

KFCRIS Report on the Regional and International Impacts of Coronavirus (COVID-19)

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Overview Current Situation

The World Health Organization categorizes Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) as an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus. Whilst not as deadly as other infectious diseases such as Ebola or other recognized forms of Coronavirus (MERS, SARS), it does appear to have a higher transmission

rate. Currently, there are no specific vaccines or treatments for COVID-19 although there are many ongoing clinical trials around the world evaluating potential treatments.

Since the beginning of the Coronavirus outbreak in Wuhan, China and subsequent global spread, the political, economic and social environments of states around the world have been severely disrupted. At the beginning of April 2020, it is impossible to predict the exact scale of the disruption and its overall cost to individual governments and societies. However, for governments, industry and countless individuals, normal life has already been overturned in previously unimaginable ways. For

Robert Kaplan of the Eurasia Group, "coronavirus is the historical marker between the first phase of globalization and the second, Globalization 2.0, which is about separating the globe into great-power blocs with their own burgeoning militaries and separate supply chains, about the rise of autocracies, and about social and class divides that have engendered nativism and populism. In sum, it is a story about new and re-emerging global divisions." Nonetheless, in the final analysis, only time will tell whether Coronavirus will be responsible for a more conflicted global order or one where states embrace the possibilities offered by global governance and enhanced multilateral cooperation.

Latest Coronavirus Statistics as of: (05 April 2020)

Global

Confirmed cases: **1,218,474**

Deaths: **65,883**

Recovered: **234,747**



Individual Countries

Up-to-date statistics on confirmed cases, deaths and recovered in specific countries can be found here:

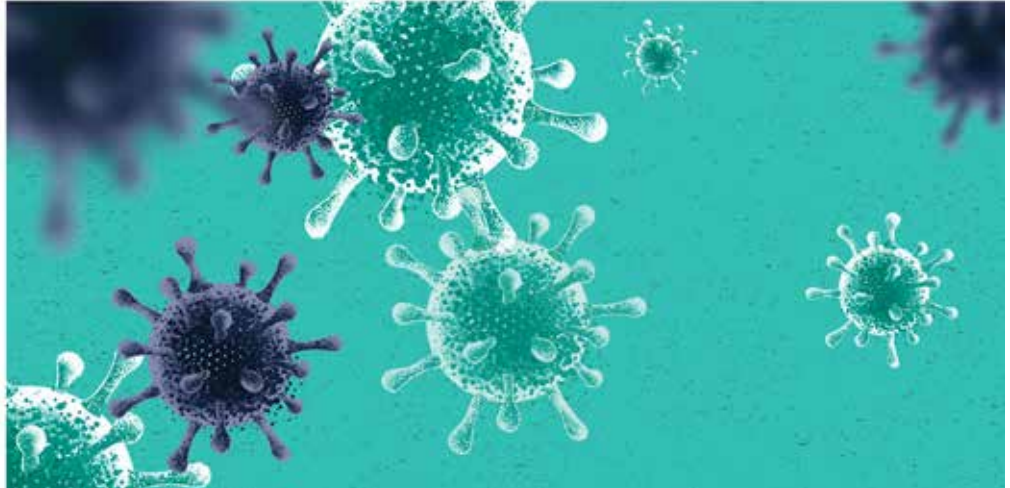
<https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html>
www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/

Rationale

This weekly report aims to assemble ideas, comment and debate, as well as specialist forecasting from experts and leaders from around the world to discuss the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on governments, economies and societies around the world. Whilst it is difficult to predict the extent that the pandemic will transform existing realities, it is possible to engage in scenario planning or analysis in order to envisage the structure and ambiance of a post-Coronavirus world. Therefore, the report will draw on the knowledge and expertise of renowned individuals, both domestic and international, to analyze current facts and scenario plan for the future. The topics and issues to be covered will include social, technical, economic, environmental, and political (STEER) trends as well as more specific issues such as demographics, geography, health care, migration, military, industrial information, and mineral reserves.

