

# GLOBAL CONVERSATIONS



**DISRUPTION**

FALL 2020 ISSUE



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#### COVER DESIGN BY

Mia Hani

# Letter from the Editors in Chief

*In 2020, the world was brought to a standstill. The global pandemic closed borders, stalled economies, and upended life as we knew it. While COVID-19 continues to dominate headlines—now with hope as vaccine delivery is underway—a myriad of changes have made 2020 a year of disruption.*

*For our Fall 2020 issue, we asked our writers to reflect on the notion of disruption, for better or for worse, as a catalyst for change. The social, economic, and health implications of the pandemic will be long-lasting, necessitating fundamental changes to daily lives and forms of governance worldwide. Protesters and advocates moved the needle forward in the fight against anti-Black racism and police violence, calls for greater government accountability, and more stringent protection of civil rights and freedoms from Minneapolis to Baghdad. Significant changes in leadership, including the election of Joe Biden as the 46th President of the United States, and the historic election of Kamala Harris as the first woman and the first woman of colour to hold the office of Vice President, have the potential to begin to heal a deeply divided nation and mend damaged international ties. Technological and community-based methods of combating the impact of the pandemic and renewed calls for the adoption of environmentally-friendly policies present opportunities for positive disruption to be carried into 2021.*

*However, other forms of disruption risk reversing progress made in recent years. Already marginalized groups have been hit the hardest by the pandemic, including migrants and refugees, racial and ethnic minorities, and women and girls. Pre-existing inequities both within and between countries have been dangerously exacerbated by the toll the virus has taken, both in terms of economic damage and health outcomes. Virulent backlash to public health measures designed to curb the spread of the virus, from lockdowns to mask requirements, authoritarian leaders' capitalization on the pandemic to solidify control and curb rights, and shifting geopolitical power dynamics present grave risks and challenges for the year to come.*

*In order to 'build back better,' we must first take stock of the damage done, the best solutions available, and the most equitable ways to enact them. Please join our writers in reflecting on the ways 2020 has disrupted our world, and join the global conversation on how we move forward.*

*Editors in Chief,*

*Isabel Jones & David Watson*

# Introduction

*This issue of Global Conversations arrives during extraordinary times that have disrupted life at the Munk School of Global Affairs & Public Policy beyond recognition. The COVID-19 pandemic has rendered campus almost unrecognizable, the hallways and classrooms that once echoed with excitement remain silent and barren. Sadly, next semester will be no different, as students in the Master of Global Affairs program will continue to pursue their degree in an online-only format. As we compile this issue remotely, we remember the time spent studying with our friends, grabbing lunch together, and celebrating our accomplishments over drinks. Although news of an impending vaccine promises a 'return to normal' in the near future, it has become clear that this certainly will be a 'new normal.' We will be together again in this new normal. Most importantly, we will need to fight together to address the challenges that follow us into the new year.*

*Just as 2020 has proven itself to be the year of change, it has also been the year for change. The year to change. COVID-19 has exposed the cracks in the global liberal order, highlighting the weaknesses of our political and economic systems. The murder of George Floyd gave way to a global protest movement demanding racial justice and an end to oppression. Civil unrest in the Middle East, Eastern Europe, Hong Kong, and around the world underscored the need to protect human rights. The culmination of a divisive American election adds to the uncertainty of our tumultuous time. This year, disruption is all around us. And from disruption, we can find opportunity and create change.*

*Opportunities for change come in many forms. Artificial intelligence has been used in innovative ways to fight COVID-19. The incoming Biden-Harris administration has the potential to restore faith in the United States on a global scale. For Canada, the pandemic has provided an opportunity to reevaluate immigration policy, further develop green transportation infrastructure, and make technology firms more competitive in the global economy. These are just some of the opportunities discussed in this issue.*

*In the face of unprecedented disruption, knowledge is the foundation of change. For the Fall 2020 issue we asked our writers to offer their thoughts on global disruption in the hopes that their words will contribute to our collective understanding and inspire meaningful change. We know that life is particularly chaotic at the moment, but if you can dedicate some time to this issue, we hope that it offers you some useful knowledge to prepare for the challenges that lie ahead.*

*Directors of Written Content,  
Alexander Johnson & Matthew Sparling*

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# Shutdown and Shut-out: Asylum-Seekers Struggle to Find a Place to Call Home

BY DOROTTYA SZEKELY | MIGRATION



THERE is no doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic has tested the world's commitment to protecting refugees and displaced people. Travel restrictions, closed borders, and cramped living spaces with inadequate access to life-saving resources have all amplified the hardships that asylum seekers continue to face. In addition, many migrants have been in a state of limbo, incapable of gaining full status as refugees or residents, unable to be resettled, and powerless against governments that shut them out. The pandemic has disrupted the hopes and dreams of asylum-seekers longing for a safe haven.

## THE STRUGGLE FOR EQUAL ACCESS

The disparities that refugees and other displaced people continue to face have only increased with the onset of COVID-19. The pandemic has doubled down on the discrimination and neglect endured by these populations. For example, refugees and other displaced people are acutely vulnerable due to their limited access to water, sanitation systems, and health facilities.

Lockdowns and movement restrictions exacerbate the

already dire living conditions in overcrowded camps and detention centres where refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) are housed. Some governments have limited the number of aid deliveries due to lockdowns. Others, such as the Trump administration, have violated international law, forcing migrants back to their home countries under the pretext of containing COVID-19.

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*The UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration's decision to suspend refugee departures has reduced resettlement figures to a historic low.*

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In the early stages of the crisis, 168 countries fully or partially closed their borders, with over 50 per cent making no exception for those seeking asylum. These massive shutdowns have also interrupted the resettlement rate for refugees. The UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration's decision to suspend refugee departures has reduced resettlement figures to a historic low. As of October, only 12 000 refugees had been resettled, compared to 107 800 in 2019.

## A LOOK AT CANADA

In March, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced new travel restrictions that prohibit most foreign nationals from traveling to Canada. Only those who had been approved for permanent residence on or before March 18 can enter. Additionally, until further notice, the Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) offices will not be interviewing refugee claimants, nor will they process refugee protection claimant document renewals. Canadian immigration officials have yet to provide a clear timeline for when they expect to ease such restrictions.

These constraints have left many with disrupted travel plans, with no end in sight. For example, after being approved for permanent residency in March, Harleen Kaur quit her job in India and prepared to move to Toronto. However, when flights to Canada were cancelled, her travel documents expired. Despite the rollout of an online portal for travel document extensions, very few applicants have received the authorization they need to travel to Canada. This leaves people like Kaur stuck between finding a new job in her home country and waiting anxiously to begin her new life in Canada.

Even those seeking asylum from within Canada are facing similar struggles. Ghadeer Albattarni, a 32-year-old Syrian refugee, came to Canada to reunite with her daughter. She has applied for protection, but continues to await her refugee claim hearing, leaving her unable to work or study in Canada due to government restrictions. Albattarni, like Kaur, must live with her life on hold until restrictions change.

Sponsors also claim that travel restrictions mean Canada will likely not meet its target for the number of sponsored refugees it has set for 2020. While the target was to admit 20 000 privately sponsored refugees by the end of August, only around 3 000 have been resettled. The Council of The Canadian Refugee Sponsorship Agreement Holders Association wants the government to add an exemption to the travel restrictions for all refugees who have applied for permanent residence status in Canada. The Chair of the Council says it is also necessary to maintain the motivation of private sponsors and to fulfil Canada's commitments to refugees.

The latest government figures show that 11 315 permanent residents were admitted in August, compared to the 31 585 admissions granted in August of last year. In the first eight months of 2019, Canada also welcomed 228 430 immigrants, compared to slightly over 128 000 this year. This means that Canada has 100 000 fewer newcomers when compared to this time last year, making it highly unlikely that this gap will be closed before the end of the year.

## WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Nearly ten months into the COVID-19 pandemic, it is

PHOTO SOURCE: FLICKR, UNITED NATIONS PHOTO

clear that these problems will not simply disappear. Both internationally and domestically, governments and institutions must be willing to accommodate asylum-seekers. The international community must continue to uphold its legal humanitarian obligations, including the principle of non-refoulement, which states that refugees and asylum seekers cannot be forced to return to a country where they may face persecution. Lockdowns and closed borders must not discriminate against asylum seekers under the false pretext of containing COVID-19. Any proposed movement restrictions should therefore include special considerations for those seeking asylum.



*Dorottya Szekeley is a first-year student in the Master of Global Affairs program at the Munk School of Global Affairs & Public Policy. She holds an Honours Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Toronto where she majored in Political Science, with a double minor in Sociology, and Women and Gender Studies. Her main interests lie within the fields of global migration and refugee advocacy, as well as inter-sectional human rights. Dorottya has spent extensive time volunteering with asylum-seekers in Paris and Toronto and continues to research refugee services within Munk's Global Migration Student Research Initiative. This past summer she served as a research and policy intern at the Canadian Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, where she focused on critical engagement with Canadian foreign policy and R2P.*

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*While the target was to admit 20 000 privately sponsored refugees by the end of August, only around 3 000 have been resettled.*

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Additionally, governments should allocate sufficient resources to maintain their resettlement commitments. While immigration offices like the IRCC remain shuttered around the world, states should endeavour to clarify what migrants can expect regarding their resettlement timelines, or what they can do to expedite the process. Meanwhile, governments can issue temporary work or study permits to those without full refugee or resident status. COVID-19 does not discriminate based on one's citizenship or legal status. The world must prove and reiterate its responsibility to protect asylum-seekers and consider those who are being further marginalized in the name of pandemic relief.



# Making a Bad Situation Worse: Why the SWANA Region is Especially Vulnerable to COVID-19

BY SARAH A. JABBAR | SWANA AFFAIRS

*Note: In this issue, we will represent the region as Southwest Asia and North Africa (SWANA) rather than the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), due to the latter's colonial connotations.*

“YOU know that you might die if you get it, but we are dying slowly anyway,” says Omar Abdullah, a worker in one of Lebanon's Syrian refugee camps. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has devastated livelihoods and communities across the globe, and the Southwest Asia & North Africa (SWANA) region is particularly vulnerable to its threats. International organizations forecast dire impacts for the region on various levels, as the health, political, and economic wellbeing of its populations are all under threat.

But these risks are not evenly distributed. Prosperous areas, such as the Gulf states of the United Arab Emirates and Qatar, will be able to better manage the damages of COVID-19 and stabilize their economies. However, the region's war-torn and resource-strained countries, such as Iraq and Libya, are likely to suffer for years to come. They face challenges in the areas of healthcare, poverty, social stability, and more.

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*But these risks are not evenly distributed.*

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## HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS & FACILITIES

The pandemic has made the availability of healthcare facilities a more pressing issue than ever. Unsurprisingly, the Arab Gulf states perform significantly better than their neighbours in providing health services. According to a recent UN report, the richest countries in the region have at least 50 (and even up to 70) health care providers per 10 000 people, whereas the poorest countries have fewer than 10 providers per 10 000 people.

The Gulf states also have access to more resources. For

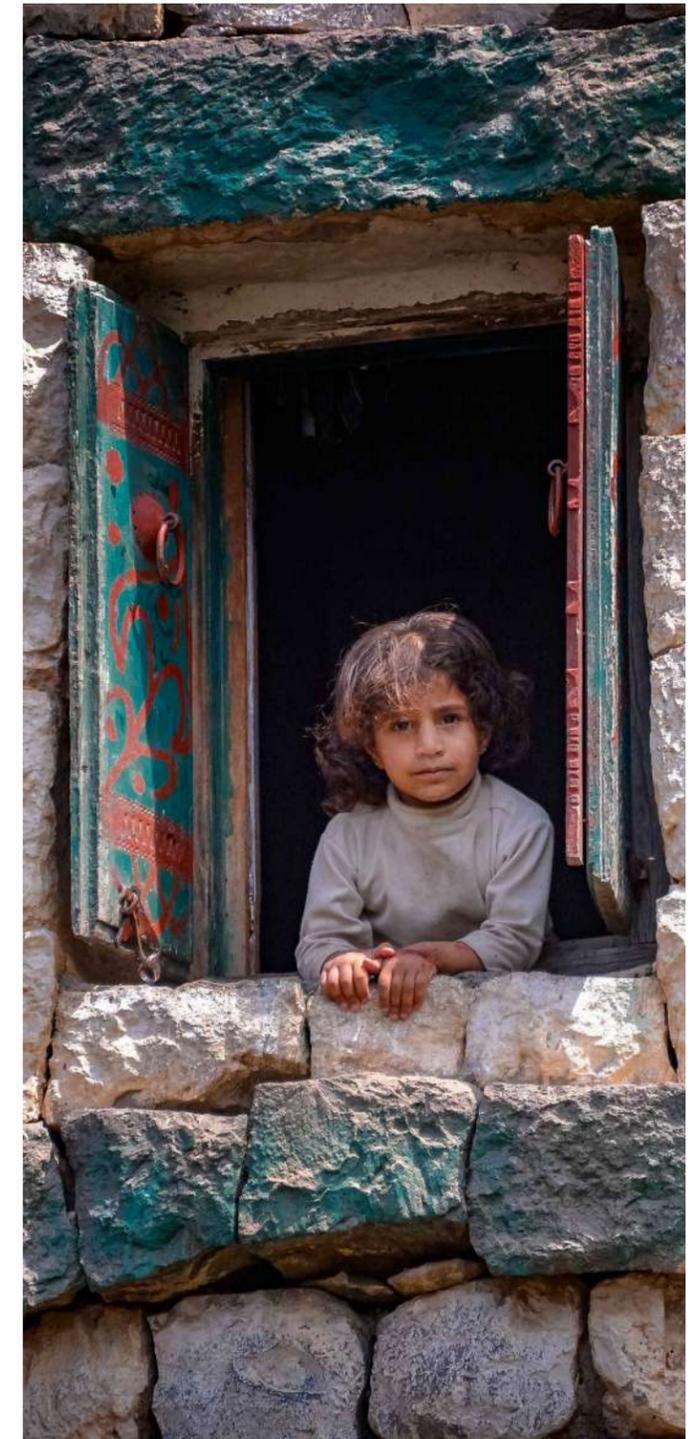


PHOTO SOURCE: FLICKR; RON WADDINGTON

example, the Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Sheikh Mohammad bin Rashid Al Maktoum, has already received a vaccination for COVID-19. And despite the fact that Gulf states report more COVID-19 cases than elsewhere in the region, this is primarily due to a much larger testing capacity.

Meanwhile, in nearby conflict zones such as Yemen, testing facilities are limited. A report by the Journal of Global Health confirmed that “in the best-case scenario, [Yemen’s system] only allow[s] testing a small number of highly suspected cases.” This explains why Yemen has only registered just over 2,000 cases, despite experiencing what the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs calls the worst humanitarian crisis in the world.

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## UNEMPLOYMENT & POVERTY: THE SECURITY RISK

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In addition to its health consequences, COVID-19 also threatens the region’s security.

For example, high unemployment strains government resources and imposes severe societal costs, such as rising crime rates and individual alienation. This makes it a significant risk factor for political instability—something the region already has no shortage of. And with numerous armed groups such as Daesh (also known as the “Islamic State”) active, unemployment and the poverty that accompanies it poses a serious security concern.

