Conference Guide

BIMUN 2021
Budapest, Hungary

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Dear Delegates,

the pandemic situation we are still living in, up to this day, is unprecedented in the globalised era. An invisibly small virus caused pneumonia, pneumonia caused cough, cough caused spreading, spreading caused quarantine, quarantine caused isolation, isolation caused unemployment, unemployment caused uncertainty, uncertainty caused social tensions, and we could go on forever.

The effects of COVID-19 will be multifaceted, and will vary throughout countries and regions. There are not so many changes after all – you may say. Well, keep in mind that we are not at the end of all this: there is a new mutant version to the coronavirus; there are uncertainties and doubts about vaccines that may cause further social unrest; there is still a wave of global economic restoration to come – just to mention a few things.

The globalised world is in crisis. Not an enormous one, but a significant one. Having that in mind, we (as the Organisers of BIMUN 2021) have decided that you, future leaders who are creative, and can think outside the box, could take on to shape innovative ideas, solutions and try out yourselves in the role of different nations in a complex crisis situation that will affect all different committees and UN organs in the conference.

In the conference, after addressing the issues of your committee in the first session, you will be given a crisis with regular updates. The crisis situation will be common to all chambers, but your committees shall choose from its various segments which ones to tackle, in accordance with the framework of your agenda.

Since most of your work will be based on your creativity and ad hoc decisions, it is important that you have detailed background information and knowledge in your mind. Therefore we provide you a Conference Guide (this one), which briefly analyses the current situation on the COVID-19 pandemic (as of early 2021), and gives you some inspiration about what to focus on when you prepare to the conference. You will read five short essays from some of our professional Organisers: students, just like you, curious, keen and diligent.

It is important that you read your respective Committee Guides as well when they are published on our website (around early March). They will be significantly shorter than the present Conference Guide. Please make sure that you read the present document, and start your preparation in time, preferably before we publish the Committee Guides, since the deadline for submitting your Position Papers may be tight.

I wish you an enjoyable and successful preparation for the conference. See you at BIMUN 2021.

Illés Katona,

Secretary-General
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The Legal and Political Relevance of the United Nations

by Márton Vida, Professional Advisor

Introduction

This section aims to summarise the legal and political competencies of the main organs of the United Nations. It is thus to be made clear in the outset that it is not going to be a comprehensive overview of the United Nations in general, as most of its fundamental features can easily be found on the United Nations website.\(^1\) A more complex topic about which many beginner delegates seem to lack knowledge about is the nature and significance of the decisions made by certain UN bodies. Therefore, this short essay would serve as a guide to understanding these issues.

At first, we will focus on the Charter of the United Nations as not only the founding document of the UN but also an essential treaty regulating the behaviour of states. Then we will go on discussing the features of the main organs of the UN, however only three of the six official ones will be assessed (the General Assembly, the Security Council and the International Court of Justice). The reason for leaving out the rest is that they are mostly irrelevant for your participation at BIMUN.\(^2\)

The United Nations Charter

The Charter of the United Nations was adopted in the immediate aftermath of World War II, as a pledge from the emerging international community to prevent any such human catastrophe from ever occurring again. Attempting to avoid the mistake of the earlier drafters

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\(^2\) At BIMUN, the ECOSOC and the specialised agencies in the Assembly of Councils follow the exact same guidelines as the committees of the General Assembly, except for working separately on the last day. The Secretariat is modelled by the Organising team, while the Trusteeship Council is inactive since 1994, and thus is not modelled at all.
of the Covenant of the League of Nations, the framers tried to separate the Charter’s adoption from the post-war negotiations and thus it was done so on a separate conference in San Francisco. Nevertheless, the Charter involves terms which indicate that it was drafted in a still belligerent atmosphere, as it uses the term “enemy state” five times. However, regardless of some of the Charter’s criticisms for it being not textually different enough from the failed Covenant of the League of Nations, it definitely contributed to the development of an international legal system. Through the codification of different norms applying to all its members, it was able to set up an international value system besides establishing the organisation called the United Nations.

Such contribution may best be seen in its advocacy for human rights. Its several provisions stressing the importance of upholding certain universal human rights by the member states led to the adoption of several human rights documents, most famously, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The main foundation of these provisions can be found in article 1(3):

(The Purposes of the United Nations are)... encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion.

Even if many of these documents had initially been non-legal declarations (such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights itself) they later became to be so widely acknowledged, that they are mainly seen as having the status of customary international law.

Another really ambitious provision of the Charter aiming to regulate how states shall behave, can be found in its article 2(4), which reads as:

All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations.

The aim of this article is quite clearly to outlaw war once and for all. It became an authoritative promise of the Charter, by world leaders citing it repeatedly in criticising the acts of certain states. However, there was a crucial limit put on this provision, by article 51:

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5 A great comparison between the two founding documents may be found in supra note 3.
8 Customary international law refers to a set of rules which bind every single state in their conduct, regardless of whether they are party to a convention having such provision. These rules are therefore unwritten ones still having a binding effect, and thus they may form reason for judgement in international (or even national) courts.
10 Besides the use of force under Security Council authorisation, which will be discussed later.
Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations, until the Security Council has taken the measures necessary to maintain international peace and security...  

Article 51 therefore holds that no member state shall be alienated from its right to use force in self-defence if the circumstances require so. One can imagine, that such provision may easily open a loophole for states to invoke self-defence as a justification for war by broadly interpreting the scope of the article. For that reason, the International Court of Justice emphasised several times certain rules of customary international law limiting this right to self defence, such as the principles of necessity and proportionality. Nevertheless it remains a dangerous loophole for states with less peaceful purposes, such as the Saudi intervention in Yemen, the Turkish military operations in Northern Syria or the War on Terror by the US and its allies.

Obviously, several other such achievements of the Charter could be listed here, however it would go beyond the scope of this essay to assess all of them. Before turning to the actual working of the UN organs based on the Charter, a few other examples worthy of looking at may be mentioned. Article 2(7) for instance ensures that the UN does not get involved in matters which are essentially within the domestic affairs of the member states. Besides, article 103 gives a supremacy to the obligations under the Charter over any other piece of international law. Lastly, article 4 outlines the procedure for admitting new members to the organisation, paragraph 2 of which requires the Security Council to make a recommendation first, which is the reason why the US was able to block Palestine’s membership on multiple occasions.