The global impact of the coronavirus pandemic poses several fundamental questions. These include (but are not limited) to the following:

- Is this one of those historic moments when the world changes permanently, when the balance of political and economic power shifts decisively, and when, for most people, in most countries, life is never quite the same again?



- How will the pandemic influence the future behaviour of nation states, governments and leaders and their often-dysfunctional relationships? Will they work together more closely, or will this shared trauma further divide them? In other words, will the pandemic strengthen the state and reinforce nationalism, or will it lead to greater multilateral cooperation and enhanced conflict resolution?
- To what degree has the impact of the virus affected individual states? Government responses to the virus have varied widely with some states being more prepared than others and therefore, able to mitigate the worst effects of Coronavirus on their health systems, economies and societies. Hence, what lessons can be drawn from these constructive examples?
- For the time-being it appears that most nationals are willing to tolerate massive disruptions to daily lives as many governments have signaled that there will be an end to these

restrictions. Indeed, it is a truism to say that these kinds of measures cannot last forever, but how will societies react if the virus is not contained and thus, government restrictions on societal freedoms become either middle to long-term?

- Some analysts have suggested “the return of the state” due to unprecedented government aid packages for businesses and workers that are intended to mitigate the virus’s economic and financial impact. But will this lead to a diminishing of regional and global multilateral forums and institutions?
- To what extent will the pandemic and its aftermath impact poorer and less developed states with limited resources and means of recovery?

If you are interested in contributing to future reports, please email Dr. Mark C. Thompson with a short outline of your proposed topic:

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Commentary & Analysis

This first KFCRIS weekly report on the regional and international impacts of coronavirus (COVID-19) comes at a critical time. Governments have responded to the growing pandemic by introducing quarantines, curfews and 'lockdowns' that impact national economies and the lifestyles of millions of people. Indeed, for many around the world, the future is highly uncertain. Hence, as part of this weekly report we aim to interview a diverse range of individuals including policy makers, academics and thinkers to seek their opinions on the impact of this pandemic as it relates to their area of interest. In this issue we interview HRH Prince Turki Al Faisal bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud a founder and trustee of the King Faisal Foundation. His Royal Highness is also the Chairman of the King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies. In addition, as the pandemic impacts on the work of think-tanks around the world, Ambassador (ret.) Gerald Feuerstein, Middle East Institute Senior Vice President gives his assessment of the effects of the coronavirus pandemic on the operations of the Middle East Institute.

Conversation with HRH Prince Turki Al Faisal

Q: Your Royal Highness, in your opinion, is this one of those historic moments when the world changes permanently, when the balance of political and economic power shifts decisively, and when, for most people, in most countries, life is never quite the same again?

A: *Because of the economic downturn caused by the pandemic, countries will invigorate their recovery efforts and people will be absorbed by that. They will turn inwards and seek to rectify whatever faults they discovered during the event.*

Q: In your opinion, how will the pandemic influence the future behaviour of nation states, governments and leaders and their often-dysfunctional relationships?

A: *Dysfunctional relationships will continue as we see by the growing maneuvering by America and China to push against each other. Some European countries will reevaluate their Union.*



Q: Government responses to the virus have varied widely with some states being more prepared than others and therefore, able to mitigate the worst effects of Coronavirus on their health systems, economies and societies. Hence, what lessons can be drawn from these constructive examples?

A: *Historically, people's responses to such traumas lead to an initial enthusiasm for improving their abilities. But eventually they will return to their behaviors as before the trauma. An example is how the world, i.e., the people, came out of WWII. Despite the establishment of the UN, which was supposed to regulate relations and prevent another world war, which it did, countries and peoples have come to lose faith in it. People are still being killed in military conflicts and the permanent members of the security council have misused that body more often than not to promote their narrow interests.*

Q: For the time-being it appears that most nationals are willing to tolerate massive disruptions to daily lives as many governments have signaled that there will be an end to these restrictions. But how might societies react if the virus is not contained and thus, government restrictions on societal freedoms become either middle to long-term?

