

COVID-19 – Think Tank Update Asia (12. June - 25. June 2020)

SELECTED ARTICLES

[China's State Responsibility for the Global Spread of COVID19: An International Law Perspective](#)

Source: Observer Research Foundation, India (23. June 2020)

Ipshita Chaturvedi, Founding partner at C&C Advisors

The COVID-19 pandemic has wreaked havoc on people's lives and livelihoods across the globe. Ipshita Chaturvedi explores the concept of "state responsibility" under public international law and examines what are the obligations of a state. As the blame game on China continues, the author tries to address if China can be held legally responsible for the pandemic. The author answers this question by analyzing practical cases to assess how principles of international law have previously been applied with respect to state responsibility as well by answering two related questions on whether China had an obligation under international law; and if such obligation was breached.

[COVID-19 and Its Impacts – US-China Rivalry Post-Pandemic: How Will the World Look Like?](#)

Source: S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Singapore (18. June 2020)

Victor R Savage, Visiting Senior Fellow

China and the US have been affected economically and politically by the COVID-19 pandemic. Victor R Savage elucidates how the pandemic will change the international perspective on globalization. While the author predicts that the world will become more fragmented, he also notes that the US might not be able to play the role of the global humanitarian benefactor and global policeman any longer. While many expect China to fill in the shoes of the hegemon, the question as to which hegemon will have the national resilience to come back in a stronger state still remains.

[Retweeting through the Great Firewall](#)

Source: Australian Strategic Policy Institute, Australia (12. June 2020)

Dr Jacob Wallis, Senior Analyst; Tom Uren, Senior Analyst; Elise Thomas, Researcher; Albert Zhang, Research Intern; Dr Samantha Hoffman, Analyst; Lin Li, Researcher; Alexandra Pascoe, Research Intern; Danielle Cave, Deputy Director

The COVID-19 pandemic has created a permissive environment for China to experiment with manipulation of global social media audiences on Western platforms. In this report, various large scale influence campaigns by Chinese state actors have been analysed to understand the tactics used to actively manipulate social media audiences and influence targeted networks in an attempt to shape the information environment to its advantage. The report is divided into three sections. The first major section investigates the tactics, techniques and operational traits of the campaign. The second section analyses the narratives and nuances included in the campaign messaging. The third section is the appendix which allows readers to do a deep dive into the data collected.

[Revitalising Japan's battered economy post-COVID-19](#)

Source: East Asia Forum (22. June 2020)

Takashi Oshio, Hitotsubashi University

The Japanese government has introduced two fiscal stimuli to constrain the damage of the pandemic on the economy. Takashi Oshio provides an overview of the actions taken and how they will be a heavy burden on Japan's fiscal balance. The need for a long-term fiscal consolidation strategy in Japan and the importance of effectively tackling both short-term and long-term fiscal policy issues has been highlighted. The author compares the policy responses of the Bank of Japan with other banks and also points out measures which can be detrimental for the Japanese economy. With the limited policy response of the Bank of Japan and the Ministry of Finance derailing far from the path of fiscal consolidation, the economy is expected to remain below its pre-COVID-19 level after its recovery.

[Boosting Indo-Pacific Alignment and India's Regional Role](#)

Source: The Diplomat (16. June 2020)

Amrita Jash, Research Fellow, Centre for Land Warfare Studies

The Indo-Pacific security architecture has gained a lot of traction due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This has been exemplified by the active role of the Quad as well the increase of India's strategic weight in the region. India is not only emerging as a key responsible actor but has also become a key player in the global supply chain, given countries' plans to shift production away from China. Amrita Jash puts forward a five-fold framework to demonstrate how COVID-19 not only pushed India to step up its proactive engagement in the region but has also provided a boost to its strategic interests in the Indo-Pacific.

[India's lockdown locks out the poor](#)

Source: East Asia Forum (20. June 2020)

Mandar Oak and Peter Mayer, University of Adelaide

Prior to the lockdown on 24 March, India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi only gave a 4 hour notice to its nearly 1.4 billion population. There was no preparation or provision made to meet the needs of the huge numbers of the workers in the informal sector. Mandar Oak and Peter Mayer analyse the largest mass migration that took place after the lockdown in India and puts into light the blind spots of the present government. The authors also highlight the sharp contradiction in the present government's continuous efforts to centralise power and decision-making while simultaneously pushing the responsibility and burden of dealing with the pandemic's social realities onto state and local authorities and the valiant local NGOs.

[Leveraging Vietnam's COVID-19 Success](#)

Source: The Diplomat (19. June 2020)

Trien Vinh Le and Huy Quynh Nguyen, Lecturers, School of Government, University of Economics, Ho Chi Minh City

Vietnam's successful fight against the COVID-19 pandemic included an unprecedented level of communication and transparency from the government. Trien Vinh Le and Huy Quynh Nguyen explore how the ruling Communist Party can take advantage of this earned legitimacy to springboard the economy and accelerate social reforms for long-term resilience. With Vietnam's economic success being dependent on both politics (ideologically speaking) and investments from China, the question of how Vietnam will balance economic development with issues of security and sovereignty still remains. While the author calls for the leadership of Vietnam to leverage this legitimacy and introduce reforms for maintaining openness, transparency and accountability, they also highlight the need for a more trustful and democratic society.