The General Assembly

Now that we have briefly demonstrated the relevance of the Charter as a multilateral (or arguably even universal) treaty regulating the behaviour of states, it is time to turn to the examination of the main organs established by it. Out of them, the General Assembly may be...
deemed as the most democratic one, by the equal participation of all 193 member states. However, just like all other organs of the United Nations, the GA was not meant to become a legislative body.\textsuperscript{18,19} Rather it was intended to be an organ coordinating the behaviour of member states through recommendations. Despite being non-binding, such resolutions could obviously carry huge political weight, hence they are adopted by the majority of all the 193 member states. As set out by article 10 of the Charter:

The General Assembly may discuss any questions or any matters within the scope of the present Charter or relating to the powers and functions of any organs provided for in the present Charter, and, except as provided in Article 12, may make recommendations to the Members of the United Nations or to the Security Council or to both on any such questions or matters.\textsuperscript{20}

What may strike one in the wording of article 10, is the exception highlighted by a reference to article 12. Such constraint on the scope of issues the GA may make recommendations on will be clear if we read at article 12(1):

While the Security Council is exercising in respect of any dispute or situation the functions assigned to it in the present Charter, the General Assembly shall not make any recommendation with regard to that dispute or situation unless the Security Council so requests.\textsuperscript{21}

What was tried to be avoided by this provision is therefore a conflict between the recommendations made by the Security Council and the General Assembly. However this led to issues in the very early years of the United Nations, as it was realised that it can easily make the GA incompetent to act when there is a deadlock in the SC due to veto threats.

It happened so in the summer of 1950, when the Soviet Union was boycotting the meetings of the Security Council due to its complaint of the UN recognising the Taiwanese delegation as a permanent member of the Council, instead of the new revolutionary communist government of China. During that time the Western states were able to pass resolutions 83 and 84, which authorised the military intervention in the Korean Civil War against the communist powers. After these events the USSR returned to the chamber and started to veto resolutions put forward by the US and its allies, which led the US to persuade the General Assembly that it should assume power in making recommendations regarding armed conflicts, if the SC is unable to do so. This has lead to the adoption of General Assembly resolution 377, also known as “Uniting for Peace”.\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{19} The Security Council’s ability of adopting binding decisions under article 25 of the Charter will be assessed later. However, it would yet be claimed that nor was the Council initially intended to become an international legislative body, but rather an entity for the more effective coordination of states in implementing the purposes of the Charter.
\textsuperscript{21} ibid., 5.
Resolution 377 made a possibility for member states to claim that the Security Council has failed in resolving a certain dispute and thus the General Assembly shall make recommendations on the matter notwithstanding article 12 of the Charter. If at the moment the GA is not at session, it was even provided that an Emergency Special Session may be established so that it can take the appropriate measures. Uniting for Peace may be invoked by a procedural vote\textsuperscript{23} of the Security Council or by a letter signed by the majority of the members of the United Nations to the Secretary General.\textsuperscript{24} It is not to be misunderstood though, that invoking Uniting for Peace does not mean that the SC delegates all its powers to the GA for resolving a given issue. It merely means that the General Assembly is able to discuss a given dispute and thus make recommendations to member states within its own competences. Therefore, the GA still cannot authorise military interventions or bind member states to impose sanctions.\textsuperscript{25} However, it can for instance reaffirm existing pieces of international law, as it did so in reaction to US President Trump’s recognition of Jerusalem as the capital city of Israel, in 2017:

Affirms that any decisions and actions which purport to have altered the character, status or demographic composition of the Holy City of Jerusalem have no legal effect, are null and void and must be rescinded in compliance with relevant resolutions of the Security Council.\textsuperscript{26}

Furthermore, as United Nations peacekeeping is based on the principle of host state consent and thus does not require a binding resolution, the General Assembly can also deploy peacekeepers through Emergency Special Sessions. It did so for instance in 1956, in the aftermath of the Suez Crisis, after which UN Peacekeepers could serve as a buffer zone between Egypt and Israel.\textsuperscript{27}

Besides making strong political recommendations reinforced by Uniting for Peace, the General Assembly has also managed to take part in creating binding international law. It has done so in two ways: (1) by codifying already existing customary rules of international law, and (2) by drafting binding multilateral treaties for its members.\textsuperscript{28} The lesser way is self-explanatory, while an example for the first case may be the often cited \textit{Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations} of 1970, which is widely seen as reflecting customary international law.\textsuperscript{29} However, such declarations of convention obviously led to disagreements in certain cases, such as when the International Court of Justice recognised

\textsuperscript{23} In procedural votes the permanent members cannot veto provisions.
\textsuperscript{25} Such competences of the Security Council under chapter VII of the Charter will be discussed later.
\textsuperscript{28} Chaesterman, Simon; Johnstone, Ian and Malone, David M. \textit{Law and Practice of the United Nations}, 151.
\textsuperscript{29} ibid., 152.
General Assembly resolution 2131 as customary international law in its judgement on the *Nicaragua v. USA* case of 1986.\(^30\)

**The Security Council**

With the adoption of the UN Charter in 1945, the wide range of legal powers given to the Security Council seemed to be one of its most ambitious provisions in relation to the League of Nation’s Covenant.\(^31\) It could be believed so, because under article 25, it can impose legal obligations on member states,\(^32\) while Chapter VII gives it a variety of options to enforce them.\(^33\) It was initially set up as an 11 members Council which was extended to 15 in 1966,\(^34\) consisting of 5 permanent and 10 elected members. The five permanent members - also known as P5 - are the main winning powers of WWII, that is, China, France, Russia, UK and USA, and they possess an exclusive right to veto resolutions in the Council.\(^35\) Obviously, this has led to many disagreements on whether these specific five countries really deserve such power, but nevertheless this set up remained.\(^36\)

As it was already mentioned, the Security Council is not only able to adopt legally binding decisions, but also has certain means to enforce them. The first of these may be found in article 41:

The Security Council may decide what measures not involving the use of armed force are to be employed to give effect to its decisions, and it may call upon the Members of the United Nations to apply such measures. These may include complete or partial interruption of economic relations and of rail, sea, air, postal, telegraphic, radio, and other means of communication, and the severance of diplomatic relations.\(^37\)

This article was widely used since the Cold War as an attempt to put pressure on member states. However, such economic sanctions often caused economic loss for certain member states which also led to a rising number of complaints under article 50.\(^38\) Should such economic