In July, a UN report estimated the pandemic would lead to 17 million lost full-time jobs in the SWANA region alone. As a result, an additional 15 million have been thrown into poverty. This brings the total number of people living in poverty to 115 million, or a quarter of the total population of the SWANA region.

Prior to the pandemic, there were various political uprisings in the region. Before lockdown measures were implemented, protests erupted across Lebanon, Iraq, Sudan, Algeria, and Gaza. The protests were instigated by the rage of young people towards the corruption of the state, high unemployment, and inequality. In Sudan, many cannot afford staple foods like bread. The region’s

volatility, compounded with the increased poverty and unemployment, could lead to conflict—as it is known that poverty is the best predictor of civil war.

Additionally the region is also home to large income inequalities, another factor that increases security risks. According to the United Nation’s Policy Brief report, the wealthiest 10 per cent owned almost 80 per cent of the total household income of the region in 2019. Along with high unemployment rates, rising income inequality can also lead to increasing crime rates.

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Finally, poor socio-economic status is a risk factor for depression and other mental illnesses. Increased poverty and the prevalence of depression make Arab-majority societies vulnerable to declining mental health, a major concern given that mental health facilities are neither widely available nor accessible. This can also contribute to political instability. For example, Max Abrahams argues that most members of terrorist groups join to reduce their sense of isolation from society and develop new relationships—heightening risks of new recruitment efforts for local insurgent groups.

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## REFUGEES: THE MOST VULNERABLE

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There were approximately nine million refugees or people living in refugee-like situations across the Arab-ma-

majority states in 2019. Refugees are the most vulnerable group in the region as they reside in overcrowded and unsanitary conditions, with little to no access to proper housing, nutrition, or clean water. This harms their physical and mental health. These conditions also present the ideal environment for the virus to spread, leaving destruction behind. With a high number of displaced people and refugees fleeing from war-torn countries, COVID-19 poses a threat to their livelihoods as border closures further restrict their movement and safety. And when their physical security is at risk, refugees are more vulnerable to exploitation. This could potentially lead to a rise in violent crime and death rates.

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*The implications of COVID-19 are exacerbating all dominant regional problems—unemployment, poverty, political unrest, and economic dependency.*

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These areas have poor healthcare facilities (or in some cases, no healthcare facilities at all) that will not be able to handle a high number of infections. In fact, the situation is far more disturbing in some countries such as Lebanon, where refugees are ineligible to obtain governmental healthcare.

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## IMPLICATIONS OF COVID-19 ON THE SWANA REGION

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The implications of COVID-19 are exacerbating all dominant regional problems—unemployment, poverty, political unrest, and economic dependency. It is too early to estimate the extent of the damages produced by COVID-19 on the region’s societal and economic well-being. However, the pandemic has highlighted discrep-

ancies and exposed multiple facets of structural weakness. These include the urgent needs for diversification of regional economies, government transparency and reform, and the improvement of refugee camps.

With events such as the recent port explosion in Beirut, the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Yemen, the protests across Iraq, and the civil war in Libya on top of the persisting pandemic, the region is undergoing immense change. In the past decade, the people of the region have been vocal about their demands and concerns. With no end in sight and more uncertainty in the future, the region may either emerge stronger and more collaborative in the fight against the pandemic, or more fractured and divided as existing trends are amplified by its fallout. But one thing is certain: the people are driving the region’s future—and there is no going back.



*Sarah A. Jabbar is a first-year student in the Master of Global Affairs program with an emphasis on security. As a product of her background and upbringing, she has always been interested in politics and history so she co-founded a project with her sister, @*

*shabab12.9, to discuss these subjects. Shabab12.9 focuses on producing graphics and sharing research on politics, history, mental health, climate justice, freedom of movement (among other topics) particularly as they relate to the SWANA region. In June 2019, she completed her undergraduate degree in Business Administration at UofT. Since graduation, she has completed a Big Data Analytics certification at York University. She is also passionate about holistic healing techniques and wellbeing practices.*

# The Disproportionate Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic in Latin America

BY ANDREA MORALES CACERES | SOUTH & CENTRAL AMERICAN AFFAIRS



ON February 26, the COVID-19 pandemic reached its first Latin American country when a case was confirmed in São Paulo, Brazil. By the end of July, Latin America became the most heavily impacted region by the COVID-19 virus, as cumulative cases surpassed the four million mark. As of November 2020, Latin America hosts almost a quarter of the world's COVID-19 cases and nearly a third of the deaths, despite the fact that the region makes up only eight per cent of the global population.

Much like the impact of COVID-19 in other societies, the virus has disproportionately affected certain economic and social groups. The spread of the virus in Latin America and the Caribbean threatens to worsen the health outcomes and living conditions of one of the most unequal regions in the world. In the Latin Ameri-

can context, this disparity is particularly felt by vulnerable groups such as informal workers, Indigenous peoples, and migrants. Whether it is accessing healthcare or financial relief assistance, the challenges faced by these groups during the current crisis have been exacerbated by a long history of social and economic exclusion.

## INFORMAL WORKERS

Informal employment in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) made up an average of 53.1 per cent of the region's total employment in 2016, with some LAC countries reporting an average as high as 60 to 80 per cent.

Informal workers often have little or no access to social protections, such as unemployment benefits, and have

therefore been forced to make the difficult decision to either jeopardize their health or their employment status. If workers self-isolate, they risk losing their livelihoods, but if they continue to work, they risk exposure to the COVID-19 virus. The latter risk is further amplified by the fact that informal workers face greater difficulties accessing adequate healthcare. While some LAC countries employ a universal health-care system, most countries in the region still require a portion of health costs to be paid out of pocket, which accounts for 34 per cent of total health spending in the LAC region. This presents an especially precarious situation for informal workers, who often come from low or lower-middle income backgrounds, have lower wages on average compared to their formal counterparts, and possess limited savings. In addition, informal workers often occupy spaces where it is difficult to social distance, such as crowded food markets and public transportation services.

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In Peru, where informal employment makes up almost 70 per cent of total employment, more than half of informal workers have reported a total income loss in comparison with just 16 per cent of formal workers. In March, the government implemented an ambitious \$26 billion (USD) economic stimulus package, worth 12 per cent of the country's GDP, for families in need. Execu-

tion of the initiative required workers to have a personal bank account to receive a direct deposit. This excluded many informal workers from receiving funding as most workers do not have a bank account. In fact, less than 40 per cent of Peruvian adults have bank accounts. As a result, many unemployed workers had to line up at banks to claim their payment, putting them at a higher risk of exposure.

## INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

Approximately 55 million Indigenous people live in Latin America and the Caribbean. In early 2020, as an increase in cases was reported in various South American countries, many remote Indigenous communities living close to or in the Amazon rainforest began to isolate as a health precaution. Their early worries surrounding the impact of COVID-19 were not unwarranted, given the historic experiences Amazonian Indigenous communities have faced with highly contagious diseases such as measles and smallpox. Despite these self-isolation measures, by October more than 168 000 cases and approximately 3 500 deaths linked to COVID-19 were reported among Indigenous peoples in at least 12 countries. Factors such as poor access to sanitation facilities, overcrowded living conditions, and a higher prevalence of pre-existing health conditions, such as diabetes or cardiovascular disease, have put Indigenous communities at higher risk for COVID-19 transmission.

Almost two-thirds of Indigenous peoples currently living in the Amazon rainforest are located in Brazil, most of whom live in remote communities. The isolated nature of these communities contributes to limited access to food supplies and healthcare assistance due to unreliable channels of communication and transportation. The scarcity of both personal protection equipment and healthcare workers, as well as the lack of coordination in the region at the state level, has hindered an effective response to protect these isolated Amazonian communities. Outbreaks of COVID-19 in these communities have not only threatened to produce immediate negative health outcomes, but also create lasting cultural damage given the virus' increased severity for older populations. For instance, the Amazonian Mundurucu people lost 10 sábios or "wise ones" to COVID-19, and with them, part of the traditional knowledge and history of their com-

PHOTO SOURCE: FLICKR, HERMESMARANA

munities.

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## MIGRANTS AND RETURNEES

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Since 2014, the socio-economic and political crisis in Venezuela has caused more than five million of its citizens to migrate, settle, and work in neighbouring LAC countries, such as Colombia, Peru, and Ecuador. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused previously employed Venezuelan migrants to lose their main source of income. Strict lockdown measures in various LAC countries forced restaurants, hotels, and shops to close, putting informal workers in dire financial straits. Since many Venezuelan migrants were previously employed in these sectors, their inability to pay their rent has resulted in a spike in evictions. Many Venezuelan migrants have been rendered homeless, and seeing few employment opportunities, tens of thousands made the difficult decision to return to their country of origin.

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*The journey back for Venezuelan migrants is difficult to say the least.*

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The journey back for Venezuelan migrants is difficult to say the least. Reports detail bottlenecks at border crossings, with little humanitarian assistance for migrants awaiting their turn to cross. Venezuelan returnees have also reported overcrowded and unsanitary conditions in local quarantine centres. Lastly, returnees have been targeted and stigmatized upon their return. Government officials have blamed them for the spread of COVID-19 referring to migrants as “biological weapons,” despite a previous statement from President Nicolas Maduro stating they would be welcomed back to the country with dignity.

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## CONCLUSION

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The disproportionate effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in the LAC region highlight the need to employ a more inclusive approach to both health and economic

assistance for all vulnerable groups. The impact of informality and social exclusion extend beyond economic outcomes by also affecting health and social conditions. Consequently, policymakers in the region must consider the experiences of informal workers, Indigenous communities, and migrants when drafting and implementing short and long-term COVID-19 recovery plans.



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*Andrea is a second-year Master of Global Affairs candidate at the Munk School of Global Affairs & Public Policy. She graduated in 2019 from Wilfrid Laurier University with a combined Honours Bachelor of Arts in Global Studies and French in addition to a Spanish minor. Over the summer, she interned at the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in their Integration and Migrant Training (IMT) Unit. Her current research interests include international development, gender equity, and forced migration, specifically in the Latin American region.*

# The Police Aren't Here to Protect you: With Nova Scotia Lobster Dispute, the RCMP Show Where Their Priorities Lie

BY HILARY LAWSON | INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS



**W**HEN the Sipekne'katik First Nation launched a small commercial lobster fishery in Mi'kma'ki territory in September, they were affirming a treaty right to fish that dates back more than 250 years. But non-Indigenous fishermen from nearby Nova Scotian communities responded by burning their buildings and vehicles, shooting flares at their boats, and assaulting community members, including Chief Mike Sack.

The violence made national headlines. Footage from the confrontation appeared to show RCMP officers standing by as non-Indigenous fishermen vandalized property and threatened Indigenous fishermen. One video taken on October 13 showed a mob of 200 people swarming two lobster pounds, smashing windows, damaging the storage facilities, and setting a van on fire. Mi'kmaq fisherman Jason Marr told Global News that the RCMP took two hours to respond to his emergency call. And when the detachment finally arrived, the RCMP told the group of Indigenous fishermen that they could not protect them.

These reports come on the heels of a summer rocked by police violence and protests beginning in the United States and which spread worldwide. In Canada, the police killings of Rodney Levi and Chantal Moore in New Brunswick and the death of Regis Korchinski-Paquet after police visited her Toronto apartment raised renewed calls from activists to defund or reform police forces

across the country. It is against this backdrop that many Indigenous and racialized communities are challenging the idea that the police are able—or willing—to protect them.

The Mi'kmaq lobster fishers are not the first to experience the RCMP's negligence in protecting Indigenous peoples. In 2019, the final report issued by the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) Inquiry stated that “the RCMP have not proven to Canada that they are capable of holding themselves to account.”

But this assessment only scratches the surface. The RCMP has a long and brutal history with Indigenous peoples that extends far beyond a dereliction of duty. RCMP officers became the armed enforcers of the Canadian “Indian Policy” that the Chief Commissioner of the MMIWG Inquiry called a “cultural genocide.” RCMP officers rounded up First Nations peoples and forced them onto reserves. They forcibly removed Indigenous children from their homes and placed them in residential schools. Terry Teegee, the British Columbia Regional Chief of the Assembly of First Nations and a member of the Takla Lake First Nation, told the Toronto Star in February that RCMP officers are known in his community as *nilhchuk-in*, meaning “those who take us away.”

Critics allege the RCMP has failed to cast off the vestig-

es of this bloody colonial legacy. Investigations such as the MMIWG Inquiry detail ongoing issues of systemic racism within the force. Indigenous leaders, like Chief Mike Sack, report a lack of trust in the RCMP in their communities—and perhaps they have good reason to feel this way.

In February, for example, an Inuk woman in Nunavut called the police after her sister was assaulted by her partner. When RCMP officers arrived, they arrested the beaten woman and jailed her for violating her bail conditions. And in August, RCMP officers brutally beat Chief Allen Adam of Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation after they pulled him over for an expired license plate. The local RCMP division reviewed the footage and deemed the use of force “reasonable.”

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*...Indigenous and racialized communities are challenging the idea that the police are able—or willing—to protect them.*

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Amidst recent calls to defund police forces around the world, the RCMP’s non-intervention in Mi’kma’ki raises the timely question as to whether a force with a history of persecution of Indigenous Peoples should be entrusted with ensuring the safety of their communities. Some Indigenous organizations say that the funds usually earmarked for policing should be channelled instead towards community supports and mental health crisis response services. In Scarborough, for example, Indigenous-led crisis response teams will replace police on mental health calls as part of a new pilot project run by the Native Child and Family Services of Toronto.

The federal government, for its part, has indicated that it will explore alternatives to the current model which leaves the responsibility of public safety in remote and Indigenous communities to RCMP contract policing. Public Safety Minister Bill Blair’s mandate letter includes a commitment to make the First Nations Policing Program an essential service, shifting the responsibility

of policing in Indigenous communities away from the RCMP and allowing communities to manage and operate their own policing services.

At the end of October, the National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations Perry Bellegarde published an op-ed in the *Toronto Star* calling for the Commissioner of the RCMP to resign over the RCMP handling of the attacks on the Mi’kmaq lobster fishery. “The force’s handling of the lobster dispute is the latest in a long line of RCMP failures, and it is clear it is not getting better,” he writes. “First Nations have waited long enough for non-discriminatory policing in this country.”

But the RCMP has already shown Indigenous communities that non-discriminatory policing may be a service it is unable to offer. In 2019, the federal government commissioned a report on the role of police services in First Nations and Inuit communities. It found that existing policing services do not meet their safety and security needs. In both Indigenous and non-Indigenous settings, findings show that the most promising ways to promote safety and well-being involve building relationships among service providers and community members—effectively addressing problems in the community before the police get involved.

This indicates that a shift away from colonial models of policing and toward community-centered and Indigenous-led approaches may be the future for many Indigenous communities—and it may be required to truly uphold their safety and security.



