

COVID-19 – Think Tank Update Asia (14 - 29 April 2020)

SELECTED ARTICLES

[COVID-19: The Chinese military is busy exploiting the pandemic](#)

Source: Observer Research Foundation, India (14. April 2020)

Harsh V. Pant, Director, and Kartik Bommakanti, Associate Fellow

Harsh V. Pant and Kartik Bommakanti look at the role of the Peoples Liberation Army (PLA) in the forefront of fighting and controlling the spread of the virus in China. The authors mainly examine how affected PLA personnel are fighting the viral infections, the extent of the productivity losses and gains of Wuhan's military industrial capacity and finally the opportunities created by the pandemic for potential Chinese military action.

[The Coronavirus Blame Game Intensifies the US-China Information War for International Public Opinion](#)

Source: Japan Institute of International Affairs, Japan (23. April 2020)

Kyoko Kuwahara, Research Fellow

Since the beginning of 2020, US and China have engaged in verbal warfare over responses to the new coronavirus. As the two superpowers continue to wage a propaganda war, Kyoko Kuwahara looks at the various ways US and China are battling for a better international public opinion. While, China is trying to rebuild its image and also gather international support from countries like Japan, US can be seen repeatedly emphasizing China's responsibility by referring to the source of these infections as the "China virus". The author further elaborates on the media war between the two superpowers as well as how China is growing its influence around the world especially in regards to its relation with the World Health Organisation.

[ASEAN and Covid-19: Sandwiched Between Two Giants](#)

Source: Institute of South East Asian Studies, Singapore (29. April 2020)

Hoang Thi Ha, Lead Researcher

Hoang looks at the strategic options for ASEAN to balance the interests of major powers US and China, with both of them drifting further apart while battling about the narratives around the pandemic. She cautions that Chinese emergency aid for South East Asia should be taken with a pinch of salt, since at least some of the aid items have proven to be of sub-standard quality. At the same time, emergency aid promises from the American side are lacking in detail, so far. Hoang suggests ASEAN to intensify its outreach to other partners, including the European Union and South Korea.

[New South China Sea tensions rattle Manila and Hanoi amid pandemic](#)

Source: Nikkei Asian Review, Manila (27. April 2020)

Cliff Venzon, Nikkei staff writer

As South East Asian nations continue to battle the COVID-19 pandemic, observers say Beijing has renewed efforts to consolidate its control over disputed parts of the South China Sea, ratcheting up tensions among rival claimants. Cliff Venzon provides an overview of the response of the South East Asian nations as well as how warships of the United States and Australia are sailing in disputed waters after China bolstered its claim.

[The world after COVID-19 - Kishore Mahbubani on the dawn of the Asian century](#)

Source: The Economist¹ (20. April 2020)

Kishore Mahbubani, Former Singaporean Diplomat

According to Kishore Mahbubani, resurgence of Asia in world affairs and the global economy, which was happening before the emergence of COVID-19, will be cemented in a new world order after the crisis. This conclusion is drawn by comparing the responses of the East Asian Government (notably China, South Korea and Singapore) to the response of the Western governments. The author states that the success of East Asia not only reflects the medical capabilities, but also the quality of governance and the cultural confidence of the East Asian societies.

[Probing Japan's slow response to the COVID-19 crisis](#)

Source: East Asia Forum (25. April 2020)

Kate Kalinova, AustCham Korea

¹ Subscription is needed to access this article.

Kate Kalinova probes into the reasons behind the slow response of Japan to the COVID-19 crisis. While the Tokyo Olympics is considered as an important factor, the author also highlights and elaborates on other variables such as the bureaucratic structure of the government and the cultural factors which slowed the wheels of the crisis management.

COVID-19 and Indian States: Spread, Risk and Implications

Source: Institute for South Asian Studies (ISAS), Singapore (18. April 2020)

Amitendu Palit, Senior Research Fellow

Amitendu Palit reviews the situation in India's regions and individual states to gather insights on the nature of the spread of the disease. The author assesses the states according to the degree of spread and the nature of risk. A detailed discussion of regional trends along with the two factors on which the success of India depends on is further elucidated.

COVID-19 in India: Re-emergence of the Centre and Prime Minister Narendra Modi

Source: Institute for South Asian Studies (ISAS), Singapore (27. April 2020)

S Narayan, Senior Research Fellow

S Narayan looks at the how the management of the COVID-19 crises in India has seen the re-emergence of the centre and Prime Minister Modi. The author elaborates on how the various steps taken by the central government coupled with the financial crises has led to the centralisation of authority and, consequently, the dilution of the federal nature of economic decision-making more palpable. While the author expects the Prime Minister Modi's government to continue to play a greater role in the states post the crises, he is quite sure that the states ruled by the opposition parties, will not allow this balance to last, and will definitely see the revival of federalism.

The Impacts of the New Coronavirus Pandemic on the Global Economy: A Nontechnical Summary

Source: The Japan Institute of International Affairs, Japan (25. April 2020)

Kensuke Yanagida, Research Fellow

The estimated impact of the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic on the global economy could be on par with or even greater than that of the Lehman Shock. Kensuke Yanagida analyses the impact of the crises on global economies using an applied general equilibrium model (Computable General Equilibrium (CGE)). The estimated results clearly indicate that the negative

impact on global economies will continue as long as there is a spread of infection around the world. Hence, the author calls for more economic measures of sufficient scale to support companies, workers and households as well highlights the need for the international community to strengthen cooperation and to help vulnerable countries and regions.

[Beware of over-hyping contact tracing apps in coronavirus fight](#)

Source: Lee Kwan Yew School of Public Policy, Singapore (22. April 2020)

James Crabtree, Associate Professor in Practice

Contract Tracing App have become vital in the fight against COVID-19, however, there is little evidence on how well these apps themselves work. James Crabtree looks at 3 potential problems that are likely to arise in launching and using these apps in the wider pandemic battle. The author concludes that while these apps are helpful in fighting the pandemic, they have not been able to reach the masses as needed. Hence, the author states that the focus of states should now be on building up the infrastructure of pandemic management.

[Asia will fall with the multilateral system unless it now springs to its defence](#)

Source: East Asia Forum (26. April 2020)

Alex Rouse and Adam Triggs, ANU

Alex Rouse and Adam Triggs look at how COVID-19 has challenged the multilateral system. The authors noted that addressing these challenges will require a new source of strong leadership. The paper further highlights the countries who have great incentives to provide that leadership as well benefit the most from the multilateral system. Despite all the challenges being faced, there is a great opportunity for Asian countries to step up as global leaders. The authors hope that Asia countries will recognise these incentives and demonstrate leadership in protecting and promoting the G20 and the multilateral system.