\(^30\) ibid., 152-153.
\(^33\) ibid., 9-11.
\(^35\) The voting of the Security Council is clarified by article 27 of the Charter, paragraph 3 of which has an interesting provision: “...in decisions under Chapter VI, and under paragraph 3 of Article 52, a party to a dispute shall abstain from voting”. This would mean that in cases when the SC is merely making recommendations and thus not opting for using its competences under Chapter VII, a P5 nation which is party to the given issue cannot veto that resolution. However, it was soon found out, that it is impossible to establish that a certain great power is or is not a party to any major dispute in the world, and therefore, this provision is only applied as a moral guideline for members rather than a binding rule.
measures be insufficient, the Council was given an even more authoritative option under article 42:

...the Security Council... may take such action by air, sea, or land forces as may be necessary to maintain or restore international peace and security. Such action may include demonstrations, blockade, and other operations by air, sea, or land forces of Members of the United Nations. 39

The way this article was mainly applied is through authorising member states to launch military interventions in certain conflicts, in order to implement a mandate given to them by the Council. 40 Under the United Nations Charter system of international law, this seems to be the only legitimate way to use force besides self-defence. 41 However, such military interventions turned out to be some of the most controversial measures of the United Nations.

The relevance of military interventions authorised by the Security Council only started to grow after the end of the Cold War, as prior to that most military conflicts were proxy wars between the US and the USSR, both of which possessing veto powers. After the fall of the Soviet block the opportunity soon came for the SC to demonstrate its ability to actively resolve armed conflicts. That was the case of the First Gulf War, during which the Council adopted resolution 678 of 1991, authorising member states “to use all necessary means” to force Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait. After the US allied troops successfully acted upon their mandate, it was started to be believed that the SC could play a more active role in armed conflicts, by legitimising military interventions for the sake of peace and security. 42 Such enthusiasm can best be observed by the fact that while during its first 40 years the SC adopted only 24 resolutions under Chapter VII, by the year 1993 it did as many annually. 43

However, the enthusiasm soon diminished by the events of 911 and its aftermath. Firstly, the United Nations had to realise that even if the Charter of 1945 assumes states to be the biggest and almost sole threat to international peace and security, the 21st century poses radically different challenges, by the emergence of serious terrorist organisations. 44 Even if the Security Council together with other organs of the United Nations started working on counter-terrorist measures, the US and some its allies did not seem to have trusted the organisation in its ability to effectively tackle the Middle Eastern terrorist cells. The result was the extremely controversial Second Gulf War in 2003, in which the US and the UK violated the principles of the United Nations by invading Iraq without Security Council authorisation or at least majority

40 The way how such authorisations actually arise from article 42 is briefly explained by Professor d’Argent in his video: d’Argent, Pierre. 2017. “The Use Of Force Authorized By The UN”. Leuven, Belgium, 2017. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y0UVg8AUV3Q&list=PLZqZuVp5NUhbnp7FF89ltFUbw5WGYFiZ&index=99
43 ibid., 21.
44 ibid., 26.
support among the member states. Additionally, another issue arose when the SC adopted another resolution authorising the use of force in Libya in 2011. The task given by resolution 1973 was to defend the civilian population in Libya, however the intervening Western forces arguably exceeded such mandate, as the intervention led to the killing of Gaddafi, the then head of state of Libya.

There were other cases since the Cold War when major Western powers launched military interventions without explicit Security Council authorisations, however some of them turned out to be more fruitful than the others. For instance the inability of the SC to legitimise the NATO military intervention in Kosovo contributed to the wider recognition of the Responsibility to Protect, and thus it was eventually included in the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document, in paragraphs 138 and 139. The exact customary rules of international law applying to such unauthorized humanitarian interventions, which invoke the failure of a state to deliver on its responsibility of protecting its civilians from war crimes, genocide or other forms of suffering, are still questionable though.

Other than that, just like the General Assembly, the Security Council has also realised its lawmaking abilities on certain occasions. It even had an easier task in doing so, as member states have consented to accepting its decisions as binding under article 25 of the Charter. Therefore, in certain cases the SC adopted resolutions imposing obligations on all member states for an unlimited amount of time, such as resolutions 1373 of 2001 or 1540 of 2003. The SC’s competence to adopt such binding decisions was enhanced by the International Court of Justice’s recognition of SC decisions as binding even outside Chapter VII, however the question whether certain provisions of Security Council resolutions are decisions or recommendations have been debated over time.

The International Court of Justice

It may strike one that this introductory essay for BIMUN delegates includes a section on the International Court of Justice, as the Court has never been modelled at any BIMUN

50 ibid., 144.
51 The International Court of Justice elaborated on these issues in its advisory opinion of 1971, titled Legal Consequences for States of the Continued Presence of South Africa in Namibia (South West Africa) notwithstanding Security Council Resolution 276. Recently, a similar issue arose by Trump’s withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, in regards to whether resolution 2231 of 2015 imposed any obligations on the United States to comply with the nuclear agreement. A legal discussion of this topic can be found in a report of the Congressional Research Service: Mulligan, Samuel. “Withdrawal from the Iran Nuclear Deal: Legal Authorities and Implications” Congressional Research Service. 2018.
conference so far. However, it is going to be seen that regardless of its huge limits in contrast to domestic supreme courts, it played an essential role in the United Nations system. Therefore, it would be argued that knowledge about the working and relevance of the Court may be useful for any MUN delegates, even if they are not participants of a committee with the same name.

First of all, it is essential to see that the Court was not created to be resembling domestic Courts in many senses. The most crucial of these is that it can only have jurisdiction over cases in which both parties have voluntarily consented to bringing it in front of the Court. Article 36 of the Statute of the International Court of Justice sets out a procedure under which member states can declare to accept the Court’s jurisdiction as unconditionally binding, but only 73 states have done so so far, out of which the United Kingdom is the only P5 country. Furthermore, according to article 59, even after the two parties have declared to accept the decision of the Court in the given case they have brought forward, the decision can only have binding effects on these two states, and not on any other country or future decision of the Court. Pursuant to article 41, however, the Court does not only have the authority to make decision on a certain legal dispute, but can also order provisional measures to be taken by the states if it deems necessary.