*Hilary Lawson is a first-year student in the Master of Global Affairs program at the Munk School of Global Affairs & Public Policy. She worked for 5 years as a political staffer on Parliament Hill, first for a Member of Parliament and then as an advisor to the Minister of Indigenous Services. Her research interests include information warfare, surveillance and privacy rights, Indigenous self-determination, and criminal justice transformation. She holds a bachelor’s degree in Conflict Studies and Human Rights from the University of Ottawa.*

# Canada Calling: Why Immigration is Valuable to the Canadian Economy

BY ALIMAH REHAN | INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND BUSINESS



ON October 30, Canada announced its 2021-23 Immigration Level Plan. As per the announcement, Canada is expected to welcome 401 000 immigrants in 2021, followed by 411 000 in 2022 and 421 000 in 2023. The last time Canada accepted over 400 000 immigrants was over a century ago, in 1913. Canada announces an immigration plan annually, indicating the number of permanent residents in different categories it will take each year. The most recent plan indicates a 60 per cent of next year’s total will be reserved for economic immigrants through Express Entry and the Provincial Nominee Program, meaning that 232 500 of the 401 000 newcomers in 2021 will be from the economic category.

Canada has generally been receptive of all categories of immigrants. It currently accepts three times as many immigrants as the United States. Since Prime Minister

Trudeau took office, Canada has witnessed the 12th highest increase in immigrants worldwide on a per-capita basis. The country also has the fourth highest population of immigrants in the West, with 21 per cent of its population being born outside of the county. Not everyone is happy with these numbers, however. Bruce Newbold, a professor at McMaster University, claims that COVID-19 has made Canadians more averse to immigrants. Despite a history of openness, anti-immigration sentiment has been building in Canada, especially against Asian immigrants, with some Canadians calling for a restriction on the number of newcomers to the country. That being said, polls have indicated that Canadians were generally more favourable towards skilled economic immigrants.

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THE LOGIC BEHIND ECONOMIC IMMIGRATION

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Between 2000 to 2018, foreign-born populations went up by 3.7 per cent in high-income OECD countries. Economic migrants constitute 240 million out of the 270 million international migrants worldwide. Economic migration involves people making conscious decisions for their own economic self-interest, which leads to increased market efficiency, greater output and eventually higher welfare in their new country. Furthermore, immigrants are an addition to a country's labour force. Some policymakers may argue that this increases competition, takes away domestic jobs or puts pressure on a country's limited resources. However, immigration is important to fill the gaps in labour supply. Immigrants often occupy high-and-low-income jobs in sectors where native-born workers are in short supply. Proponents of immigration argue that such an increase in labour supply will be met with a boost in labour demand, as immigrants spend money, stimulate demand and drive up production. This spillover nurtures the availability of goods and services, which eventually lowers prices for all consumers. Further, new arrivals bring skills and technological expertise which allow the agglomeration of domestic and foreign human capital. This combination of skills enhances market competitiveness and overall productivity.

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*Since Prime Minister Trudeau took office, Canada has witnessed the 12th highest increase in immigrants worldwide on a per-capita basis.*

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#### WHY PEOPLE IMMIGRATE

Nobel Laureates Esther Duflo and Abhijit Banerjee argue that wage gaps between home and host countries, along with network effects (existing immigrants attract more immigrants), drive people to immigrate. However, this effect is reduced as people with lower incomes show acute loss aversion. In such a case, it is largely the host country's government incentives, smooth application

processes, ease in transferring money to home countries, insurance against job losses, and public amenities that motivate economic immigration. As per a World Bank report, immigrants benefit from a significant increase in income and standards of living. It is estimated that an immigrant from a developing country earns four to six times more income in the U.S., when compared to a person of the same age and qualification in their country of origin. In Canada, principal applicants in the Canada Experience Class and Provincial Nominee Program typically make more than the national average income within the first year of arriving. Moreover, Canada is perceived as somewhat receptive and tolerant of minorities among the OECD countries.

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#### WHY CANADA NEEDS IMMIGRANTS

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Almost any politician or economic expert in support of the Immigration Plan 2021 will be quick to point out Canada's aging population and labour shortage. Currently, 17 per cent of Canada's population is over the age of 65. This figure is projected to rise to 25 per cent in the next 20 years. Immigration lowers the strain on retirement systems by bringing in more young workers. Analytically, it means that as more workers come in, contributions to the Canada Pension Plan will start increasing again relative to payments made to beneficiaries. As baby boomers begin to retire, workforce balance—the difference between the employed and retired populations—is projected to slump. With fertility rates remaining at 1.5 children per household, Canada needs immigrants not just to support its economy today, but to sustain its population in the future. In 2019 the Conference Board of Canada reported that if Canada was to halt immigration, real GDP growth would fall to just 1.1 per cent by 2040. To meet its workforce requirements, it is estimated that Canada needs 350 000 immigrants annually until at least 2035—a quota that will become increasingly important due to COVID-19. The pandemic prevented Canada from reaching its 2020 target of 341 000 newcomers. Commenting on the latest immigration plan, Minister of Immigration Marco Mendicino said that post-COVID-19, economic immigrants will be vital to lift the national economy.

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#### IMPACT ON CANADIAN TRADE AND BUSINESS

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The World Bank iterates that immigrants are more likely to become entrepreneurs, inventors, and innovators in destination countries than the local population. International students often progress towards becoming permanent residents in host countries by applying for economic immigrant status. These students have a positive impact on patents-based innovation. In the U.S., high-skilled workers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) have led to a rise in wages for native-born citizens, thereby suggesting that immigration impacts overall growth in factor productivity. This may

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*As baby boomers begin to retire, workforce balance—the difference between the employed and retired populations—is projected to slump.*

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also be true for Canada. While immigration has not had a huge positive effect on domestic wages (yet), the influx of foreign workers has served to reduce income inequality. Immigration in Canada has diversified local demographics in the country. The evolving population composition has the potential to result in national trade diversification, which is essential for continued economic growth. Canada's very close trade relationship with the U.S. must also be considered in the context of its immigration policy. This excessive trade reliance on the U.S. has linked Canada's national economy to its neighbour's political whims and economic performance. Studies have shown that immigration has a positive direct relationship with bilateral trade between the host and source countries. In this regard, an immigrant from India is likely to directly or indirectly boost trade with India, which presently consists of 0.86 per cent of Canada's overall trade. Despite anti-immigration sentiment lingering among some Canadians, immigration will prove to be an economic necessity for the country.



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*Alimah is a second-year Master of Global Affairs Candidate at the Munk School of Global Affairs & Public Policy. She is currently studying the impact of university collaboration on urban innovation as a Research Assistant with Professor Shiri Breznitz and Professor Shauna Brail. Over the summer of 2020, Alimah worked as a business development intern with the Trade+Impact Association (Africa and North America division). Her research interests include the social shaping of technology, business, and innovations in the developing world.*

# Canadian Tech: Disruption and Opportunity

BY ELLIOTT SIMPSON | CANADA IN THE WORLD



“BLACKBERRY is planning a comeback,” reads the title of an article from September in *Wired U.K.*, a tech magazine. Many would be surprised to hear that the former Canadian tech giant is in fact still in business, and has remained solvent by making the transition from hardware to software—capitalizing on the growth industry of cybersecurity.

Supporters of Blackberry could be accused of being “homers,” in the same way that Canadians support and defend other Canadian exports like Alanis Morissette or Gordon Lightfoot, no matter what. However, many in the tech industry are starting to notice Blackberry’s last 12 months of growth amidst a difficult transition.

Canadian tech firms have always been seen as punching above their weight in their quest to disrupt their respective technology industries, and the battles Canadian tech companies must fight are difficult given their competition. Consider the battle for skilled talent, where Canadian tech hubs like Waterloo and Toronto compete with the likes of Silicon Valley and New York. Another is the fight for name recognition—who knew that Ottawa-based Kinaxis Inc. has a reputation as the global thought leader in supply chain management, or that Shopify Inc. and Blackberry Ltd. worked together to develop Canada’s federal contact tracing app?

COVID-19 has hit the Canadian economy hard, slashing growth and skyrocketing unemployment to almost 14 per cent in May. Industries such as travel, hospitality, and retail have been especially hard hit as businesses shuttered and were forced to lay off employees. As the second wave continues and Canada braces for a dismal winter, a bright spot exists in the Canadian tech sector,

where many Canadian tech companies have found a way to not just survive, but thrive.

Ottawa based e-commerce platform Shopify is the most obvious example. The August 31, 2019 edition of *The Economist* touted Shopify as quietly filling a hole in the market that no one realized was there: the hallmark of a good idea in tech. Shopify’s “software as a service” platform is to merchants what Amazon is to consumers. Shopify now facilitates e-commerce for over 1 million businesses in 20 languages and 175 countries across the world. Its platform is as appealing to a mom-and-pop shop as it is to giants like Heinz, Staples, and Budweiser, and it has disrupted e-commerce globally from its (now empty due to COVID-19) Ottawa headquarters at 150 Elgin Street. COVID-19 has propelled Shopify to dizzying heights. At the end of 2020’s third quarter, Spotify reported a 109 per cent increase in its platform product sales from last year, and has become Canada’s largest company by stock market value. *Forbes* has even described Shopify as the “most disruptive retailer that most...aren’t paying attention to,” and named it a “Challenger to Amazon Every Day.”

Other Canadian tech firms have been incredibly successful during COVID-19 as well, such as the aforementioned Ottawa-based Kinaxis Inc., and Montreal’s Lightspeed, a cloud-based point-of-sale company. Both have gone up against bigger and supposedly better-established firms—and both are making quite the impression.

A key reason why Canadian tech has been successful in impacting the industry from hubs across the country is because in recent years, Canada has been able to attract the type of talent needed for innovative ideas to come

to life. Canada has always had the key assets traditionally required for a tech industry to exist – including access to capital and research universities, but experienced chronic brain drain to American tech hubs like Silicon Valley and Seattle. COMPTIA, an industry association, reports that there are now 1.72 million tech workers in Canada, having increased by 282 000 since 2011. The immigration

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*...Canada has been able to attract the type of talent needed for innovative ideas to come to life.*

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news website CIC News recently reported that skilled workers, especially in the field of tech, are coming to Canada in large numbers from the United States. Toronto alone has added nearly 67 000 tech jobs in the past five years, second in North America only to San Francisco.

These skilled tech workers migrating North, while attracted by favorable conditions in Canada, are simultaneously being pushed by a hostile American immigration policy, courtesy of outgoing President Donald Trump. The Brookings Institution, a U.S. based think-tank, estimates that President Trump’s June executive order that limited immigration, including immigration of skilled workers to the U.S., wiped \$100 billion from the U.S. economy. This executive order, among others, has presented Canada as an attractive alternative. Adding to this is the immense cost of living in the traditional U.S. tech hubs, which have grown to be prohibitively expensive, versus the comparatively cheaper cost of living in Canadian hubs like Waterloo, Toronto, and Montreal.

The current U.S. administration’s posture on immigration is in direct contrast to the Trudeau government’s signature openness to immigration, especially with respect to tech workers. A primary example of this is the Global Skills Strategy, launched in 2017, that allows a fast tracked, two week processing of visas for skilled workers. This gave Canada an advantage that has allowed Canadi-

an tech to prosper. “Canada has disrupted the traditional global talent flow over the last few years,” according to Christopher Leung, Head of Commercialization at Bon-sai, a digital commerce firm. “We’ve seen a significant inflow of top tech talent through our immigration policies and comparatively low social integration barriers.” While COVID-19 has vastly impacted these fast visa processing times—drawing them from two weeks to four to six months—the Trudeau government is pushing ahead, putting in place the highest immigration targets in Canadian history: a good sign for the future of the tech industry.

The United States is welcoming a new administration in January. President-elect Joe Biden is promising a reversal of the executive orders from the last four years, and Canada may no longer be able to rely on unfavourable immigration conditions in the U.S. to attract talent. Therefore, Canada will have to position itself not just as a better alternative to the U.S. for tech, but a standalone tech hub in its own right. “To stay ahead,” says Christopher Leung, “the Government of Canada needs to invest more in supporting local tech to foster deeper organic talent demand.” In a letter to Prime Minister Trudeau, 130 tech leaders in Canada drove the message that Canadian tech will no longer be able to disrupt the tech world without support and transparency from the government. For Canadian tech to continue to prosper and disrupt American-based tech giants resting on their laurels, Canada will need to be proactive in attracting, retaining, and fostering talent. Canada’s knowledge economy depends on it.



*Elliott Simpson is a first-year student at the Munk School of Global Affairs & Public Policy at the University of Toronto. He graduated from the University of Edinburgh in 2016. Then worked with Deloitte Canada’s Public Sector Transformation Team. In 2019,*

*Elliott joined the team at Ritual and launched the app in Montreal. He has worked in several industries including telecommunications and marketing, and spent some time consulting within the Scottish Parliament. Elliott’s interests lie mostly in the sphere of global security, and defence – and he has been conditionally accepted to the Royal Canadian Navy reserve unit at HMCS York.*

PHOTO SOURCE: UNSPLASH, YESHI KANGRANG

# Rising Temperatures, Melting Claim: How Canada's Claim in the Arctic is Being Challenged by Global Warming

BY FRÉDÉRIC COSSETTE | INTERNATIONAL LAW



WHILE recent announcements from the pharmaceutical sector indicate that the COVID-19 pandemic is not far from cooling down, geopolitical tensions in the Arctic are heating up. Across the Atlantic, the European Union is leading public consultation that will lead to an updated Arctic policy by the end of 2020. In the United States, President Trump is considering allowing drilling in an Alaskan wildlife refuge, though the policy's future remains unclear under the incoming Biden administration. Meanwhile in Russia, President Putin announced the renewal of Russia's fleet of icebreakers to "retain superiority in the Arctic." In the East, the Chinese Arctic policy paper adopted in 2018 indicates China's expansionist interest in a region far beyond its geographic reach, an interest that may very well intensify in the midst of ongoing international tumult. In the face of these rising challenges, what is Canada's claim of sovereignty in the

Arctic and how could it be challenged moving forward?

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) enunciates the methods by which a state establishes its maritime boundaries. A state must first draw normal baselines based on the low-water line along the coast, from which it can generate different maritime zones (like a territorial sea, a contiguous zone, or an exclusive economic zone) which are attached to different legal regimes. The waters within the normal baselines are considered internal waters on which the state can exercise the same level of sovereignty as it does on its terrestrial land. For certain states, such as France or Portugal, relatively simple coastlines render the establishment of their respective maritime boundaries no strenuous task.

Now, let us consider the case of Canada's Arctic, the country's forgotten third coast which has been left out of

the national motto: *A mari usque ad mare*, "from Sea to Sea." How would anyone trace a line around every single indentation and fringe of Canada's Arctic islands without turning the life of any ship captain navigating its waters into a steering hell? Article 7 of UNCLOS provides for such cases and specifies that a state can draw straight baselines around the entirety of the fringe of islands. The water included within the lines—that is, in between the islands—are thus considered internal waters. In order to recourse to straight baselines instead of normal baselines, the fringe of islands needs to be in the immediate vicinity of the coast (e.g. Norway). There is no doubt that the Arctic Archipelago is in the immediate vicinity of the coast. In fact, the northern part of the archipelago is related to the southern part by tiny islands (Lowther, Griffith, Young, Garrett) on which Canada relies to plead the unity of the archipelago.

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*How would anyone trace a line around every single indentation and fringe of Canada's Arctic islands without turning the life of any ship captain navigating its waters into a steering hell?*

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Given that this criterion is fulfilled, the straight baselines must follow the general direction of the coast and there must be a close relationship between the land and sea areas which are enclosed. To reinforce these two criteria, a state can invoke "economic interests peculiar to a region, the reality and importance of which are clearly evidenced by a long usage."

