and education infrastructure: The world after coronavirus may not be a safe world. More pandemics may be on their way. Pakistan must realize that managing pandemic has less to do with political power, but it needs a strong health and education infrastructure systems. Foreign aids in time of pandemics are not as helpful as domestic solutions.

Reforms in governance system: After COVID-19, only those countries may be successful, which would reform their systems, especially focusing on health, education, sustainable economy, digitalization, etc. The pandemic is manageable at country level. It is more of an issue of good governance and not necessarily of global or regional aid. Germany for instance has contained coronavirus because it practices a specific government model and political system.

Regional security policy: The national security in COVID-19 time is in fact the world security. People of the world are either all winners or all losers. Political leadership must consider this point and bring regional powers (especially in South Asia and Persian Gulf region) to a genuine dialogue to devise a regional security policy.

New definition of superpowers: Instead of military and economic might, the future superpowers will be defined on the basis of individual freedom and human rights, digital connectivity with the world and digital diplomacy, culture (e.g. tourism, art and music, exports, etc.), enterprise (e.g. ease of doing business), engagement (e.g. global diplomatic footprint) and
Risks for extremely powerful: Regarding the emergence of strong actors in global political order in future, the world must realize that becoming overwhelmingly powerful can pose risks of failure. China has a high potential to be the superpower in terms of economy and military might, but it must realize the changing situation of the world, especially the US.

Equality, justice, basic rights: The world after coronavirus will not be a world having specific ideologies. It is neither a world of socialism, communism, or liberalism, nor is it capitalism and liberal democracy which can take an absolute lead. There is a need to promote the culture of equality, justice, individual and fundamental rights, etc.

Climate Change coping strategies: While the pandemic has delayed the climate negotiations, it is imperative that countries continue to take necessary steps to mitigate and adapt to climate change. Pakistan should prioritize its plans to address the adaptation needs given the urgency of the climate crisis. The plans need to be developed sector-wise, as well as provincial, regional and institutional level.

Local level health plans and policies: Given the inadequacy of the health care system across the world, it is imperative that all citizens must be given access to adequate health care. In Pakistan, people living in towns and small cities have to come to major urban areas for their health and medical needs. Therefore, it is imperative that the country may develop district level health plans and policies that caters for the needs of growing population. These steps need to be facilitated by apportioning the required amount in the annual budget. Such a plan might not address the pandemic, but it will go a long way in addressing the future crises.

Social protection for all: Given the crisis, it is imperative that social protection is extended to everyone, who needs it. In Pakistan, a social protection programme is effectively trying to fill the necessary gap. However, there is a large percentage of people, who are not part of the government’s safety net due to various reasons. The government should use citizen data base such as National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) to ensure that 100% social protection is provided to those who need it.
References


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Annexure

Three senior experts, who participated in the focus group discussion are as follows:

- Dr Nazir Hussain (Dean of Faculty of Social Sciences, expert on International Relations, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad)
- Dr Jochen Hippler (Country Director, German Friedrich Ebert Foundation, Pakistan),
- Dr Imran S. Khalid (Research Fellow and expert on Climate Change, Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Islamabad).