Another case when the ICJ may have jurisdiction over member states without explicit authorisation to try that given case, is when a treaty includes a provision of recognising the ICJ as the authority to settle disputes among the parties to that treaty, should any of them suspect another party violating it. An interesting - but rather political - such case happened recently, when Iran argued that the US violated an old bilateral treaty between the two states by imposing new sanctions on Iran. The treaty alleged to be violated by the US is the Treaty of Amity, Economic Relations and Consular Rights of 1955, article 21(2) of which stated that any dispute on the application or interpretation of the treaty shall be resolved by the ICJ. Even if the US has withdrawn its recognition of ICJ jurisdiction as unconditionally compulsory after the Nicaragua v. USA judgement of 1986, the Court could proceed with the case due to this provision of the Treaty of Amity. As a consequence, the Court unanimously imposed the following provisional measure on the United States:

The United States of America, in accordance with its obligations under the 1955 Treaty of Amity, Economic Relations, and Consular Rights, shall remove, by means of its choosing, any impediments arising from the measures announced on 8 May 2018 to the free exportation to the territory of the Islamic Republic of Iran of:

(i) medicines and medical devices;
(ii) foodstuffs and agricultural commodities; and

55 ibid., 27.
(iii) spare parts, equipment and associated services (including warranty, maintenance, repair services and inspections) necessary for the safety of civil aviation;\textsuperscript{57}

It can thus be seen that the Court lacks jurisdiction over many cases and many of its provisional measures are not implemented at all - such as the above cited one. Nevertheless, many of its judgements became to be recognised as essential clarifications on the interpretation of customary international law or the United Nations Charter, even if it does not have an authorisation of making binding decisions on such matters.\textsuperscript{58} If not in its judgements, the Court was able to clarify certain such rules in its advisory opinions, which can be requested either by the General Assembly or the Security Council under article 96(1) of the Charter.\textsuperscript{59} Examples of such widely recognised clarifications have already been mentioned above, such as the limits on the scope of self-defence\textsuperscript{60} or the bindingness of certain Security Council resolutions.\textsuperscript{61}

**Conclusion**

This section has aimed to show the legal and political relevance of the United Nations, by limiting its scope to what is essential for understanding debates at BIMUN. It has therefore tried to raise attention on four different topics: (1) the relevance of the Charter as a treaty regulating the behaviour of states, (2) the relevance of the Security Council, (3) the relevance of the General Assembly and (4) the relevance of the International Court of Justice. It was shown that all these bodies were able to achieve more than they were originally intended to in certain aspects, while not neglecting their downsides.

Regarding the United Nations Charter, it was argued that it contributed to the building of a universal international legal system by its advocacy for human rights and serious limits on the use of force. The General Assembly was even shown to be able to act as a legislative body regardless of the fact that it was initially meant to adopt political recommendations. Such characteristic was also found in the case of the Security Council, however the emphasis was mainly put on its controversial authorisations of the use force by member states. Lastly, the International Court of Justice’s limits of competence were assessed, but yet it was shown that it could also find its role in interpreting and clarifying both customary international law and the provisions of the Charter.

\textsuperscript{57} ibid., 28.

\textsuperscript{58} Schachter, Oscar. "United Nations Law.", 7-8.


\textsuperscript{60} On this matter see supra note 12.

\textsuperscript{61} On this matter see supra note 51.
Coronavirus: Past, Present and Future

by Anna Kelemen, Deputy President of the General Assembly

Introduction

We have all heard of the so-called COVID-19 virus. It has many aliases, yet its original name is SARS-CoV-2. Medically speaking, it is a contagious, infectious disease which attacks the respiratory system of the human body. The world has seen more than 61 million confirmed cases as of today and the virus has claimed about 1.4 million lives since the first case was officially identified in Wuhan, China, in December 2019.

COVID-19 spreads via a number of means, primarily involving saliva and other bodily fluids. These fluids can form droplets and aerosols, which can spread as an infected person breathes, coughs, sneezes, or speaks. The virus may also be transmitted via contaminated surfaces and direct contact. It can spread as early as two days before infected persons show symptoms (presymptomatic), and also from asymptomatic individuals, who don’t show the symptoms of the virus. People remain infectious for up to ten days in moderate cases, and two weeks in severe cases.

Symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, cough, extreme fatigue, breathing difficulties, and loss of smell and taste. After exposure to the virus, symptoms begin to develop in one to fourteen days. Luckily, most people have mild symptoms, however, longer-term damage to organs, particularly in the lungs and the heart, has been observed.

Nearly a year after the disease was first identified and diagnosed, a number of vaccines stand at our disposal. Pfizer–BioNTech, Moderna, and the University of Oxford and AstraZeneca’s vaccines made headlines first, all stating that their medication is 95% effective against COVID-19. Some call it a miracle, since many expected the developing of vaccines might take years. The international medical community has worked together tirelessly to beat the disease and has won. Pfizer, Moderna, and AstraZeneca predicted a manufacturing capacity of 5.3 billion doses in 2021, which could be used to vaccinate about 2.6 billion people (as the vaccines require two doses for a protective effect). By December, more than 10 billion vaccine doses had been pre-ordered by countries around the globe, though about half of them was purchased by high-income countries, covering only 14% of the world's population.

The global market for COVID-19 diagnostics is valued at $60.3 billion in 2020, and market researchers expect it to grow to $84.4 billion in 2021.
Economy

The COVID-19 pandemic is a global shock ‘like no other’, involving simultaneous disruptions to both supply and demand in an interconnected world economy.

Supply-demand

On the supply side, infections reduce labour supply and productivity, while lockdowns, business closures, and social distancing also cause disruptions. During the first few weeks of worldwide lockdowns in March 2020, after the WHO has announced that the COVID-19 disease is officially a pandemic, supply shortages occurred because of panic buying. These panic-bought items differ regionally: in North America, toilet paper and hand sanitizer sold out quickly, meanwhile in Eastern Europe, people mostly stocked up on flour and sugar.

On the demand side, layoffs, loss of income (because of morbidity, quarantines, and unemployment) and worsened economic prospects reduce household consumption and firms’ investment.

Stock markets

The pandemic caused the largest global recession in history, with more than a third of the global population at the time being placed in lockdown.

Global stock markets fell on 24 February 2020 due to a significant rise in the number of COVID-19 cases outside mainland China. By 28 February 2020, stock markets worldwide saw their largest single-week declines since the 2008 financial crisis. However, the worldwide market crash arrived around the 13th of March, causing even the biggest stock exchange indexes to fall. Since then, the world of commerce has stabilized, fixing itself on a steady climb.