The general direction of the coast followed by the straight baseline is often a point of contention in negotiations. The land and water included within the straight baselines can cover an immense area to which the water-to-land criterion is also hard to attach, even though the

presence of sea ice during most of the year reinforces it. Canada also points to the economic activities of the Inuit people since time immemorial to "invoke economic interests peculiar to [the] region" that, given the historical presence of the Inuit in the region, are "evidenced by a long usage."

Canada, however, chose to affirm its sovereignty over the Arctic waters with a hybrid claim. Canada drew straight baselines justified by the historical waters regime within customary law. Such historic title requires an exclusive exercise of state jurisdiction during a long lapse of time and a general acquiescence by foreign states. As historical waters remain undefined in conventional law, it is up to the state to prove that the aforementioned criteria are met. Canada pleads that it has exercised jurisdiction since the early 20th century, namely through Arctic patrols conducted during the Second World War. It also asserts that the Inuit occupied and used the Arctic waters since time immemorial. As for the acquiescence criterion, it is met in the absence of explicit challenge to Canadian sovereignty over these territories. Even if the US and other states have expressed their disagreement with Canada's claim, none have taken Canada to the International Court of Justice, nor led a strong intervention against Canada in the Arctic.

It is commonly held that when Minister of Foreign Affairs Joe Clark declared in 1985 that internal waters in the Arctic were historical waters under customary law this was to be a temporary defense until Canada advanced a stronger legal claim under the Article 7 UNCLOS straight baselines criteria. However, even a claim on this conventional basis is now threatened by climate change, as melting sea ice prompts the disappearance of formations previously considered land.

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*The legal fragility of the Canadian claim is rivaled only by the fragility of the Arctic environment itself.*

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PHOTO SOURCE: FLICKR, L'ORIOU

In the Canadian Arctic, the melting sea ice makes it easier for ships to navigate through the Northwest Passage (NWP). States looking to challenge the status quo would like to see Canada's historical internal waters redefined as a territorial sea where they could invoke innocent passage, or even establish an international strait like the Panama or Suez Canals. China has its eyes fixed on the NWP as it aims to create a 'polar Silk Road' that would use the passage as a trade route, a policy which Russia supports. The United States similarly views the NWP as an international strait, but has long maintained the status quo.

The increasingly assertive interests of Arctic and non-Arctic states alike in the Canadian Arctic not only affect the high politics of security and sovereignty, but also the micro realm of cultural and ecological factors. As climate change modifies the landscape, the traditional lifestyle and the food security of Inuit in northern Canada—who are sustained by the land and its resources—are threatened. Furthermore, an increase in maritime traffic would increase the likelihood of incidents in Arctic waters that could have consequences on the regional ecology, like an oil spill. The legal fragility of the Canadian claim is rivaled only by the fragility of the Arctic environment itself.

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*Canada must also put as much focus on the internal threats caused by climate change as it does on the external threats posed by foreign states.*

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Whether Canada decides to maintain its claim to sovereignty over Arctic waters using historical titles or conventional legal grounds, both foundations will become more precarious as climate change alters the Arctic landscape. So what are Canada's options? Canada must re-establish a healthy relationship with the United States in the region, namely by emphasizing a common interest in de-

fending the Arctic from Russia and China's converging and expansionist interests in the region. Canada must also put as much focus on the internal threats caused by climate change as it does on the external threats posed by foreign states. Finally, if Canada is serious about its claim to internal waters on the basis of effective exercise of authority, it needs to empower local populations with the resources and infrastructure to do so. Deepening ties with the territories and regional representative bodies such as the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and Nunavut Tunngavik will be essential to establishing a meaningful and authoritative presence. Falling short of these recommendations will result in Canada's Arctic claims melting away.



Frédéric is a first-year student in the Master of Global Affairs program. He holds a B.Sc. in International Studies and a LL.M. in International Law, both from Université de Montréal.

Last year, Frédéric interned at the Québec Government Office in Munich where he gained invaluable government experience while cultivating his interest for German-speaking countries. In 2017, he also gained NGO experience promoting European institutions through an internship at the Maison de l'Europe de Provence. Frédéric is interested in a wide variety of topics including the law of the sea, questions of sovereignty, Arctic security, the rise of illiberal regimes, global migrations and soft power through sports.

# COVID-19 and Geopolitical Revisionism: The Emerging Security Landscape

BY AMANDEEP SINGH HANSPAL | GLOBAL SECURITY



ACCORDING to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), global military expenditure saw its largest annual increase in a decade, reaching a total of \$1.9 trillion in 2019. This figure demonstrates the priorities of military powers heading into the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic: increasing attempts to bolster national security, often at the expense of global cooperation. The response to the pandemic, from ventilators to the vaccine race, has been mainly characterized by nationalistic self-interest rather than international cooperation. Some revisionist states have exploited this period as an opportunity to conduct aggressive foreign policy. This behaviour has resulted in increased geopolitical tensions, while also reigniting latent interstate territorial conflicts such as the Nagorno-Karabakh issue between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

COVID-19-induced disruption has acted as a catalyst for countries around the world to reevaluate their geopoliti-

cal threat perceptions and prepare for a more precarious security landscape. For instance, even in the relatively peaceful Nordic region, Sweden has approved the largest military build-up in the last 70 years amid fears of a resurgent Russia. One common trend in the face of this geopolitical turbulence has been the absence of a strong U.S. leadership role on the global stage, which would have previously served to check the revisionist tendencies of countries like Turkey and China. Wherever possible, regional powers have stepped into the void created by American retrenchment.

## TURKISH SABER-RATTLING

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has used external military ventures and a belligerent foreign policy to incite nationalist sentiments at a time when both the Turkish lira and the country's economy is struggling due to COVID-19. While already active in Syria and Libya

before the pandemic, Turkey has since stepped up its aggressive stance in the Mediterranean Sea in a direct challenge to Greece and Cyprus over maritime claims. More recently, Turkey vociferously backed its ‘brotherly’ nation of Azerbaijan in the conflict against Armenia over the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region, skewing the military balance in Baku’s favor by providing armed drones and Turkish-aligned Syrian fighters. Turkey has tried to

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*Wherever possible, regional powers have stepped into the void created by American retrenchment.*

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assert its dominance and challenge the status-quo along its periphery, which has alarmed other regional powers such as Egypt, Israel, and the UAE.

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#### INCREASING CHINESE BELLIGERENCE

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After receiving pushback against the government’s attempt to turn the pandemic into a public diplomacy victory, Chinese officials have engaged in ‘wolf-warrior’ diplomacy—a bellicose offensive style used by Chinese diplomats to defend the party’s narrative—which has antagonized numerous countries. Beijing has further tried to leverage the uncertainty surrounding the pandemic to gain a geopolitical advantage. The Chinese People’s Liberation Army (PLA) official website published an article in April 2020, stating that “the outbreak of COVID-19 has significantly lowered the U.S. Navy’s warship deployment capability in the Asia-Pacific region.” The PLA, in another article, also asserted that none of its service members had been infected with COVID-19, and that the pandemic had improved the overall combat readiness of the Chinese military. These increasingly assertive Chinese intentions have galvanized four Indo-Pacific democracies—the U.S., India, Japan, and Australia—into a closer security relationship, expressed through security forums like the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue.

As the pandemic rages on around the world, China has adopted an increasingly aggressive military posture across its neighborhood. Since the pandemic began, the PLA has repeatedly tested Taiwan’s air and maritime boundaries. Taipei has witnessed an increasing number of incursions by Chinese naval vessels and warplanes into Taiwan’s waters and airspace. On another front along its long and unsettled Himalayan boundary with India, China is engaged in a tense stand-off. As the World is largely preoccupied with the pandemic, the two nuclear states have increased their military presence along their mutual border. China has used the pandemic-induced distraction to move into what India claims as its side of the disputed territory. Tensions rose in June when Indian and Chinese forces began a series of violent skirmishes in the Galwan Valley, leading to casualties on both sides. This was the first deadly incident in at least 45 years between the two Asian giants, prompting India to shed its strategic ambiguity and embrace a closer relationship with the United States. According to the Director of Asia Programs at John Hopkins University, Prof. Devesh Kapur, it is not

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*As the pandemic rages on around the world, China has adopted an increasingly aggressive military posture across its neighborhood.*

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a mere coincidence that the last India-China war in 1962 occurred at a time when the U.S. was distracted by the Cuban Missile Crisis. With the COVID-19 pandemic as a more-than-suitable substitute, the international conditions at present make the chances of a larger conflict more probable.

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#### CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM IN THE FACE OF GRIM PROGNOSTICATION

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General Nick Carter, head of the British Armed Forces, recently presented a sobering scenario, warning that the present global uncertainty and economic despondency caused by the pandemic could risk another world war. According to General Carter: “we are living at a moment in time where the world is a very uncertain and anxious place and of course, the dynamic of global competition is a feature of our lives as well, and I think the real risk we have with quite a lot of the regional conflicts that are going on at the moment, is you could see escalation lead to miscalculation...” Such warnings, if left unheeded, could

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*Joe Biden’s victory in the recent U.S. presidential election is crucial in this regard, as it promises to strengthen the rules-based international order and hold accountable the revisionist powers that try to undermine it.*

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potentially lead to further regional flare-ups and instability. Rather than exploiting the pandemic to pursue narrow geopolitical interests, states should work together and cooperate in tackling the socio-economic challenges caused by the disruption. The international community must pivot back to enhancing global cooperation and the peaceful resolution of conflicts. Joe Biden’s victory in the recent U.S. presidential election is crucial in this regard, as it promises to strengthen the rules-based international order and hold accountable the revisionist powers that try to undermine it. This new administration has pledged to restore U.S. leadership, with a focus on reaffirming alliances and U.S. commitments. By pursuing multilateral diplomacy over zero-sum geopolitics, the U.S. and its allies can act in unison to keep revisionist powers in check and maintain international peace and stability.



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*Amandeep is a first-year student in the Master of Global Affairs program at the University of Toronto. He earned his Bachelor of Technology in Computer Science & Engineering from India and worked as a software developer at Accenture. He has a Graduate Certificate in Strategic Studies from the Takshashila Institution in India and holds an MA in Politics (International & Area Studies) from Jamia Millia Islamia University, India. Earlier this year, he attended winter school at the University of Bologna, Italy. In his internship roles, he has worked at varied institutions such as the Center for Information Systems, Ministry of Railways (India), Statecraft—a non-partisan global affairs daily—and the Indian Institute of Public Administration. He has presented at various international conferences focusing on security matters and his key research interests include exploring the intersection of traditional geopolitics and emerging technology.*

# COVID-19: The Rise of Autocratic Governance?

BY JOSEPH ROSSI | HUMAN RIGHTS



IN 2019, Freedom House, an American non-profit that conducts research on advocacy and democracy, reported that of the 41 countries ranked 'free' from 1985 to 2005, 22 have experienced a decline in freedom in the past five years—a trend that has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. While COVID-19 is unlikely to have any substantial effect on established democracies in Western nations, it will act as a catalyst in countries where democracy is already under threat. There is a clear historical precedent for political leaders utilizing crises as a premise to violate human rights and challenge institutional democracy. UN Secretary-General António Guterres asserted that the COVID-19 crisis “can provide pretext to adopt repressive measures for purposes unrelated to the pandemic.” The current challenge is based on the fact that COVID-19 is a serious health crisis that warrants the suspension of certain civil liberties. However, repressive regimes may view such restrictions as an opportunity to challenge and eliminate democratic norms.

Government use of emerging technologies and their subsequent threat to individual privacy has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The use of contact-tracing applications can be effective in monitoring the spread of

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*While the world is experiencing an unprecedented moment in history, human rights law still applies and must be respected.*

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COVID-19, but some governments have used the pandemic as a pretext to extend their use of invasive surveillance for the purpose of political repression.

PHOTO SOURCE: UNSPLASH, FRED MOON

This is likely to be the case in countries such as China where the government undertook domestic surveillance initiatives before the outbreak of COVID-19. The legacy of the 9/11 attacks has shown that surveillance systems created in response to a specific crisis are likely to remain in use for a substantial period thereafter. While the world is experiencing an unprecedented moment in history, human rights law still applies and must be respected. In this way, it is imperative that government officials undertake a strategic and balanced approach to surveillance. Collection of personal data must only be used to support public health authorities' objectives to respond to the ongoing pandemic.

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## THREATS TO DEMOCRACY

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Beyond threatening privacy, COVID-19 has challenged the very core of democracy: elections. The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance asserted that more than 60 countries have postponed national or subnational elections in response to COVID-19. In the short-term, postponement of elections may be necessary from a public health perspective. Over time, however, delayed elections under the guise of COVID-19 can be used to purposefully extend a government's tenure—threatening the peaceful transition of power at the heart of democracy. Conversely, other countries may choose to hold elections, but under questionable conditions: limiting the number of poll workers, engaging in voter suppression, and preventing independent election monitoring. It is imperative that elections be regulated in accordance with objective principles. Emergency measures that affect elections must abide by electoral laws, remain proportional to the ongoing public health threat posed by COVID-19, and be communicated in a transparent manner with the public.

Moreover, the opportunity to respond to negligent or repressive government action through freedom of assembly has been challenged by stay-at-home orders. For example, in Algeria there has been a sharp decline in protesters challenging ongoing government corruption, while Russia prevented protests against President Vladimir Putin's decision to rewrite the constitution to extend his term in office. In the short-term, civilians have pursued online activism. However, as a host of prevalent issues continue to increase in severity—inadequate

services, rising inequality, corruption, government repression, and abuse by security—protesters may become desperate. This is especially the case if governments continue to prohibit gatherings for longer than necessary as a means to suppress legitimate protests that will challenge their regime.

In the western Balkans in particular, the pandemic has provided an optimal environment for coercive regimes to increasingly erode civil rights. While elections were delayed in both Serbia and North Macedonia, government objectives were made clear through the vastly different processes taken to decide on electoral delays. North Macedonian President Stevo Pendarovski engaged leaders of all political parties who then issued a joint decree.

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*It is increasingly important for international and regional organizations to pressure governments who have used COVID-19 as a means to threaten and challenge democratic values to alter their behaviour.*

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In contrast, Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić defied constitutional regulations and declared an indefinite state-of-emergency to delay the election and only chose to consult with the Prime Minister and the Parliament's speaker—both of whom are members of his party. The state of emergency made it permissible to prohibit parliamentary meetings and mandate army presence in the streets to impose severe and continuously changing lockdown regulations. In Serbia and other Balkan countries, the focus has been on restrictive rules and repression,

favouring large fines and detention instead of communication on best practices to prevent the spread of COVID-19. This questionable approach is perhaps most stark in Montenegro, where the government has violated citizens' right to privacy by releasing the names and addresses of those in self-isolation.

It is increasingly important for international and regional organizations to pressure governments who have used COVID-19 as a means to threaten and challenge democratic values to alter their behaviour. The European Union (EU) can play a meaningful role in promoting human rights by placing greater emphasis on democratic and civil rights as part of its enlargement process. Specifically, this includes the threat to delay or end EU candidacy for countries that violate these rights. This action must be immediate. Otherwise, some countries will accept economic support from China and Russia, countries who are uninterested in upholding civil rights.

