

COVID-19 – Think Tank Update Asia (1 – 14 May 2020)

SELECTED ARTICLES

[Unfavourable views: Southeast Asia's perceptions of China and the US worsen amid Covid-19](#)

Source: Thinkchina.sg (5. May 2020)

Malcolm Cook and Ian Storey, Senior Fellows, ISEAS

The COVID-19 pandemic has deepened and broadened rivalry between the US and China and made it more virulent. While the Southeast Asian nations were already concerned about the US-China rivalry and its regional implications, the unfolding situation has worsened their fears. Malcolm Cook and Ian Storey look at how the discord between the US and China has impacted regional security dynamics as well as the geo-economics of the region and reinforced the negative perceptions of the two countries in Southeast Asia. Although these nations expect more reliance on China after the end of the crisis, they prefer to have more regional resilience and closer ties with third parties such as Japan and the European Union.

[The ASEAN-Led Multilateral Order: Unravelling?](#)

Source: S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Singapore (11. May 2020)

Tsjeng Zhizhao Henrick and Shawn Ho, Associate Research Fellows

With the global COVID-19 pandemic showing no signs of abating, the multilateral order is showing severe strains and even unravelling. Tsjeng Zhizhao Henrick and Shawn Ho analyse the impact of the US-China confrontation on ASEAN and how the stage is set for China filling up the void left by the US in the multilateral order. The authors also elucidate how ASEAN has stepped up to reassert the need for regional cooperation by holding the two ASEAN Summits and how it should fight its next multilateral battle.

[Reviving Stalled BRI: China's Two-Stage Approach](#)

Source: S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Singapore (5. May 2020)

Pradumna B. Rana, Visiting Associate Professor and Jason Ji Xianbai, Associate Fellow

Along with the dismal global economic outlook, China is also facing a crisis with the stalling of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Pradumna B. Rana and Jason Ji Xianbai provide an overview of

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the slowdown of the BRI, and its impact on its partner countries. They also provide an insight into how China has adopted the Health Silk Road and Digital Silk Road in reviving the BRI. While the authors are optimistic of the eventual revival of physical BRI, they also think that it is an opportunity for China to reflect on its BRI project of the past six years or so and contemplate ways to improve it.

[Restarting China's economy?](#)

Source: East Asia Forum (13. May 2020)

Yan Liang, Willamette University

China is slowly reopening its economy. However, this reopening poses its own challenges in the form of the global economic slowdown which can hamper China's effort in returning to normalcy. Yan Liang outlines the hopeful signs of economic recovery in China as well as states the four major steps which need to be taken to effectively reopen the economy and create jobs in China.

[Can Japan and South Korea cooperate against COVID-19?](#)

Source: East Asia Forum (9. May 2020)

Kazuhiko Togo, Kyoto Sangyo University

Since the normalization of diplomatic relations in 1965, Japan–ROK relations were at its worst in 2019. Kazuhiko Togo explores how the South Korean success and Japanese failure in dealing with COVID-19 has given an opportunity for cooperation rather than confrontation. If Prime Minister Abe could acknowledge President Moon's success and demonstrate willingness to learn from his COVID-19 strategy, the two countries could cooperate against the COVID-19 pandemic.

[Economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on South Asia](#)

Source: Consortium of South Asian Think Tanks, Nepal (14. May 2020)

Nishchal Pandey, Director, Joyeeta Bhattacharjee, Senior Fellow, Sanghamitra Subba, Economic Correspondent, Faiz Sobhan, Research Director, Tshering Dema, Mehwish Raza, Assistant Professor, Rasheeda Didi, Professor, Bernard Goonetilleke, Chairman, Shanthie Mariet D' Souza, Founder

In this report, scholars from South Asia assess the economic impact of COVID-19 on the region. They provide insights on how the pandemic has impacted the various sectors from banking to

insurance, agriculture, real estate to automobiles. Along with the impact on various sectors, short briefs on the impact of COVID-19 on each country are also provided in this report.

[Facing the greatest economic crisis since the Great Depression](#)

Source: East Asia Forum (11. May 2020)

Yves Tiberghien, UBC, Alan S Alexandroff, University of Toronto and Colin Bradford, Brookings

The world is not only facing a pandemic but also the greatest economic crisis since the 1930s. While the authors analyse the current economic crisis, they clearly state the need for collective actions among important players and international institutions in order to bounce back from the crisis. The global economic system is prone to different shocks and if countries face them early and together, the system can be saved. If countries and institutions do not cooperate and instead engage in tit-for-tat strategic interactions, the system will definitely break down.

[Tracing the problems with Singapore's COVID-19 app](#)

Source: East Asia Forum (9. May 2020)

Howard Lee, Murdoch University

Singapore has introduced 'TraceTogether', a mobile phone app developed by the Government Technology Agency (GovTech) to enhance contact tracing efforts. By using Bluetooth technology, TraceTogether claims to have side-stepped the data collection issues associated with contact tracing inventions that governments in Israel, South Korea and Hong Kong are facing. Howard Lee reviews the "Trace Together" app and looks into the questions of data protection and other problem associated with this app in this article.

[Aarogya Setu: Containing Disease or Violating Privacy?](#)

Source: Institute of South Asian Studies, Singapore (12. May 2020)

Karthik Nachiappan, Research Fellow

The Indian government has introduced a new mobile app "Aarogya Setu", which has emerged as a key tool in helping the government curb the spread of COVID-19 in India. Through the Aarogya Setu app, the government is able to track users' movement through bluetooth and geographic information system services and also goes further by assigning each user a colour coded tag that displays the risk of possible infection. Since India has no data protection law, Kartik Nachiappa outlines how the development and use of this app has stoked fears of whether the data collected will be used only for the purposes claimed.

[Biological Weapons and Biosecurity – Lessons from the COVID-19 war](#)

Source: Observer Research Foundation, India (10. May 2020)

Lakshmi Puri, Former Assistant Secretary General, United Nations

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought up the topic of biosecurity, especially in context with the conflicting claims on whether the Novel Coronavirus is a natural mutation or human engineered and accidentally released from the high-security Level 4 Wuhan Institute of Virology. The pandemic marks the beginning of a new geostrategic era where biosecurity and health security will take centre stage in national and international goal setting, policy and action. Hence, according to Lakshmi Puri, international organisations must create new frameworks in order to lead a multilateral effort to effectively prevent and counter the threat of bioterrorism and bio warfare.

[Gunmen with thermometers: The Taliban are joining Afghanistan's fight against covid-19](#)

Source: Economist¹ (9. May 2020)

Since the outbreak of COVID-19 in Afghanistan, the Taliban have played an active role along with the government to fight the pandemic. The government and aid agencies have welcomed the Taliban's involvement as both rely on the rebels to allow them to operate in rural areas. However, the most helpful thing that the Taliban could do by agreeing to a ceasefire has been rejected by the militants. Instead while offering Afghans advice on how to keep themselves safe, they have also been attacking them.

[The trends shaping the post- COVID -19 world](#)

Source: Observer Research Foundation (11. May 2020)

Rakesh Sood, Distinguished Fellow

Rakesh Sood looks at geopolitical lines which will shape the contours of the global world order post COVID-19. Amongst others, he expects to see the rise of Asia followed by the retreat of the US when it comes to global leadership. He also expects the European Union to be preoccupied with its internal challenges. The fading away of international organisations is another prediction of his. Lastly, he expects a growing interest in renewables and green technologies across the world.

¹ This article needs a subscription