Industrial impact

Technology

The initial outbreak in China impacted facilities producing parts and components, disrupting the global supply chain of technological goods. It is difficult to predict what the final impact will be; however, early analysis predicts overall growth in the tech supply, but forecast the service sector being limited to two percent. Why? As a result of sometimes country-wide lockdowns, many were forced to work remotely, from home. With school closures, students did not stop learning, but switched to online or distant learning, or as some call it, home-schooling. In an imaginary household, with two parents and two children, that would require at least two electronic devices to be used at the same time. A lot of households, therefore,
invested not only in extra laptops or tablets, but also in increasing their internet bandwidth. Companies such as MediaMarkt and Saturn experienced sales momentums, despite lockdowns and store closures.

Travel

Travel and tourism are among the most affected sectors with airplanes on the ground, hotels closed and travel restrictions put in place in virtually all countries around the world.

If you wish to see more data, please visit the United Nations’ World Tourism Organisation’s dashboard at: https://www.unwto.org/international-tourism-and-covid-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has triggered one of the worst job crises since the Great Depression. There is a real danger that the crises will increase poverty and widen inequalities, with the impact felt only in the coming years. The travel industry had the biggest impact on unemployment rates: as hundreds of thousands of flights were cancelled, many pilots, cabin crew and airport workers were laid off. This ignited a chain reaction: as there were less travellers, hotels, motels, and restaurants, relying on tourists have had to make changes as well. Some started to pay minimum-wage to their employees in an effort to keep them, others have had to let thousands of staff go. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the impact on jobs has been 10 times bigger than that of the global financial crisis. For highly detailed statistics, please visit: http://www.oecd.org/employment-outlook/2020/

Unemployment

The International Labour Organization issued a prediction on 7 April stating that 6.7% of job hours would be lost globally in the second quarter of 2020, equivalent to 195 million full-time jobs. They also estimated that 30 million jobs were lost in the first quarter alone, compared to 25 million during the 2008 financial crisis.

In January and February 2020, during the height of the epidemic in Wuhan, about 5 million people in China lost their jobs. In March 2020, more than 10 million Americans lost their positions of employment and applied for government aid. The coronavirus outbreak could cost 47 million jobs in the United States and unemployment rate may hit 32%, according to estimates by the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis.
Oil

The oil and gas industry are used to the highs and lows of economic cycles. The downturn caused by COVID-19, however, is unlike any other. Global oil demand fell by 25% in April, but it has rebounded sharply since then, cutting its losses to just 8%. Mass layoffs and heightened cyclicality in employment continue to challenge the industry’s reputation as a reliable employer. Oil and gas companies in the United States laid off about 14% of permanent employees in 2020, and researches show that 70% of jobs lost during the pandemic may not come back by the end of 2021.

April 20, 2020 will go down in oil-market history as the day when the U.S. benchmark price for crude dropped below zero for the first time – and then kept falling. In a massive and unprecedented swing, the future contracts for May delivery of West Texas Intermediate tumbled to minus $37.63 a barrel. The jaw-dropping development was in no small measure down to an extreme glitch in the way oil futures operate. But it also revealed a fundamental truth about the oil market in the age of coronavirus and the aftermath of a price war: the world’s most important commodity is quickly losing all value as chronic oversupply overwhelms the world’s crude tanks, pipelines and supertankers.

Carbon emissions & environment

Government policies during the coronavirus pandemic have drastically altered patterns of energy demand around the world. Many international borders were closed and populations were confined to their homes, which reduced transport and changed consumption patterns.
Aviation decreased by 75%, surface transport by 50%, power generation by 15%, industry by about 35%, and there was a small increase in residential buildings of 5%.

At their peak, emissions in individual countries decreased by 26% on average.

The coronavirus had a vast impact on our environment: residents of Venice in March noticed improvement in the quality of the famous canals that run through the city, which were running clear for the first time in years. Even fish could be seen in the usually murky waters.

The restrictions imposed to fight the spread of the virus have provided some short-term positive impacts on Europe’s environment, according to the EEA (European Environment Agency). These include temporary improvements in air quality, lower greenhouse gas emissions and lower levels of noise pollution. However, there have been negative consequences such as low oil priced resulting from lockdowns and increased use of single-use plastics, and the EEA emphasised that ways out of the pandemic should focus on reshaping our unsustainable production and consumption systems to achieve long-term environmental benefits.

**Psychological impact**

In public mental health terms, the main psychological impact to date is elevated rates of stress or anxiety. But as new measures and impacts are introduced – especially lockdown and its effects on many people’s usual activities, routines or livelihoods – levels of loneliness, depression, harmful alcohol and drug use, and self-harm or suicidal behaviour are also expected to rise.

Steven Taylor, author of The Psychology of Pandemics, and professor in psychiatry at the University of British Columbia, argues that “for an unfortunate minority of people, perhaps 10 to 15%, life will not return to normal”, due to the impact of the pandemic on their mental wellbeing.

One reason, why psychologists are concerned about the potential long-term impact of COVID-19, is existing insights from previous pandemics and national emergencies. The SARS global outbreak in 2003 was associated with a 30% increase in suicides in people over the age of 65. Strategies like quarantine that are necessary to minimise viral spread can have a negative psychological impact, such as causing post-traumatic stress symptoms, depression and
insomnia. Job loss and financial struggles during a global economic downturn have been associated with a long-lasting decline in mental health.

Meanwhile, the stress of living through the pandemic is likely to have a greater ongoing mental toll on those who have had painful life experiences in the past. It might trigger the memory of the trauma consciously and unconsciously, which can affect a person.

Thankfully, more and more governments have started to realise that the mental health of their citizens are important and should be cared about. Several EU countries have created websites and free phonelines for people struggling with anxiety and depression or for whoever needs mental health support because of the pandemic or the resulting quarantine.

In Hungary, several organisations have direct phone lines to mental health help. For teenagers and young adults, it’s called Kék Vonal or Blue Line (phone number: 116 111). Most lines like this provide 7/24, free, anonym services to people who reach out to them.

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The Second Once-in-a-Lifetime Economic Crisis of Our Generation: an Overview

by Laura Brantmüller, President of the General Assembly

Introduction

The alarming spread of the Covid-19 virus has resulted in the infection of millions and a near-standstill in economic activities as countries imposed stringent restrictions and lockdowns on movement with the aim of slowing the spread of the virus. The globalisation of the pandemic engendered devastating economic impacts that are set to run havoc across all economies in the world, throwing many into recession (Barua, 2020).