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## PRESERVING HUMAN RIGHTS

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Beyond regional unions, individual countries must undertake collective action to ensure that countries are upholding and protecting human rights. This may be achieved by making receipt of economic aid conditional on compliance with human rights law. Developing countries who are engaging in human rights violations and are reliant on foreign aid should be incentivised to alter their egregious behaviour. Additionally, if this plan is not successful, countries may undertake a more direct method: Magnitsky legislation. This refers to government sanctions enacted against foreign nationals who are responsible for gross violation of human rights. Canada, in particular, has passed legislation which prohibits any Canadian from interacting with or pursuing a financial transaction with a foreign national sanctioned under the law. Canada has already used this legislation against 17 foreign nationals from Saudi Arabia who committed violations of human rights in the torture and killing of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi. Expanding its use should be considered for human rights violations related to COVID-19.

COVID-19 has presented a number of domestic difficulties for countries while disrupting economic and multilateral cooperation, and representing a challenge to the

liberal international order. However, it is vital for countries and international organizations to undertake immediate action to protect democratic values abroad before countries teetering on the brink make a full-scale transition to autocracy.



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*Joseph Rossi is a first-year student in the Master of Global Affairs program at the University of Toronto. He completed his undergraduate degree at the University of Toronto in International Relations. As an undergrad, he was a Crisis Analyst for the North American Model United Nations, Vice-President of the Italian Undergraduate Student Cultural Association and a journalist for The Varsity newspaper. His research interests include Canadian foreign policy, inter and intra-state conflict and international organizations.*

# Is COVID-19 Putting Democracy in Africa at Risk?

BY REBECCA SEWARD-LANGDON | SUB-SAHARAN AFRICAN AFFAIRS



**A**T first glance, the COVID-19 pandemic appears to be placing democracy in Africa under threat. Although this is not the first time African countries have faced a health crisis, lockdown measures have seemed to stall democratic processes and magnify existing inequalities. According to the International Foundation for Electoral Systems, 15 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have postponed elections due to COVID-19.

But just how much is COVID-19 really contributing to a political backslide on the continent? It depends—while some authoritarian and hybrid regimes are using the emergency as an opportunity to strengthen the power of the executive branch, other regimes are grabbing power without the justification of the pandemic. The contrast-

ing examples of Ethiopia and Tanzania may demonstrate an overall trend of growing authoritarianism on the continent, irrespective of COVID-19.

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## THE BRINK OF CIVIL WAR

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Ethiopia is ruled by an authoritarian government, according to the 2019 EIU Democracy Index. However, perceptions of Ethiopia's autocracy started to change in 2018, when Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed came into office. This followed major protests against the 30-year rule of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), who represent the minority Tigray people of northern Ethiopia.

However, in March, Ahmed called for the postponement

of the parliamentary election that was supposed to take place on August 29. It is now set for a year later in August 2021. While the government claims the postponement is due to COVID-19 safety precautions, it is hard to ignore the rapidly rising tensions and conflict with the Tigray opposition. Because of claims of Ahmed destroying Ethiopia's self-determination, accusations that TPLF is a "treacherous group," the dismissal of Tigrayan government officials, and military attacks from both sides, Ethiopians now fear a civil war.

military attack against the TPLF. The TPLF is a strong, militarized opposition with a history of armed action—and they are more than capable of attempting to take back power in Ethiopia.

From promising free and fair elections to postponing them for a year, Ethiopia is now on the edge of falling into civil war.

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### COVID-19 ELECTIONS

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Unlike Ethiopia, Tanzania did not postpone its 2020 elections. COVID-19 was not used as an excuse to extend the presidential term. Rather, the elections were riddled with fraud and opposition suppression to secure another term for the leading party in power. This begs the question: is the failure of democracy caused by COVID-19 lockdown measures or rather the ruling powers themselves?

President John Magufuli of the Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) party was re-elected to another five-year term in October—allegedly winning 84 per cent of valid votes. In the semi-autonomous region of Zanzibar, Hussein Mwinyi of CCM was elected President for a five-year term. The EIU Democracy Index considers Tanzania's government to be a "hybrid regime," and this year's barely-democratic election proves that.

For the five years that Magufuli has been in power, opposition parties have not had a fair run for leadership. Major efforts to suppress the opposition include banning rallies and meetings, imprisoning and charging opposition candidates, media censorship, brutal attacks, and disqualification altogether. Additional reports of electoral fraud, lack of transparency, and false outcomes make it impossible for a true democracy to exist. This time around, at least five opposition candidates were arrested, including presidential candidate Tundu Lissu of the Chadema Party.

Similarly, Zanzibar's elections suffered from electoral fraud and oppression of the opposition candidates and supporters. Nine people were killed in the lead-up to election day, and ACT-Wazalendo, the island's opposition party, allegedly discovered ballot box stuffing. Police and military who surveyed the streets and polling stations

were found beating several citizens.

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*...is the failure of democracy  
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World Health Organization data shows that the country's reported cases have been at zero since May. Although this seems like a success story, the reality is that Magufuli's government has refused to release data since June, claiming that it causes unnecessary panic. COVID-19 did not cause Tanzania's elections to be postponed. The ruling powers made sure to secure leadership for the next term. Another country is on the cusp of backsliding from democracy, but in this case COVID-19 was not used as an excuse.

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### EXISTING ISSUES ARE MAGNIFIED DURING EMERGENCIES

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So, if the pandemic is not the real reason Ethiopia and Tanzania are backsliding democracies, what is? Africa's political story is often portrayed as corrupt, unreliable, and unstable. This is not necessarily false, and it is not necessarily true—Africa is not a homogenous state. There are deep, complex histories that date back long before COVID-19, when European settlers and colonizers first stepped foot on African soil.

The cases of Ethiopia and Tanzania cannot simply be viewed as a scramble for power in a state of emergency. Although the pandemic provides an opportunity, complex histories of ethnic divide, single-party politics, and the fear of backsliding are the real causes of the growing authoritarianism. Like many other countries across Africa, strong-man leadership, plus the fear of state failure, prevent democracy from thriving. It is within this intersection where Africa's political complexities must be

addressed, because they are the roots of the threats to democracy. COVID-19 may be making a bad situation worse, but it is not the root cause of the situation.



Rebecca is a first-year student and the Munk School of Global Affairs & Public Policy. She completed her undergraduate degree in African Studies and Political Science at Carleton University. Her interests include China-Africa relations, environmental conservation, and African independence. At the fourth Annual African Studies Undergraduate Conference, Rebecca presented her research on community efforts of environmental conservation in Tanzania and Rwanda after visiting the two countries, and co-hosted the event the following year. During her undergraduate studies she wrote an honours research essay on the effects of China's non-interference policy in Africa and assisted in the Rethinking African Liberation research project.

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*...while some authoritarian and hybrid regimes are using the emergency as an opportunity to strengthen the power of the executive branch, other regimes are grabbing power without the justification of the pandemic.*

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While Ahmed worked to reconcile tensions with Eritrea and the Oromo people, a large ethnic group in Oromia, Ethiopia (which won him the Nobel Peace Prize in 2019), tensions with the Tigray grew. This is an old story of ethno-linguistic ties to power and representation. When Ahmed came into power through anti-government protests, he accused his predecessors of corruption and removed Tigrayan government officials from office. He further re-organized the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF)—a multi-ethnic coalition—to exclude the TPLF.

For the TPLF, postponing the election is a sign that Ahmed is not ready to let go of his power. In September, the Tigrayan government held elections, denying the legitimacy of the Prime Minister's rule. The central government deemed these elections illegal and ordered a

# End of an Era: Can Neoliberalism Survive COVID-19?

BY JUN PARK | GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT



ON the eve of 2020, the first known case of COVID-19 was reported. Within a matter of months, the virus was found in almost every corner of the globe. When COVID-19 was declared a pandemic in March, the global economy came to an abrupt halt, leading to dramatic slowdowns in trade, travel restrictions, the shuttering of global businesses, and further disruptions which would affect the livelihoods of hundreds of millions of people across the world. As COVID-19 continues to wreak havoc on the global economy, governments and businesses are working around the clock to return to normalcy. But what if a return to normal is not something which we should be championing?

A return to normal means a return to neoliberalism, a system which has been the dominant economic framework and development model for the past forty years. Neoliberalism is embodied by what is known as the “Washington Consensus,” a set of ten policy prescriptions that

champions the privatization of state enterprises, trade liberalization, deregulation of markets, and flexible labour markets. The system works flawlessly—in theory. It purports that, if given control over various aspects of society, the market will regulate itself. The ‘invisible hand’ of the market, as the theory goes, would enable greater economic growth and the betterment of society, while allowing governments to cut spending on welfare provisions as the market would fill the gaps. However, while the neoliberal system did foster economic growth, much of this growth was concentrated among the corporate and political elite, which greatly entrenched inequality between the wealthy and working classes. Major corporations realized outsourcing employment and manufacturing to less developed countries where labour is cheap and regulations are loose would be far more profitable than continuing operations domestically. The decision to invest overseas to increase profits has had devastating consequences for many middle-class families that relied on manufacturing jobs, which are continuously dwindling in

developed countries. To keep order during this economic restructuring, economic and political elites encouraged people to take on more debt and spend to maintain their middle-class status. Policies were created to encourage spending by providing access to capital through loose and often predatory lending practices, providing funds even when the borrowers had no capacity to pay it back. The market has galvanized a false sense of financial prosperity in which the elites were able to extract incredible amounts of wealth from consumer debt, real estate, and insurance and trading schemes. These frail and unsustainable business practices ultimately culminated in the

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2008 global financial crisis, which created a level of economic distress not seen since the Great Depression. The corporations and institutions that were responsible for misleading the public were bailed out through massive state intervention schemes. However, the same generosity was not extended to the working people who continue to suffer the consequences of the conditions created by the ownership class. As a matter of fact, median weekly wages in 2018 were \$897 USD, only \$39 USD higher in real terms than they were in 1979; however, the 90th percentile earners have seen their real weekly wages double to \$2 112 USD within a decade. The 2008 financial crisis exposed the increasingly problematic nature of the ‘boom and bust’ business cycles that continue to redistribute even more wealth from the bottom layers of society to the top.

Fast forward to 2020, when the world finds itself in the midst of an economic downturn of biblical proportions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. This time however,

the consequences of neoliberalism may be far more fatal. In addition to deindustrialization over the past four decades, state capacity has been depleted through the logic of privatization and tax cuts which have compromised the ability of governments and industries to effectively tackle crises. With the global economy in a meltdown, two of the wealthiest neoliberal economies—the United States and the United Kingdom—struggled to produce vital protective equipment for hospitals. These failures were a result of not only outsourced manufacturing, but also the deliberate policies crafted to promote neoliberalism. From university labs to manufacturing, neoliberalism actively promoted the fragmentation and separation of a wide range of systems of provisions as individual firms scrambled for short-term profits.

In the U.S., neoliberal policies coupled with COVID-19 have also exposed the fragility and fatal flaws of privatized health systems that resulted in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people. The flaws within the medical system already segregated a large part of the population based on their earning capacity and lack of medical coverage from their employers. When these people were laid off, many of them lost their medical insurance and were not able to pay for vital medical treatment, forcing people to take on debt or forgo their treatments entirely—putting increased financial strain on low-income families. As of December 5, more than 1.5 million people globally have died from COVID-19, with the US alone accounting for more than 285 000 deaths. The US presents a grim case of neoliberalism taken to its extreme, as it not only failed to keep its own citizens healthy, it also allocated much of the relief funds to large corporations that continue to lay off thousands of workers due to falling profits. Furthermore, the lack of a safety net coupled with neglect from the government forced many people to risk their lives and take on much-praised but low-paid ‘essential work’ as nurses, care workers, bus drivers, and shopkeepers. Meanwhile, the ownership class have largely been unscathed and continue to live their lavish lifestyles with no financial constraints.

However, other countries demonstrate that it does not have to be this way. Countries in East Asia—such as Taiwan, South Korea, and Singapore—collectively have less than 100 000 COVID-19 cases to date, in addition to avoiding nationwide lockdowns and mass unemployment. Although these countries are indeed capitalist in

PHOTO SOURCE: FLICKR, IVAN RADIC

nature, they are more closely aligned with the developmental state model. The foundation of the model is built on the desire to develop through state-driven economic growth. This is achieved through a process of “embedded autonomy” that forges close ties between elite bureaucracies and the private sector where businesses and industries are guided by the state. The developmental model is far from perfect, but it demonstrates that strong state autonomy coupled with the state’s ability to intervene in the economy enables these countries to be largely independent from other states during times of crisis. These states demonstrate that the linkage between government and the private sector can be a crucial factor in mitigating failures created by the market; the state can oversee economic activities and intervene when necessary. This is one of the reasons why these countries were



*Jun Park completed his undergrad at Western University studying International Relations and was part of their political think tank, The Leadership and Democracy Lab. He has always had an interest in global affairs and how they shape the world we live in. It*

*has always fascinated him that one thing that happens on the other side of the world can have a profound impact on our lives at home. This is also a fascinating time as the world is undergoing unprecedented changes that will have significant implications on the way societies will develop. Needless to say, he is excited to explore the various ideas and events that will shape the trajectory of global development for years to come.*

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*The pandemic has laid bare the shortcomings of the neoliberal framework.*

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able to more effectively weather the 2008 financial crisis compared to Western countries, and continues to clearly demonstrate that they can handle a novel global pandemic with great efficiency.

The pandemic has laid bare the shortcomings of the neoliberal framework. The market that was supposed to correct itself failed to do so and now in neoliberal states, businesses have to rely on heavy subsidies from the government to stay afloat. No development model will be perfect, as every country has different needs and values that will require tailoring. However, it has become abundantly clear that neoliberalism is no longer a viable model for development moving forward.



# The Economic Implications of the Postponed 2020 Summer Olympics in Tokyo

BY YUNA BAN | ASIA-PACIFIC AFFAIRS



THE 2020 Summer Olympics were scheduled to take place in Tokyo from July 24 to August 9 this year. Due to complications caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 Summer Olympics have been rescheduled to take place in 2021. This marks the first time in history that the Olympic Games were rescheduled to another date rather than being cancelled completely. The disturbance to the largest international biennial sporting event bears considerable economic consequences for the host country, Japan.

Back in March, the fate of the 2020 Summer Olympics had yet to be determined. Despite Japan’s high COVID-19 case numbers, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the Tokyo Organizing Committee (TOCOG) opposed the delay or cancellation of the Games. It was only after countries began withdrawing their participation that the tides began to turn against

the Games. Canada was the first country to withdraw from Tokyo 2020. In doing so, the Canadian Olympic Committee and Canadian Paralympic Committee called for the IOC to postpone the Games, emphasizing the need to protect the health of all athletes. Australia, New Zealand, and the U.K. promptly followed Canada’s lead with their own withdrawals. In response to mounting pressure, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe officially proposed a postponement to the IOC soon after. Abe conceded: “If it is difficult to hold in a complete way, a decision of postponement would be unavoidable as we think the athletes’ safety is paramount.” On March 24 the IOC and TOCOG officially postponed the 2020 Summer Olympics by one year to July 23, 2021.