[Mind the gap in combating COVID-19](#)

Source: East Asia Forum (18. June 2020)

Juzhong Zhuang, ADB

Income inequality has been severely deepened by the COVID-19 pandemic. Without policy interventions, it will only worsen further. Juzhong Zhuang lists down the five ways income inequality is affected. The author puts forward policy measures which can help dampen the devastating impact of COVID-19 on growth, poverty and income inequality in Asia Pacific. The

first is to contain the outbreak as quickly as possible, followed by protecting jobs. The third is to support the economic recovery in an inclusive manner. Governments in Asia and Pacific are taking action but the region still needs a well-designed policy response to avert the negative impact of the pandemic.

[COVID-19: Balancing the Infection and the Misery Curves](#)

Source: ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute, Singapore (17. June 2020)

Jayant Menon, Visiting Senior Fellow

COVID-19 has not only highlighted existing inequalities and disparities, it has exacerbated them. While the poor are likely to bear a disproportionately high share of the burden of curtailment measures designed to curb the spread of the virus, they are also more susceptible to infection and to succumbing to it if infected. The misery curve which measures the loss of incomes and livelihoods has become a counterpart of the infection curve contributing to long-term and sometimes irreversible harm. Jayant Menon addresses why targeted time-bound measures rather than prolonged general lockdowns should be considered in poorer countries, while increased testing is being vigorously pursued.

[COVID-19 and Its Impacts – ‘Infodemic’: More Than a Public Health Crisis](#)

Source: S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Singapore (17. June 2020)

Dymples Leong, Senior Analyst

While dealing with the COVID-19 crisis, governments across the world are also facing a communication emergency with the spread of various disinformation and misinformation. Providing accurate information to the public is key to fighting the pandemic. Dymples Leong looks at the various strategies and tools governments could utilize to effectively communicate with the public. The multi-channel communication strategy of Singapore is highlighted and how some of their best practices can be adopted to disseminate information is provided. As governments continue to relax restriction guidelines globally, the emphasis on providing timely dissemination of clear, transparent and accurate public health information will remain a powerful way to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic.

[The COVID-19 vaccine project: Turning a marathon into a sprint](#)

Source: Observer Research Foundation, India (22. June 2020)

Sheetal Ranganathan, Columnist Health and Policy

The speed at which countries across the world are going to find the vaccine for COVID-19 has been unprecedented. There are 140 vaccine research projects ongoing with 11 of them already undergoing human trial. Sheetal Ranganathan provides an overview of all the various vaccines being developed worldwide. The speed at which these vaccines are being developed is critical in order to avoid the situation that thwarted the 2003 SARS virus vaccine project – the pandemic tapered and eventually disappeared before development of the vaccine. The author notes that despite WHO repeatedly enlisting SARS Corona viruses amongst the top 5 threats likely to cause future pandemics of severe intensity, no advocacy or action was attempted to find a vaccine. It is imperative that the same is not repeated and that a vaccine is found before the end of the pandemic.

[COVID-19 and Its Impacts – Pandemic, Technology and Privacy: How Far Will the State Go?](#)

Source: S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Singapore (12. June 2020)

Muhammad Faizal Abdul Rahman and Gulizar Hacıyakupoglu, Research Fellows

Various kinds of contact tracing apps have been launched in the fight against COVID-19. With the various levels of data collection, data privacy and security practices which come with these apps, there are rising concerns about privacy and the potential use of these tools after the pandemic. While the global research community has begun initiatives to help improve privacy, the extent to which governments would go to enhance the privacy and security of their contact-tracing applications remains a question. Muhammad Faizal Abdul Rahman and Gulizar Hacıyakupoglu look into these questions as well bring forward other pertinent issues like expanding the reach of contact tracing applications to people who lack smartphone access, the use of data for forecasting non-COVID related areas such as crime prevention and social management and if certain section of the society will embrace “sousveillance”. As surveillance technology becomes increasingly entrenched in social governance, governments should try to find an empathetic way to uphold individual rights and privacy.

[Asian economies positioned to ride out crisis](#)

Source: East Asia Forum (14. June 2020)

Brad Setser, Council on Foreign Relations

As the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic continues, governments across the world are running large fiscal deficits, and a sharp rise in the stock of public debt globally is expected.

While most Asian countries are well suited to handle this increase in public debt, there are few exceptions. Brad Setser elucidates how due to effective policy responses and savings and investments made by countries like Taiwan and South Korea, they will likely avoid the economic shock being faced by other nations. Japan and China have also been put in the same category due to their external foreign currency assets as well as the low level of bonded debt. While Indonesia economy is posited to be in risk, the author claims that this situation can easily managed.