The pandemic is expected to plunge most countries into recession, with per capita income contracting in the largest fraction of countries globally since 1870. Every region is subject to substantial growth downgrades. Despite the virus being still prevalent in countries, governments face soaring pressure to revive the economy even at the expense of public safety.

Effects on international trade and trade flows

The pandemic brought about an inevitable depression in global stock markets with immensely volatile swings due to extreme uncertainty in markets. In March 2020, stocks across North America and Europe experienced a sharp decline by more than 9% in a single day, which has not occurred since 1987.

In the second quarter of 2020, a precipitous fall disrupted international trade as lockdown measures were introduced, however, in the third quarter global merchandise
commerce rebounded sharply, as shown on the “G20 international merchandise trade” statistics below.  

![Graph showing quarterly levels of G20 exports and imports from 2017 to 2020.]

Most countries introduced more stringent sanitary and technical barriers to imports from other states (with special regard to China) and restricted entry for non-citizens with rigorous health assessments (Barua, 2020). While these disruptions were instituted to be temporary, some changes may persist in the long run.

A shift of sourcing and production to locations that are less stricken by the virus (or countries without strict lockdown provisions) in order to elude extensive supply chain disturbance has been noted. Some of these adaptations may be tenacious.

**Direct, short-term impacts**

First and foremost, it is important to differentiate two types of products and services: essential and non-essential as the demand for them is considerably polar.

The shock to countries’ demand, production and supply chain prompt a substantial plummet in the international trade of services and goods, thus, internationalising the initial local market shock.  

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Long-term macroeconomic and macro-relational impacts

Prolonged distortions impinge on the economic indexes of countries. A sharp fall in non-essential goods and services will result in a net decline in the aggregate demand of the economy. Furthermore, the over-demand for essential products will push the price level up (Barua, 2020).

Many countries have been subsidising industries and firms in order to avoid lay-offs on a big scale, however, the continuous closures eventually lead to the inability of governments to prop up struggling companies, thus, those businesses who have managed to keep their employees will be forced to dismiss them. Business volume will face deleterious effects.

Current estimations suggest that in the long-run, prices of all goods and services could be reinstated.

Oil trade and prices

Countries that are net exporters of oil are experiencing an unprecedented thwack: not only are they afflicted by the pandemic but they also have to face with an oil market collapse with the West Texas Intermediate going negative for the first time in history in April 2020.65 That means oil producers were paying buyers to take the commodity off their hands due to an oversupply that led to the WTI’s storage tanks becoming overflowed.66

The unprecedented crash was antedated by a rift between Russia and Saudi Arabia starting in March 2020, ensuing proposed oil-production cuts. Russia walked out of the agreement causing substantial drops in oil prices. 67 In early April and again in June, OPEC and Russia agreed to oil-production cuts.

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Warped supply and demand for different industries and economic sectors

No sector has been left untouched by the collapse in stock prices. Most industries were hit hard by the pandemic.68

The enforced closure of traditional brick-and-mortar businesses selling non-essential items brought about an expanding market for online retailers. While some demand shifts are predicted to be temporary, others are presumed to have long-term effects.69 A global consumer survey conducted by McKinsey indicates that in South Africa and Brazil new users drove over 50% of the increase in online grocery shopping.70

Tourism experiences a precipitous slump as lockdowns and travel restrictions persist all around the globe and employees lose their sources of income. As a result, this sector is particularly endangered as estimates suggest it may be among one of the last to recover. According to OECD’s estimations, international tourism will fall by around 80% in 2020. A meaningful recovery is not foreseen for years. Tourism generates huge revenues and foreign exchange, drives regional development and underpins local communities.71

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Effects on developing countries

Unlike the 2008 Recession, the Covid pandemic has a substantial impact on the emerging world and will throw these countries into recession. Developing countries are beset by the loss of trade and the sharp decline in tourism, escalating pressure on their healthcare systems and mounting debts. FDI flows (a critical source of financing for emerging economies) in Africa in the first half of 2020 declined by 28% and a 25% contraction impinged on Latin America and the Caribbean.\textsuperscript{72}

Sub-Saharan Africa is forecasted to have its first economic recession in 25 years.\textsuperscript{73} According to estimates by the African Union, as many as 20 million jobs will be lost as a result of the pandemic.

Latin America and the Caribbean is predicted to experience the largest economic shrinkage in its history. The expected economic performance in response to the pandemic compares unfavourably with that of other emerging market regions, according to the CSIS.\textsuperscript{74}


Experts forewarn that Latin America’s and the Caribbean’s meltdown will be deeper with the economy more debilitated than in emerging regions of Asia, Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and Africa.

Developing economies in Asia are in a somewhat different situation. The downturn of the Asian economy as a whole has been projected to be more moderate compared to other parts of the world partly due to early lockdown measures and the increased global demand for online services and IT-related goods, which are highly emerging fields in Asia.75 Furthermore, some states started in a fairly good fiscal position with low deficits and debt relative to income before the virus hit (e.g. Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia). Some countries on the other hand did suffer from higher amounts of debt (e.g. Vietnam, Thailand and India), resulting in steeper downturns.76 However, developing Asian states will be afflicted by a contraction for the first time in approximately 60 years.

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The COVID-19 pandemic has not only led to a dramatic loss of life worldwide but besides being a disease, it also had far-reaching consequences, including social and cultural outcomes. The global crisis presents unforeseeable challenges in the world of work, healthcare and private life, in addition to many other effects.

As coronavirus worsens inequality, inequality worsens coronavirus. The pandemic increases the social and economical division, pushing many of the burdens onto the lower society of our polarized world. People living in poverty are more likely to catch the disease and die from it due to their loss of income or health care as a result of quarantines and other measures, but already bad or chronic health conditions are also accountable. The social vulnerabilities pre-existing a disaster only get worse following it, just as in the current epidemiological situation. Many have to choose between losing their income or risking their health because of low-paid jobs – social protection and security becomes even more important during these hard times; assistance and care are more needed than before.