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## THE COST OF POSTPONEMENT

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Prime Minister Abe’s reluctance to postpone the Games

was not without reason: Japan had already spent more than ¥1.35 trillion (\$13 billion USD) in preparation for the Games. This figure does not include expenses pertaining to hotel renovations, foreign broadcast rights, new airline launches, nor the capacity expansion requirements in both of Tokyo's largest airports, Haneda airport and Narita airport. These altogether account for an additional estimated ¥1.2 trillion (\$12 billion USD) in expenses.

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Although the total spending for Tokyo 2020 is lower than that of the 2008 Beijing Olympics and the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics (which cost \$45 billion USD and \$51 billion USD respectively), Japan did not anticipate the considerable rescheduling costs incurred by the global pandemic. To postpone the Games for one year, Japan expects to pay between ¥300 billion (\$2.9 billion USD) and ¥600 billion (\$5.8 billion USD), in order to account for building maintenance, temporary commodities, equipment, tickets, and other expenses. This estimate does not include the financial impact that the loss of 600 000 foreign attendees has had on Tokyo's economy.

Japan's 2020 Tokyo complications came at a time when the Japanese economy was already heading towards a recession. Since the start of Japan's "Lost Decade" in 1991, a period of economic stagnation, Japan has been

struggling to combat the problems of its declining workforce and aging population. Furthermore, a recent trade war with South Korea and geopolitical tensions with China had already weakened local tourism and export industries. Japan's 2019 annual real growth rate was an unimpressive 0.7 per cent. Recognizing the poor economic tides and the importance of the Olympics' success, the Japanese government had already announced a ¥26 trillion (\$233 billion USD) stimulus package in 2019 to boost the economy. Prime Minister Abe has already tried to combat Japan's economic slowdown on a national front: the Japanese government introduced a policy package, "Abenomics," to accelerate growth and revive the Japanese economy.

The Abe government expected the Olympic Games to reflate the economy. Japan was hoping to use the Olympic Games as the 'fourth arrow' of Abenomics that would complement the three primary policy arrows: aggressive monetary policy, flexible fiscal policy, and growth strategy. The government was expecting a ¥3 trillion (US\$30 billion) economic gain, including 150 000 new jobs generated by the Tokyo 2020 Games. After Japan's successful bid to host the Games, Abe declared: "I want to make the Olympics a trigger for sweeping away 15 years of deflation and economic decline." Abe has since resigned due to his declining health, leaving the policy package that bears his name unfinished.

Looking past the bleak state of the Japanese economy and the complications surrounding the Tokyo 2020 Games, COVID-19 will continue to devastate economies across Asia. The International Monetary Fund forecasts an economic contraction in most Asian economies, projecting economic shrinkages in South Korea by 2 per cent, in India by 4.5 per cent, and in Japan by 5.8 per cent.

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#### AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

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Despite the additional safety precautions, the postponed 2020 Summer Olympics could be interrupted by COVID-19 once again. In the event that the Games are completely cancelled, the economic loss would be fatal to the already deteriorating Japanese economy. Some estimate that cancelling Tokyo 2020 would cost about ¥7.8 trillion (\$75 billion USD). The IOC has yet to announce detailed COVID-19 restrictions or safety measures and

the TOCOG appears open to the possibility of having in-person audiences for the time being. Should this stance change, Japan has the option to hold the Games without in-person audiences and create an 'Olympic bubble' for the athletes similar to the successful 2020 'National Basketball Association (NBA) bubble.'

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*Postponing the 2020 Tokyo Games may have been the final nail in the coffin for the prosperity of Japan's economy in the near future.*

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The tensions surrounding the Tokyo 2020 Games have also impacted the Japanese population. A survey by NHK World-Japan shows that the decision to postpone the Summer Olympics was seen unfavourably. Asked when they thought the Tokyo Games should be held, 35 per cent of those surveyed said that the Games should be postponed beyond summer 2021, with 31 per cent saying that the Games should be cancelled altogether. In contrast, only 26 per cent responded that the Games should be held in 2021 as scheduled. The results of this survey should be appreciated by Japanese policymakers, as low public support will inevitably limit the economic benefits presented by the Olympic Games.

Postponing the 2020 Tokyo Games may have been the final nail in the coffin for the prosperity of Japan's economy in the near future. Even if a COVID-19 vaccine is developed, distributed, and administered adequately to the world's population within the next year, Japan's prospects for a safe and prosperous Summer Olympics will likely remain bleak. Other upcoming international multi-sport events such as the 2021 World Games in Birmingham and 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing may over-saturate the market. The logistics of operating the postponed Tokyo Games will be a burden on the Japanese government and citizens alike. Ultimately, the COVID-19 pandemic

has completely reshaped the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, leaving Japan and the rest of the world uncertain about the future of the Games.



*Yuna Ban is a first-year Master of Global Affairs student also pursuing a Collaborative Master's Specialization in Contemporary East and Southeast Asian Studies. She graduated from the University of Toronto with an Honours Bachelor's of Arts studying International Relations, Political Science, and History. Prior to joining Munk, she worked at the Consulate General of the Republic of Korea in Toronto. Her previous experience with the AAS-in-Asia 2017 Conference, Canadian Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, and research assistant work prompted her academic focus in innovation policy. Upon graduation, Yuna aspires to use her quantitative analytical skills to contribute to the international studies of the Asia-Pacific.*

# The EU Recovery Plan: New Milestone or Missed Opportunity?

BY PIERRE MILLER | EUROPEAN AFFAIRS



ONE tweet, one word, 750 billion euros. At 5:32 AM, President of the European Council, Charles Michel tweeted “Deal.” The implication of these four letters was considerable: the European Union (EU) was now ready to respond to the economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. On July 21, after 90 hours of constant negotiations in Brussels, the 27 EU leaders agreed to a unique package of 750 billion euros along with a new multiannual budget for EU institutions. However, the question of whether or not this deal is a true victory for European integration remains up for debate.

Expectations for the European Union to take decisive action were high. The pandemic had taken a toll on the European economy. Real GDP fell by nearly 40 per cent in the second quarter of 2020. Social distancing, lockdowns, low demand, and disruptions in international trade and supply chains led to a record economic collapse. The European Central Bank had already activated

monetary policy tools by announcing a massive wave of quantitative easing, the maintenance of its zero-interest-rate policy, and “no limits” to its commitment to the single currency. Because monetary policy alone would not be enough, French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Angela Merkel pressured other leaders to adopt a bold policy recovery plan.

Without a recovery plan encouraging public spending to stimulate national economies, the future of the EU looked compromised. After a series of challenges in recent years ranging from Brexit to the Eurozone crisis, EU leaders had to send a powerful signal about their willingness to cooperate and share a common destiny. As is common, the initiative started with Germany and France, the couple at the center of almost every decision regarding the EU.

President Macron was eager to use the recovery proposal to position himself as the leader of a new EU defending

further integration and prosperity. Yet, nothing would happen without the support of Germany, a country notorious for its fiscal restraint. On May 18, President Macron and Chancellor Merkel proposed an ambitious policy for European integration with a recovery plan constituting 500 billion euros in grants for the most vulnerable countries. Suggesting a deal was a decisive first step, but negotiations would not be easy as the EU still represents a constellation of divergent interests.

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Tensions rapidly emerged between what observers named the “Frugal Four” (the Netherlands, Denmark, Austria, and Sweden) and the rest of the continent as this coalition of fiscally conservative countries showed skepticism about the first draft. The Frugal Four preferred loans, a mechanism fundamentally different from the grants initially proposed. Loans would force EU members to repay exactly the funds they received from the Union. Grants, on the other hand, would allow members to repay their debts according to their capacity. So, countries benefiting the most from them would not necessarily pay the highest share of the newly proposed EU-wide common debt.

In a different context, the Frugal Four may have imposed their terms, but one crucial element had changed: Germany would not support frugality this time around. The pandemic, lessons learned from the Eurozone crisis, and the rise of populism had changed the political calculus for Germany. These three factors together led Germany

to abandon its frugality and join France in calling for an ambitious stimulus program.

First, the pandemic represented a massive existential threat to the EU, and the possible implosion of the common market and end of the euro was not an option for Germany, whose primary trade partners are other EU members. Second, Europeans still have vivid memories about the disastrous rescue programs implemented after the 2008 financial crisis and the subsequent Eurozone crisis. The harsh austerity conditions of rescue programs, the length of negotiations that nearly caused a Greek exit from the EU, and the enforcement of unpopular measures across Southern Europe were on everyone’s minds.

Third, populist and explicitly Eurosceptic governments are now part and parcel of the European landscape, especially in Italy where the far-right Northern League allied with the populist Five Star Movement to form government. Many Italians already viewed the European Union as a gathering of technocratic rulers trying to impose their view on the new Italian budget. Failing to address the legitimate economic anxieties of Europeans by adhering to fiscal conservatism for the COVID-19 recovery plan would have bolstered nationalist rhetoric calling for the end of the Union. Ultimately, Spain, Italy, and many other countries in the EU’s southern periphery would not accept a recovery plan dictated by the proponents of fiscal orthodoxy.

Grants and any other mechanism leading to a common debt were the most popular solution to overcome this fiscal orthodoxy and to take a step closer to federalism. However, these measures, as with any recovery plan,

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*The pandemic, lessons learned from the Eurozone crisis, and the rise of populism had changed the political calculus for Germany.*

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PHOTO SOURCE: FLICKR, EUROPEAN COUNCIL

would have to be unanimously approved by the elected leaders of the 27 EU member states.

As expected, negotiations stumbled from the first day with heated discussions behind closed doors. Reaching an agreement was essential, but the longer negotiations dragged on, the more divided the EU would appear on the international stage. An additional set of constraints emerged when some member states requested that funds be conditional on respect for the rule of law. Such propositions were deemed unacceptable for the illiberal governments of Hungary and Poland who threatened to stop any negotiation.

The final compromise took the form of a combination of grants and loans. After a long battle between the Netherlands and Italy, leaders agreed to create a governance mechanism enabling a state to raise objections if it feels a country is failing to use their funds for their intended purpose. Another crucial concession to the Frugal Four has to do with the multiannual budget which manages the expenditures and revenues of the Union between 2021 and 2027. EU leaders lowered the ambition and scope of this budget to appease the Frugal Four and obtain an agreement on the recovery plan. Regarding the protection of the rule-of-law, leaders passed the question to the European Commission, with no direct conditionality between funds and respect for democratic values.

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*President Emmanuel Macron and others portrayed the outcome of the negotiations as a success, but it may be a Pyrrhic victory.*

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President Emmanuel Macron and others portrayed the outcome of the negotiations as a success, but it may be a Pyrrhic victory. The solution chosen by EU leaders is different from the response to the Eurozone crisis as it signals a clear commitment toward European integration and away from fiscal austerity. Nevertheless, the difficulty in reaching an agreement and the concessions made to

the Frugal Four show that divisions between EU members are likely to continue. Most importantly, such divisions will support Eurosceptics and populists in their attempt to delegitimize the EU. A collective debt is a milestone—but if a single country can raise objections about the use of the funding, if no commitment is made toward human rights, and if the next multi-annual budget lacks ambition, then what will be the true cost?



*Pierre Miller is a dual degree student pursuing both a Master of Global Affairs at the Munk School of Global Affairs & Public Policy and a Master in Public Policy at Sciences Po. He recently completed an internship with UNESCO New Delhi within the Social and Human Sciences team. Pierre completed his undergraduate degree at Sciences Po, receiving a BA in Political Sciences with an emphasis on History while attending the Sorbonne and receiving a BSc in Physics. He was a visiting student at Johns Hopkins University from 2018 to 2019 and has been involved in several multidisciplinary projects focusing on a wide range of issues from art to climate change. Pierre's main interests are elections, European negotiations, and the implications of global warming.*

# COVID-19: A Blessing in Disguise for Canada's Bid Toward Green Transportation

BY REEBA KHAN | ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE



**T**HE lockdowns imposed to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic have contributed to a reduction in atmospheric emissions as daily activity slows. However, this relief is only temporary since the lockdowns do not eliminate the accumulation of pre-existing greenhouse gas emissions. More alarmingly, looking ahead, the lockdown's economic setback threatens any future mitigative climate action. The International Energy Agency (IEA), an independent Paris-based intergovernmental organization, foresees a decline in fossil fuel demand coupled with an economic crisis. The latter does not bode well for climate action because the current drop in emissions is not sustainable; instead, it is simply a by-product of an unfortunate situation.

The lockdown has ignited fear of a global recession and knocked oil prices to a historic low not seen in 30 years. This is indicative of an economic contagion that will impede green infrastructure projects. Global solar energy levels are predicted to drop for the first time since the

1980s. The IEA claims 70 per cent of global clean energy investment is government-funded, making government action key to the future of climate action.

In the Canadian context, the Trudeau government should see the country's COVID-19 recovery strategy as an opportunity to meld sustainability with economic growth. This can inspire an ideological shift that challenges the conventional thinking of a diametrically opposed environment and economy. Specifically, the government should target the transportation sector, given its high carbon footprint and its promise of a high financial return. Funding electric vehicles is a particularly promising avenue because Canada has pre-existing frameworks that are ready to be expanded. This will facilitate a cost-effective mass scale transition towards electric vehicles.

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## GREENER PUBLIC TRANSIT

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The Pembina Institute released its Green Budget Coalition Recommendations for Recovery and Budget Actions highlighting transportation as a potent area for greening. Transportation was highlighted as the highest polluting, yet most promising sector in terms of job production, emission reduction, and quality of life enhancement. The

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*Funding electric vehicles is a particularly promising avenue because Canada has pre-existing frameworks that are ready to be expanded.*

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federal government has established solid groundwork for this fiscal year by pledging an investment of \$1.8 billion nationally for public transit as part of the Safe Restart Program—a key element of their COVID-19 recovery strategy. The government should consider extending this funding. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities has suggested a permanent transit fund of \$3.4 billion annually. In addition, Infrastructure Canada, the federal department for public infrastructure, should consider collaborating with its provincial and municipal counterparts to streamline project start dates and consolidate funding. Doing so will result in the creation of more jobs while also reducing emissions.

Additionally, as part of the move towards a zero-carbon transit system, there is a need to transition to electric buses. The report suggests an incentive program worth \$472 million annually over the next five years. It claims the government will need at least 5 000 electric buses, each of which could reduce emissions by 100 tonnes per year. As such, the government should cover 80 per cent of the capital costs of these eco-friendly buses and move away from funding their diesel counterparts. In addition, the institute's recommendations include a per-bus subsidy of \$115 000 to cover the cost of electric charging infrastructure. While these investments are costly in the short run, they are necessary in the long run to reduce emissions.

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## FOR TRANSITIONING TO ZERO EMISSION VEHICLES

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Beyond buses, smaller vehicles must also be transformed. Currently, only 0.4 per cent of Canada's light duty vehicles—cars and small trucks—are electric, which is substantially lower than the 2.3 per cent global average. Eleven per cent of Canada's carbon pollution comes from these vehicles. The federal government is aware of the need to act and has aimed to have all vehicles sold in the country be zero-emissions models by 2040. To that end, in 2019 the federal government invested \$300 million towards a consumer purchase incentive program (iZEV) granting \$130 million for charging infrastructure, and tax incentives for business investments in zero-emissions vehicle (ZEV) fleets. The program can be further built upon for greater results and long-term growth. Experts recommend focusing on light duty vehicles, and suggest topping-up program funding. For example, an additional \$300 million top-up for the program geared towards electric infrastructure would mean that more than half of the costs will be covered for projects that are slated to start in August 2021.