A: *As long as people benefit from an existing situation, they will accept a more regimented social order. There will be exceptions, but they will be pushing against the majority. Demagogues will try to advance their ambitions, but they will not succeed.*

Q: In your opinion, to what extent will the pandemic and its aftermath impact poorer and less developed states with limited resources and means of recovery?

A: *Poorer countries will suffer, but there will be an increase in the international aid agencies to mitigate the effects of the virus on them.*

Q: In your opinion, with the US focused on domestic problems, could China take the crisis as an opportunity to start setting new rules according to its own global governance vision. Therefore, in your opinion, is the virus being used by China as a soft power tool to overtake its superpower rival, the US?

A: *The rivalry between China and the US preceded corona and will survive it. The US has already positioned itself to blame China for the virus as China is doing vis-a-vis the US. Media and military might favor the US.*

Q: At a moment of extreme geopolitical vulnerability, do you believe that the Coronavirus pandemic is an opportunity for the West's adversaries to watch—and benefit from—how these states cope, or do not cope, with this major crisis?

A: *Western states, or some of them, are expressing doubt and criticism of the West. The West has not shown a itself as a shining example of conduct towards the virus. Nor have China, Russia, and Iran.*

Q: In your opinion, what can we do (governments, industry, educational institutions and societies) to prevent or minimize the impact of another pandemic from causing global fatalities and widespread economic disruption?

A: *The G20 are putting a program on order to meet future threats. Common action is the best way to prevent such disasters.*

Middle East Institute Response to the Coronavirus Pandemic

Gerald M. Feierstein

The effects of the coronavirus pandemic on the operations of the Middle East Institute (MEI) have been dramatic and, potentially, long-lasting. Like most private sector enterprises in the Washington, DC metropolitan area, the Institute has been operating under increasingly restrictive government instructions since mid-March. MEI staff have responded to stay-at-home directives that are likely to remain in place in this area until the end of May or, possibly, even into June.

Substantively, to remain relevant in the current environment, the Institute moved quickly to focus on the impact of the pandemic in the Middle East/North Africa region. We were able to hold a very well-received panel discussion on the pandemic early in the crisis and we have continued to offer a number of analytical pieces on our website that examine the economic and social aspects of the crisis. As we move into a new phase, we are shifting our focus again to look at long-term responses to the pandemic, including those elements of systemic strengthening to manage more effectively similar global pandemics in the future. Despite that new focus, we have maintained, of course, our traditional coverage of critical non-coronavirus related issues in the region.

Operationally, as a result of the stay-at-home and social distancing guidelines, the Institute has transitioned almost entirely to virtual platforms. This has had a very limited impact on the written product that the Institute produces for its website. Since many of these postings were already submitted electronically, and in light of the fact that many of our contributors are not resident in the Washington, DC area and, in fact, are scattered throughout the U.S. and the region, there has been no tangible decline in the number of submissions or our ability to sustain the high value of our website. We expect that there will be no change in that reality going forward.

The most significant change in the Age of Global Pandemics is in the Institute's public offerings, including conferences, roundtable discussions, and panels. Having moved last summer into newly renovated facilities with state-of-the-art A/V capabilities, MEI reached new peaks in terms of the events that we sponsored and conducted at our headquarters building. As this is not now possible, the Institute has moved to an entirely virtual platform. This transition has been smooth, and the new format has worked remarkably well. In fact, as we are no longer tethered to physical presence in Washington, we have been able to draw on a global pool of panelists and an audience that is similarly drawn from around the world. In our view, this has made the Institute's programs richer and more relevant than ever before. For that reason, our expectation is that we will continue to look at virtual programs going forward regardless of the ultimate outcome of the coronavirus pandemic.



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