As lockdowns occurred in most of the Member States around the globe numerous enterprises were confronted with decrees of closure as well as a lack of customers and income, thus began closing down. The global economy was and is facing the greatest recession since the Second World War 77 along with a vast increase of unemployment rates. In the member states of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) the highest rate of unemployment in 2020 was in April, right after the collapse of economy, which was meant 8.8% of labour force.78 Since then, the statistics show improvement due to the restart of the economy and governmental funds. Although 48 million people were unemployed in the OECD area, this figure is higher outside the more developed countries making up the OECD. For

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instance, in Latin America and the Caribbean the percentage of job seekers increased to 10.6% during 2020.79

Due to the high recession, nearly half of the 3.3 billion workforces of the world are at risk of losing their livelihoods. Some groups of workers are particularly vulnerable of losing their jobs and already below-average income, such as the informal economy workers who are facing relative poverty after a drop of labour income. This includes workers in sectors such as food services and accommodation, the wholesale, manufacturing and retail trade and many more, which are fields of working more likely to suffer from lockdowns and other containment measures, causing social tension endangering governments’ efforts to protect the population by fighting the pandemic.80

Migrant agricultural workers, small-scale farmers and indigenous people, who are fundamental in the agri-food sector, are especially at risk. They play an essential role in the food market; thus, the restrictions of movement undermine food security in many countries. Also, special attention must be paid for women, who are over represented in low-income jobs, and child labour, which is present in most agriculture-based states' economy. Altogether, the agricultural and food sector is in need of governmental help in guaranteeing safety, protection and income to save life and livelihood. Countries dealing with already existing humanitarian crises or emergencies are notably exposed to the effects of COVID-19, as a result of not being able to respond swiftly to the serious challenges set by the pandemic.81 Both Yemen and Syria were inadequately prepared because of the ongoing armed conflicts: lack of transparency and testing and crumbling health system cannot provide safety for the citizens. In crowded refugee camps often struggling to treat basic illnesses coping with coronavirus and controlling it is extremely difficult.82, 83

The pandemic has influenced the education system worldwide, leading to extensive closure of schools, universities and colleges. 165 countries implemented nation-wide closures of educational institutions during the peak of the coronavirus disease in the Spring of 2020 which

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affected more than a billion learners all over the world, but students were and are affected by national and localized lockdown afterwards.⁸⁴

Undoubtedly, children's life changed in what can be considered a negative way in most cases. Although closing the schools helps in decreasing the speed of propagation and flattening the curve, it also has a dramatic impact on a student’s life. Losing access to schooling exposes children to trauma and abuse, if their homes are unsafe, consequently putting both their physical and mental health at risk. In many less developed countries minors miss out on information and health services provided in the schoolhouses, and school feeding programmes, which have taken place before, can no longer continue. 24 million students are projected to drop out of schools, but more children are at risk of contracting vaccine-preventable diseases due to school immunisation disruptions. The economic shock will likely push many children into poverty increasing the effects mentioned above, and in those states, where the government cuts funding of the education to concentrate only on fighting the pandemic, the closures might even have greater long-term effects.

Besides these consequences, early pregnancies become more widespread, child marriages increase, children are more likely to be recruited into armed groups, and child labour becomes more common when schools are shut down. Also, optimistic beliefs are that 31% of the students, that is nearly half a billion children, are estimated to not to be able to access remote learning. In most cases, this is due to the lack of internet connection and adequate or affordable technology and equipment. The highest share of children who are considered as not being able to entry distance learning is located in Eastern and Southern Africa, and the highest concentration can be found in South Asia.⁸⁵

Nevertheless, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on our personal lives was for most people one of the most, if not the most, serious one (of) among all of the effects. First of all, mental health became more important. Many feared and had anxiety about the new disease and what could happen; stay-at-home movements begun or such order was given by the government. In consequence of lockdowns, financial stress due to loss of job appeared in lots of households, and not everybody was able to cope with being closed in with the family all day. Also, many other issues have occurred. Healthcare workers have been under great pressure during the pandemic, handling loss of lives became harder as the number of fatal cases increased. Even post-traumatic stress syndrome cases began to rise among them. Taking care of children developed into an even more exhausting activity, because school-aged children were always at home. For some minors, life was harder, since schools can be a place of protection, where they can flee from the unsafe situation inside and outside their homes.


Since quarantine regulations have been introduced, cases of domestic violence and exploitation have intensified. Because of cramped living conditions, health, security and money worries and deserted public places a number of violent cases against women, especially domestic violence, grew. Many were isolated with abusers. In some countries, the number of reported cases, which is not equal to the genuine number, has increased by 20-30%.86

Elderly care has turned into a major issue in 2020 due to COVID-19, since they need special attention during such a crisis. The higher risk of the disease is evident in worldwide data making older people in developing countries notably endangered as a consequence of the lack of proper health care in their home countries. Moreover, seniors are more plausible to live in nursing homes or rehabilitation centres, which are hotbeds of infection as multinational experience has shown. However, those who are living alone require regular and proper supervision.87

People with disabilities also have to face greater than usual challenges during the pandemic. People with intellectual and developmental disabilities are four times more likely to contract coronavirus, and two times more likely to pass away because of it for the reason that they are overrepresented in care facilities, just as elderly people. School closures makes them vulnerable since they are less likely to participate in remote learning because of their capabilities or financial situation. As people with disabilities are more probable to experience domestic abuse and anxiety or delays in development because of school closures, it’s especially dangerous for them.88

Social stigma associated with COVID-19 appeared shortly after the fast spread of the disease all over the world. Certain groups of people have suffered discrimination due to fear of being infected. Although, many governments and local authorities launched responding campaign tackling prejudice. This mostly affects people who had the virus and was singled out owing to carrying the dangerous disease, however, discrimination against the Asians, mostly Chinese, and Africans occurred in many countries, illustrated by the usage of terms like Chinese virus and Wuhan virus. 89, 90

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In conclusion, the coronavirus pandemic has become a humanitarian crisis where issues, being social or not, converge. Now is the time for global solidarity and support, because we can only overcome the health and social impacts of the COVID-19 together. We have to identify that we have the opportunity to build back better and to develop sustainable strategies to address the challenges facing the health sector. We must rethink the future of our environment to protect health and livelihoods and to ensure a ‘normal life’.
United in adversity: assessing the political consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic

by Dániel Gonda, Head of the Crisis Team

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has been dominating news broadcasts for about a year now. Even though every major conflict and every other political quarrel retreated from the limelight, the political nature of the post-COVID world is still unforeseeable and the question is still up for debate: To what extent will the pandemic influence the political milieu of the 21st century? It is incredibly difficult to answer such a question since the pandemic is far from over and the long-term social and economic effects of the crisis are still unknown. Nevertheless, speculations and predictions have already been made about what we can expect after we successfully deal with the coronavirus, but it is vital to handle these claims with a grain of salt, as it is impossible to certainly predict what the future holds.