The transition to electric vehicles presents an opportunity to produce sustainable jobs in the green transportation sector. Green vehicles need to be maintained, so funded training and intensive research and development programs will be required. British Columbia has invested \$10 million in training automotive technicians. Similarly, \$250 million in funding can support logistical matters such as establishing a sustainable battery supply chain and extending the batteries' shelf life. This would involve formulating regulations and motives for implementing sustainable and low waste battery recycling. Research and development into batteries needs to be expanded, along with recycling for electric vehicles as opposed to simply disposing of their materials. The combination of education and research will ensure the longevity of green transportation and ensure that consumers have access to top quality products that compete with fossil fuel-powered alternatives.

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## IDEOLOGICAL SHIFT

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Above all, an ideological shift is needed toward the more viable alternative of 'climate capitalism,' a term coined by Tom Rand of Corporate Knights magazine. Neither the blame nor the responsibility for the climate crisis can fall onto one particular industry, when all of them can collectively be part of the solution. Capitalism has different flavours, like the traditional American version, or China's state-controlled capitalism. Climate capitalism runs in the same vein as any other form of capitalism because it utilizes the private sector's nose for profit-making in combination with the authority of the government. The target is climate mitigation but, this time, from the united front of both the government and green industries. The goal is to harness all sectors of society, as opposed to singling out or placing the burden on just one industry. It requires an orchestrated effort between both sectors because the private sector provides private capital and innovation free of political divisions.

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*Neither the blame nor the responsibility for the climate crisis can fall onto one particular industry, when all of them can collectively be part of the solution.*

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As for the role of government, at a domestic level, it can back companies with a track record of success in global markets by providing loan guarantees for production and project finance. Furthermore, the government can construct a green bank by funding low-carbon infrastructure through green bonds. Tom Rand claims the government can raise "cheap capital with a Canada Savings Bond-like instrument" which the private sector can bid to use. However, the private sector will be mandated to decrease its carbon footprint at the least possible cost to the general public.

Green transportation is a potent venture for both the public and private sector. The shift to electric vehicles promises socially conscious profit with an enduring future. The upfront costs of installing the proper infrastructure and training are undeniably expensive, yet the gains of the potential multiplier effect from these investments will offer Canadians a shot at sustainable lives.



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*Reeba Khan is a first-year student in the Master of Global Affairs program at the University of Toronto. She plans on studying sustainable development with a specialization in Environmental Studies. Recently, she completed her Honours Bachelor of Arts with high distinction at the University of Toronto. She double majored in Political Science and Environmental Management. As an undergraduate, she extensively participated in the Research Opportunity Program (ROP). Her projects involved studying the presence of green infrastructure in Toronto and partnering with an Indigenous friendship center in Peel. Additionally, she published an article on environmental regulations through Federalism-E, and she interned for the United Nations Development Program as their research analyst.*

# The 2020 US Election: What a Biden-Harris Administration will Mean for Climate Policy and US Global Leadership

BY KRISTEN PEARN | NORTH AMERICAN AFFAIRS



**A**FTER four days of vote tabulation and nervous anticipation, Joe Biden and Kamala Harris emerged as the 46th President and the first woman and first woman of color Vice President of the United States on Saturday, November 7. The news of Biden's projected victory broke after more mail-in ballots were counted in Pennsylvania and Nevada, propelling Biden over the 270 electoral college vote threshold required to clinch the White House. That afternoon, Biden delivered his first address to the nation as the President-Elect, urging the American people to unify across partisan divides. In response, President Donald Trump doubled down on allegations of voter fraud and refused to commit to a peaceful transition of power. For millions of voters, Biden's message of healing and unity in America represented a drastic departure from President Trump's dark and divisive rhetoric.

The glaring differences between the two contenders are further demonstrated in their respective visions regarding America's role in multilateral organizations, global health, and climate change. Indeed, there is perhaps no issue on which Biden and Trump contrast more sharply than that of climate change. Over the past four years, President Trump has consistently referred to climate change as a "hoax." His administration has repealed the Obama-era Clean Power Plan and rolled back more than 70 environmental regulations governing clean air, water, wildlife, and toxic chemicals—including the vaunted Paris Cli-

mate Agreement. President Trump's regulatory rollbacks on environmental protections have led to an increase in US greenhouse gas emissions, while also undermining international efforts to limit global warming and the effects of climate change.

## BIDEN'S "BUILD BACK BETTER" PLAN

In stark contrast to President Trump's environmental policies, President-Elect Biden has pledged an immediate series of executive actions to combat climate change when he takes office. Biden's climate proposals represent a foundational pillar of his "Build Back Better" economic recovery plan, which stipulates a \$2 trillion USD investment in clean-energy infrastructure. Biden's most progressive policy proposals include: a million new jobs in the US auto industry by incentivizing the switch to electric-powered vehicles, zero-emissions public transportation in every American city with 100 000 residents or more, upgrades to affordable housing and commercial buildings, a carbon-free power sector by 2035, and the creation of the Office of Environmental and Climate Justice at the Justice Department to address how "environmental policy decisions of the past have failed communities of colour." To pay for these proposals, Biden has also pledged tax increases on US corporations and individuals earning more than \$400 000 in annual income. Environmental activists and climate-friendly factions within the Democratic Party have touted Biden's

PHOTO SOURCE: FLICKR, IVAN RADIC

plan as the most advanced climate agenda ever put forward by a US President-Elect and "a Green New Deal in all but name."

Biden's bold commitments to climate change and an equitable economic recovery may spell an end to the controversial Keystone XL pipeline project. Proposed by the energy infrastructure company TransCanada in 2008, the Keystone XL is designed to dramatically increase the capacity to transport oil from the Alberta tar sands to refineries off the Texas Gulf Coast. In constructing this cross-border pipeline, TransCanada required a US presidential permit which was withheld by the Obama administration but subsequently granted by the Trump administration in 2017. A fully operational Keystone XL pipeline will create jobs and bring enormous economic benefits to Canadian oil producers and US Gulf Coast oil refiners. The pipeline, however, may lead to devastating environmental consequences, including oil spills and increased greenhouse gas emissions. Risks aside, the Biden administration's decision regarding the future of Keystone XL will have a significant impact on US-Canadian relations and the North American energy sector in general.

## REASSERTING US GLOBAL LEADERSHIP

Biden's climate proposals, while domestic in nature, could prove equally momentous at the international level. By applying the "Build Back Better" approach internationally, the US could regain its soft-power advantage and repair relations with developing countries that were targeted, almost arbitrarily, by US tariffs during the Trump administration. A similar US infrastructure program that provides assistance to low-and-middle-income countries for clean-energy infrastructure may be an attractive alternative to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which has proved to be exploitive and unresponsive to the environmental concerns of its recipient countries. The apparent failures of the BRI have afforded the US an opportunity to reassert its global leadership while containing Chinese influence and combating climate change simultaneously.

## FACING FAMILIAR ROADBLOCKS

Biden's ability to take executive action and deliver on his

progressive climate plan hinges upon the outcome of two runoff Senate races in Georgia in January and Democratic control of both chambers of Congress. If the Democratic contenders—Jon Ossoff and Raphael Warnock—win the contentious races in Georgia, the Senate will be evenly divided among Democrats and Republicans, leaving Vice President Harris with the tie-breaking vote. Conversely, if the Democratic contenders lose the races in Georgia, Biden will have to broker deals with Mitch McConnell, the coal-friendly majority leader of a Republican-controlled Senate, to pass modest pieces of legislation with bipartisan support. The potential for legal challenges in a Republican-controlled Senate, coupled with a conservative majority on the US Supreme Court, will inevitably impede Biden's ability to enact sweeping environmental legislation in the near-term.

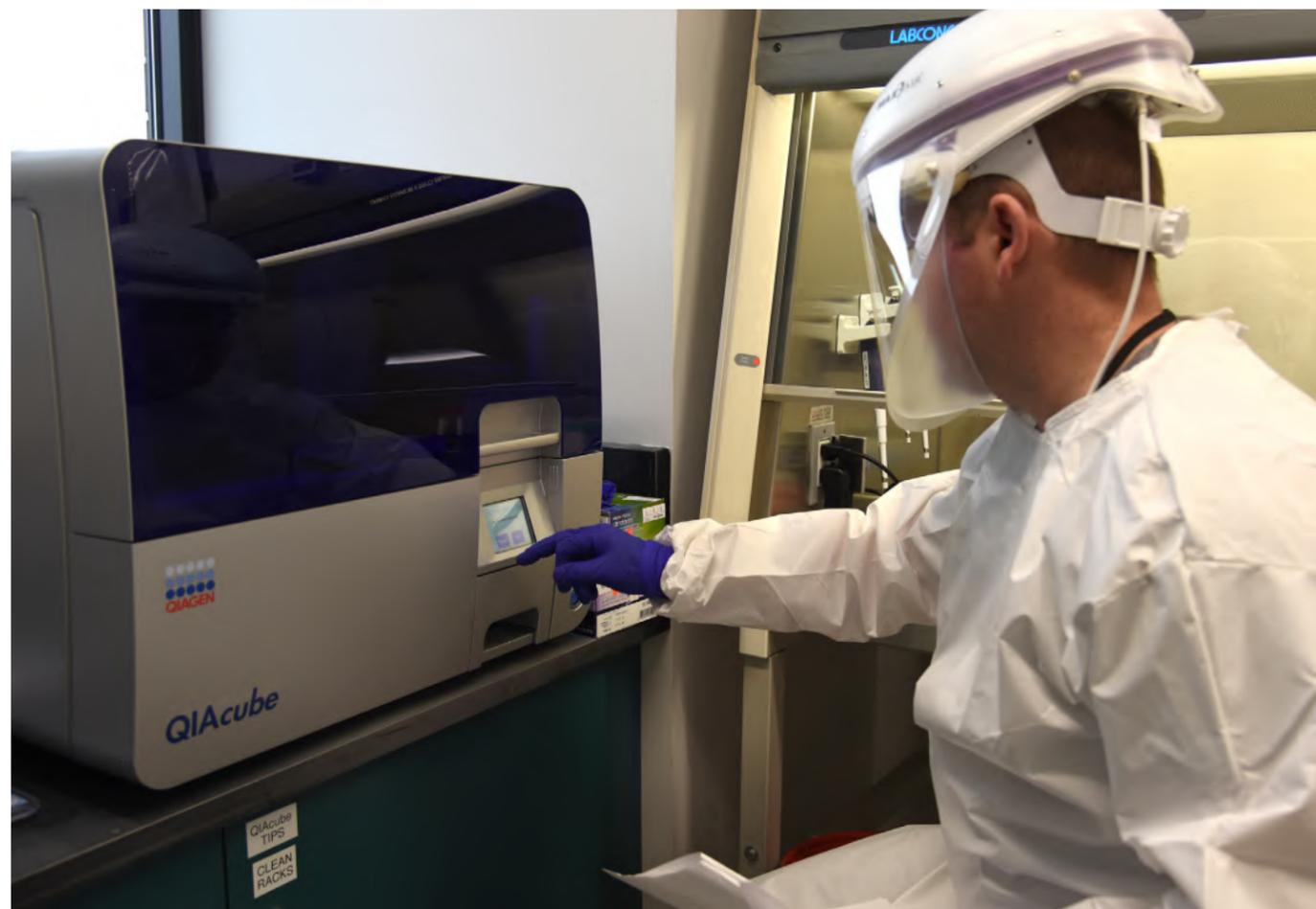
Given the uncertainty surrounding the runoff Senate races in Georgia and the reluctance in the Republican camp to support any large-scale fiscal policy proposed by the Democrats, it seems improbable that Biden will be able to deliver on most of the progressive climate proposals outlined in the "Build Back Better" economic recovery plan. Biden could still have a real impact on US climate policy by investing in renewable energy to decrease the nation's greenhouse gas emissions and by rejoining the Paris Agreement to limit global warming and the effects of climate change. If only partially realized, Biden's ambitious climate plan will position the US on an upward trajectory toward renewable energy and climate-friendly job creation.



*Kristen Pearn is a first-year student in the Master of Global Affairs program at the University of Toronto. She completed her undergraduate degree at the University of Western Ontario in History and Criminology. As an undergrad, she maintained a starting position on the Western Mustangs Varsity Softball team and a part-time position both as a Research Assistant and volunteer at a local charitable organization. She then completed her Master's degree at the University of Toronto in History. As a Master's student, she specialized in U.S. Cold War foreign policy and civil rights and worked part-time as a Teacher Assistant.*

# Artificial Intelligence: A Tool to Combat COVID-19

BY KATHERINE ANNE ROSS | TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION



**A**DVANCEMENTS in digital technologies have augmented human lives and disrupted centuries-old human activities. Artificial intelligence (AI) stands out as one of the most prominent digital technologies changing the way we live. According to Darrell M. West, the Director and VP of Governance Studies at the Brookings Institution, AI is widely assumed to refer to “machines that respond to stimulation consistent with traditional responses from humans, given the human capacity for contemplation, judgment, and intention.” Software systems are designed to mimic human cognitive functions by making decisions which normally require a level of human expertise.

The market for consumer data is at an all-time high. For instance, technology companies are eager to gather data

from electronic health records (EHR) to build the next generation of health products and services. AI in healthcare is promising yet dangerous. Companies must balance the pursuit of profit and growth while addressing patient needs and respecting their privacy rights. Organizations’ intentions to encourage hospitals and governments to work with them in data sharing mechanisms have raised legal and ethical concerns regarding how to partake in these technological practices.

## HOW PEOPLE JUSTIFY THEIR FEAR OF AI

Public trust and confidence in AI is low. Public concerns regarding “facial recognition” or “machine learning” in-

crease anxiety in the information age. The nervousness about AI stems mostly from general anxiety about machine intelligence, the fear of mass unemployment, exploitation of personal information, and general unease over technological advancements. Public anxiety has contributed to apprehension in using predictive algorithms or data gathering for societal benefit during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Distrust toward AI has further increased due to private corporations gathering personal information from internet users to sell to third party organizations, in order to promote online advertisements. Since the early 2000s, rumours have swirled that social media and big corporations are gathering personal data and exploiting it for their own benefit. Public concerns towards the ethical dilemmas and violations of privacy were solidified after the 2018 Facebook and Cambridge Analytica scandal, where millions of Facebook users’ personal information was harvested without their consent to promote catered political advertisements. This misuse of personal information exacerbated the apprehension for AI applications to be used for everyday adoption across the globe.

## BENEFICIAL APPLICATIONS OF AI

However, public anxiety surrounding AI should not overshadow the successful applications of AI in everyday lives. Beneficial applications of AI include enhanced automation that reduces operational costs and eases intensive human labour, smart weather forecasting used to predict possible natural disasters and hazards, and AI for Social Good (AI4SG), a movement that aims to establish interdisciplinary partnerships centred around AI applications towards SDGs. Numerous applications of AI exist in the healthcare sector, including expanding precision medicine, transforming care delivery, and improving patient experience and diagnostic accuracy. Health Europa argues that medical specialists should not see AI as a technology to compete against, but rather as a valuable tool for solving clinical questions.

Issues of data ethics and privacy arise when organizations use digital technologies to gather personal data from clients and distribute that information to outside sources. The expansion of AI and digital health technologies cause bioethical concerns. Employing digital

health technologies requires health agencies to gather large datasets which alarms patients who are concerned that the collection of personal information violates their

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*AI in healthcare is promising yet dangerous. Companies must balance the pursuit of profit and growth while addressing patient needs and respecting their privacy rights.*

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privacy. This may result in lawsuits based on data-sharing between large health systems and AI developers. AI can predict private information about a patient without having received that information, which is often the goal of healthcare applications of AI. For example, an algorithm can detect symptoms of Parkinson’s disease based on the trembling of a computer mouse. A recent paper published by the Journal of the American Medical Association revealed that this type of AI-based software can detect or prevent dangerous illnesses earlier than trained doctors.

However, patients may consider this a violation of their bioethics and an invasion of privacy, especially if the collected data were available to third parties. As anxieties surrounding governments and corporations gathering individual personal information for exploitation grow, the need for transparent data-gathering efforts and the explicit uses of that data become paramount to AI in healthcare applications.

## FIGHTING COVID-19 WITH AI

AI technologies can be employed during the COVID-19 pandemic to properly screen, track, and predict future cases of the virus. AI is already used in the healthcare

PHOTO SOURCE: FLICKR, THE NATIONAL GUARD

system for drug development, patient monitoring, anticipating the evolution of the pandemic, enforcing containment policies, and completing diagnosis processes. These applications are valuable in the COVID-19 context to develop drugs and vaccines, and to reduce the workload of healthcare workers.

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*Certain faculty members at the University of Toronto are using AI technology and machine learning algorithms to find existing drugs that may be effective against COVID-19.*

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Many projects are in place to employ AI technologies to fight the pandemic. Certain faculty members at the University of Toronto are using AI technology and machine learning algorithms to find existing drugs that may be effective against COVID-19. A Canadian company, BlueDot, was among the first in the world to identify the emerging risk from COVID-19 in the Hubei province of China and published one of the first scientific papers on COVID-19, accurately predicting its global spread using proprietary AI models. AI technologies have great potential to reduce the impacts and consequences of the pandemic.

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### CRITICAL CONSIDERATIONS

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Healthcare organizations have an urgent need for decision-making technologies to handle the virus and generate efficient suggestions in real time to avoid its spread. AI works in a skilful way to mimic human intelligence, making it a practical mechanism to utilize for COVID-19 prevention, detection, and response. However, just as AI mimics human intelligence, it also mimics human bias. In order to ensure that AI-enhanced public health measures do not exacerbate societal marginalization, especially of

racial and ethnic minorities, AI-enhanced technologies, policies, and adoptions must be designed equitably.

AI could assist in rapidly reducing the spread and repercussions of COVID-19. However, widespread public concerns surrounding AI and the data it collects must be addressed. Data must remain in the hands of organizations that will be transparent about their data security and privacy policies. The data protection standards set by the Council of Europe can help guide public decision-makers to follow ethical data protection guidelines.

In order to utilize AI during the COVID-19 pandemic, transparency must be ensured. It is essential for patients to understand how their personal information is being used to prevent, detect, and respond to the pandemic. Healthcare organizations must avoid sharing patient data with third-party organizations, explain the uses of patient data, and enforce transparency by allowing patients to track what is being done with their information. Respect for the dignity and rights of individuals must be guaranteed.



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*Katie is a second-year Master of Global Affairs candidate at the Munk School of Global Affairs & Public Policy. She also graduated from Western University with an Honours Specialization in Media, Information & Technoculture.*

*This summer, Katie worked at MaRS Discovery District, the largest innovation hub in North America, where she advised on their marketing strategies by analyzing their data analytics and provided tailored recommendations on how to improve their outreach to increase the number of ventures and small businesses in the MaRS ecosystem. She has research interests in artificial intelligence ethics, data governance and security, international space policy, space governance, and national and international foreign and defense policy.*

# COVID-19 and the Rise of Toxic ‘Mask’-ulinity

BY JULIA DA SILVA | GENDER AND IDENTITY POLITICS



OVER the last few months, COVID-19 has not only disrupted everyday life, but has altered our perspectives on the intersections of health, gender, the patriarchy, and toxic masculinity. The ongoing global pandemic has inadvertently forced us to confront the pervasive sexism that is deeply embedded in institutions across the world, especially as heightened gender inequality has permeated the range of coping mechanisms adopted during the pandemic.

Women have had a harder time dealing with the circumstances produced by the pandemic, resulting in unprecedented levels of emotional labour. The concept of emotional labour has become increasingly relevant and visible in mainstream feminism, describing the unpaid caregiving work that disproportionately falls on women as a result of gender roles. This includes managing the household, extensive cleaning, and taking care of children, among other tasks. Across the globe, women often bear most of the responsibility for maintaining societies and performing caregiving duties without pay.

During lockdowns, women are doing more work at home than ever before. Not only are many mothers working from home, they are also supervising their children’s online learning, while simultaneously carrying out regular housework. This has gone on while their male partners were often solely focused on working from home. The unequal distribution of household labour has become even more evident during the pandemic.

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*During lockdowns, women are doing more work at home than ever before.*

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The COVID-19 global pandemic has been linked to large spikes in gendered violence globally. Overwhelming research shows that domestic, sexual, and gendered

violence increases during periods of crisis and disaster. The Center for Global Development has associated this rise in gendered violence to pandemic-related stresses produced by job loss, reduced income, food insecurity, heightened mental health issues, fears of contracting the virus, confinement at home, and disrupted routines. Lockdowns and social isolation have also kept abusers and those they harm in close proximity, hidden away from the public eye. In these cases, women, girls, trans, and non-binary people have been at a high risk of experiencing gendered violence.

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*Women make up 70 per cent of all staff in the health and social services sector.*

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In addition to the inequalities at home, women are also at the centre of the COVID-19 health crisis. Women make up 70 per cent of all staff in the health and social services sector. This sector has faced widespread staff shortages and an overwhelming surge in patients during the pandemic. As a result, female healthcare professionals are at a high risk of contracting the virus and experiencing greater mental health issues such as stress, burnout, and mental illness. Yet, there are inadequate support resources for women within this sector.

Not only has COVID-19 demonstrated the patriarchy's negative impact on women, but it has also emphasized the prevalence of toxic masculinity amongst men—and it's killing them. Globally, more men have been dying of COVID-19 than women despite both genders being equally susceptible to the virus. Studies have shown that men are less likely to wear masks, wash their hands, and practice physical distancing when compared to women. Perhaps unsurprisingly, men have grown to become prominent leaders in the anti-mask movement.

This strong aversion to COVID-19 safety precautions is linked to toxic masculinity. Hegemonic ideals about masculinity are encouraging men to resist the calls for more diligent mask-wearing made by health care professionals and world leaders in order to reduce the spread of the

virus. Anti-mask rhetoric stems from the fear that wearing a mask undermines one's masculinity, making them appear weak. After President-elect Joe Biden posted a video of himself wearing a face mask on Twitter, Fox News host Tomi Lahren tweeted that Biden should "carry a purse with that mask," implying that no 'real' man would resort to wearing a mask because it would be seen as feminine and thus, demeaning.

The COVID-19 pandemic is a gendered issue that has reinforced the existence of the patriarchy. Men's refusal to wear masks exemplifies the deep-rooted nature of toxic masculinity and the patriarchy in our society. As long as groups of men refuse to be diligent with safety precautions against COVID-19, the virus will continue to spread. As long as the virus prevails, women will be greatly impacted in their personal lives and face higher levels of emotional labour and gendered violence. COVID-19, gender, and the patriarchy are greatly intertwined and the fight against the virus must acknowledge this in order to alleviate the pandemic's amplification of gendered violence.



*Julia Da Silva is a first-year student in the Master of Global Affairs program at the University of Toronto. She completed her undergraduate degree at the University of Ottawa in International Development and Globalization with a Minor in Women's Studies. Enrolled in the co-op stream of her program, Julia has worked with various federal government departments and agencies including Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada and Polar Knowledge Canada. As an undergrad, she was the Delegate Coordinator for the University of Ottawa's International Development Week Conference, as well as part of the International Development Student Association's Mentorship Program. She also has been a Parliamentary Assistant in the House of Commons. Before coming to Munk, Julia worked at Women and Gender Equality Canada.*

# Community-Based Health Care is the Future of Global Health

BY ALEXANDREA JOHNSTON | GLOBAL HEALTH



THE last several decades have been characterized by positive trends in global health, with the World Health Organization (WHO) reporting improved progress in 24 out of 29 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) from 2000 to 2018. The international community has seen an increase in global life expectancy of over five years, an increase in vaccination coverage rates, and women and children have become less likely to die in childbirth. While there have been notable outbreaks of known viruses such as H1N1 and Ebola, as well as the emergence of new viruses such as SARS and Zika over the same period, states have nonetheless remained resilient in maintaining global health initiatives and progress. Although these viruses caused significant disruptions in the economic, political, and cultural spheres of an increasingly interconnected world,

their impact pales in comparison to the ongoing damage of the current COVID-19 pandemic.

COVID-19 has highlighted the fragility of health systems around the world. Most notably, it has shown that Western countries, despite having better health care systems, are ill-prepared and ill-equipped to respond to crises. For the first time in post-war history, Western countries have been those most heavily impacted by a disease. While lockdowns of varying degrees around the world have reduced virus transmission and COVID-19 deaths, they have also drastically reduced access to other vital health services like vaccinations, acute care, and preventative screening. In March 2020, the National Health Mission in India reported a 69 per cent reduction in measles, mumps, and rubella vaccinations in children, a 21

percent reduction in institutional childbirth deliveries, and a 50 percent reduction in clinic attendance for acute cardiac events when compared to March of 2019. Sadly, India is not the only state reporting such drastic figures, as others around the world have reported similar trends, particularly those who have implemented more stringent lockdowns. Health care systems already plagued by a lack of funds, equipment, and staff are incapable of successfully treating COVID-19 patients without reallocating resources, which subsequently increases deaths unrelated to COVID-19.

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*For the first time in postwar history, Western countries have been those most heavily impacted by a disease.*

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Ultimately, this leads one to consider how states should learn from the devastating impacts of COVID-19. One conclusion is that a unilateral, one-size-fits-all approach to combating illness will not work and will increase inequality in the long term. Current approaches like national, provincial, or statewide solutions are not sustainable and have led to COVID-19 fatigue and general apathy towards institutions and health systems. Additionally, recent research published in Nature which utilized cell-phone data to track the movement of 98 million people to various locations, including restaurants and religious establishments, found that a small proportion of “super-spreader” outbreaks result in a large proportion of infections. The researchers also found that people in low-socioeconomic groups were less likely to be able to reduce their movement, increasing infection rates among these populations. Ultimately, the researchers concluded that rather than imposing large lockdowns, stringent monitoring of capacity restrictions can be more effective at reducing the likelihood of “super-spreader” outbreaks. This research further demonstrated the disproportionate impact lockdowns have on lower socioeconomic groups, highlighting the importance of striking an appropriate balance. Coupling these research findings with the fact that states have a better understanding of the best means

to combat COVID-19, successfully mitigating the risk of virus transmission necessitates an emphasis on a community-based approach.

The WHO defines community-based health care as “services delivered by a broadly defined community health workforce, according to their training and capacity, encompassing a range of health workers, lay and professional, formal and informal, paid and unpaid, as well as facility-based personnel who support and supervise them and provide outreach services and campaigns.” This means that different areas within the same country or region require different approaches to designating essential services. Additionally, communities have different key stakeholders that must be considered when approaching health care, ranging from private-sector providers to NGOs and faith-based organizations. In reality, the health of a population depends on more than just health systems. Human health is strongly correlated to income as well as education; states must find the appropriate balance between enabling people to earn a living, furthering their education, and taking the necessary steps to limit the spread of COVID-19.

Broad lockdowns disproportionately impact lower-income households, compromising the livelihoods necessary for their wellbeing, and hindering the promotion of overall global health. To better promote global health, it is necessary to adopt localized approaches such as those demonstrated in the community-based approach. These approaches were proven effective during the 2014-2016 Ebola outbreak where communities in West Africa reduced virus transmission with non-intrusive interventions. For example, communities used local facilities to provide appropriate respiratory support managed by local community members who were equipped with proper PPE. While states such as South Korea, New Zealand, and Taiwan have successfully combated COVID-19 with dramatic lockdowns and contact-tracing, they are outliers when compared to other countries whose populations resist closures, mask-enforcement, and contact-tracing methods. Noting this, a community-based approach to appropriate interventions is more effective because it responds more directly to the unique needs of a community, rather than the application of blanket measures.

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*...the lessons learned from COVID-19 can be leveraged to hold governments accountable for increasing access to health care services, particularly services centered on preventative medicine.*

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While community-based approaches to health care will be critical to the promotion of global health in the future, the lessons learned from COVID-19 can be leveraged to hold governments accountable for increasing access to health care services, particularly services centered on preventative medicine. The international community has experienced the dramatic and dire effects that occur when basic human health is not prioritised. This experience and the associated momentum must be taken advantage of to drastically reassess how governments allocate funding to their respective health care systems. There is a clear indication that increasing access to preventative health services improves health and decreases the likelihood of premature death. However, many communities do not have access to basic health care resources and COVID-19 closures have further limited access to critical preventative health care services. A community-based approach to health care would improve access to medicine, antibiotics, and pregnancy assistance while simultaneously guaranteeing access to these services in a way that is sensitive to the needs of the local community. When governments enforce a one-size-fits-all approach, patients fall through the cracks. As those already living in poverty are disproportionately impacted, blanket approaches further exacerbate inequality.

A coordinated yet decentralized approach to health care and global health will ensure all sectors of society have

equitable access to necessary preventative resources, while simultaneously strengthening the broader health infrastructure to adapt to the medical uncertainties of the future. While the recent announcement from Pfizer about their COVID-19 vaccination is promising, the world is changing rapidly; as a consequence of global trends such as climate change, viruses and diseases will likely increase in prevalence and severity. States must recognize this reality and equip their respective health care systems to be capable of addressing these crises. By focusing their efforts on ensuring communities are equipped and empowered in this respect, states can successfully promote and contribute to global health while ensuring preparedness for the future.



*Alexandrea (Alex) Johnston is a first-year student in the Master of Global Affairs program at the University of Toronto. She completed her undergraduate degree at McMaster University and obtained her Bachelor of Science majoring in Psychology,*

*Neuroscience, and Behaviour, and minoring in Sustainability. As an undergrad, Alex was heavily involved in McMaster student life serving in multiple roles for her program and faculty societies. Additionally, Alex spent time researching in the field of neurolaw and conducting research for the City of Hamilton. Alex has spent summers interning both in Canada and globally in the financial sector, commercial insurance, and legal fields. Before coming to Munk, Alex spent a year serving the 25 000 Undergraduate students at McMaster as the first female Vice-President Finance for the McMaster Students Union.*



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