If we are to contemplate the political consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, we must differentiate between its impacts on global and local levels, because its effects are significantly different on the two different levels.

I would like to begin with how the COVID-19 pandemic will affect the international political sphere. It is probably safe to say that the political situation before the pandemic was "rife with conflict, mistrust, political and economic tensions, and increasing populism" (Aldalala’a, 2020). Nearly every significant international power found itself in some sort of a political dispute or quarrel, like the US-China trade war, Brexit, the migration crisis in the EU, the Crimean war or the conflicts of the Middle East.

The most significant impact on global politics by the pandemic is that of the strain it has put on US-China relations. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the relationship between the USA and China were the ones that deteriorated the most in 2020. Former US president Donald Trump oftentimes used China to channel domestic attention away from national issues such as the rising death count of the pandemic, rising unemployment and the protests arising after George Floyd’s death, by declaring China as the sole actor accountable for the COVID crisis. This, alongside the proliferation of misinformation and conspiracy theories about the origin of the pandemic (Huang, 2020a) has resulted in American disapproval of China reaching a historic high, with 73% of Americans viewing China negatively, according to PewResearch (Pew Research Centre et al., 2020). The situation is not that much brighter on the other side of the Pacific either. The Trump administration’s heavy use of anti-China rhetoric...
and the Chinese state media’s portrayal of the USA as a “diminishing and hostile power” has reignited Chinese nationalistic and anti-American feelings (Huang, 2020b). Alongside China, President Trump has also accused the World Health Organization (WHO) of inadequate functioning, ordering the suspension of funds from the organization (Farzan et al., 2020).

If we examine the diplomatic rhetoric of the USA in the past 60 years, we may recognize a pattern, which has not been broken by the pandemic. Ever since the end of the Second World war, American diplomacy always uses two different elements to construct an adequate diplomatic narrative; an abstract, ungraspable enemy and a nation/group of nations to solidify this abstract enemy. During the Cold War, the abstract enemy was communism, which, as perceived by Americans, stood against every virtue of American free-market capitalism and democracy. The Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc solidified this. However, after the fall of the Soviet Union, and especially after the 9/11 attacks, the US entered the period of the “war on terror”, terrorism and Muslim radicalism being the abstract villains, solidified by Middle-Eastern dictatorships like Iraq and Afghanistan. Under the Trump administration, this narrative has seemed to change quite a bit. With American presence in the Middle East diminishing and President Trump saying that “the US will not be the world’s policeman “to Iraqi troops (US Won’t Be World’s ‘policeman’, Trump Says during Surprise Visit to Iraq, 2018), it is now evident that “war on terror” is being replaced by something else, centring around Russia, and, more importantly, China. This is indeed quite logical from the US’s perspective, given how big of a threat China is to American economic and diplomatic dominance. The essential question, which will determine the future for international politics is; Will the Biden administration return to the diplomatic narrative of the status quo before Trump, will it keep its newly founded narrative villainizing China, or will it create something radically new?

The COVID-19 pandemic can also potentially be a threat to international security. On 1 July 2020, Resolution 2532 was unanimously passed in the United Nations Security Council. In the resolution, the Security Council recognises that the coronavirus pandemic “is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security” (United Nations Security Council, 2020). In countries, which already have been thorn by numerous years of war, COVID-19 is likely to increase the suffering of civilians, creating inhospitable circumstances and forcing millions into despair. In Yemen, for example, 55% of all hospitals and health clinics are closed either partially or completely. With other diseases like cholera wreaking havoc in the area, Yemeni civilians are now facing multiple humanitarian catastrophes, both man-made and natural (Nasser, 2020). In Libya, although many expected that due to pandemic, the ceasing of armed conflict (or at least the halt of its intensification) could be on the lookout, the exact opposite happened. The heavy external involvement in the conflict has made the fighting parties less dependent on local resources, and therefore more prone to the effects of COVID-19 (Mustasilita, 2020).

According to the World Bank, 40-60 million people could be pushed into poverty by the pandemic. With food insecurity becoming more prevalent and economic inequalities getting bigger, a universal increase of local and international tensions are expected. The worsening situation has resulted in civil unrests, especially in the developing world, in nations like India, Kenya, Mozambique and Honduras (Mustasilita, 2020). The global economic recession can also negatively affect international security, however, the UN is also likely to face budget cuts (during the financial crisis of 2008, peacekeeping operations’ budgets were lowered by 20% (de Coning, 2020)). This means that the institutions that could properly mitigate the long-term effects of the pandemic will also become victims of it.
The pandemic can also serve as one of the biggest challenges to democracy since the fall of the Soviet Union. Governments like Hungary and Israel used the pandemic to strengthen their legislative position (Flinders, 2020). These acts have been heavily criticised, on the other hand, however, authoritarian regimes like Singapore and China, handled the pandemic much more effectively, than some democratic countries, like the USA (Kleinfeld, 2020). Nevertheless, democratic nations like Australia and New Zealand were also able to adequately combat the virus. Within democratic countries, a clear correlation between the damages of the pandemic and government approval is noticeable (Herrera et al., 2020). In nations where Covid cases were low, the rise of government approval was indicated, whereas in nations where cases surged, government approval declined steeply. Governments, which failed to tackle the virus effectively are now in a position where their approval have suffered irreparable damages and must conceive new strategies to maintain their political positions. In the light of this new situation, supporters of democracy must be on the lookout, since democratic institutions and instruments, like the rule of law, are now more endangered than ever.

The COVID-19 pandemic is sure to influence our lives significantly, not only in the short-term but in the long-term as well. Many of these long-term effects are not yet known, however, it is sure that the world cannot return to the status quo to which we had been used to. Nevertheless, the situation is not just doom and gloom. Nations have the perfect opportunity now, to achieve radical change and combat the problems that were inconceivable to solve beforehand, like rampant economic inequalities and an imminent natural disaster. It is only the question of how governments will tackle the long-term effects of the pandemic that will determine the future of our lives. The COVID-19 pandemic could be one of the biggest challenges of the globalised world, but we are now more capable of tackling it than we ever were. The urgency of the situation is obvious, and we must watch and see what the future holds.

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