

# per Concordiam

*Journal of European Security and Defense Issues*

■ **THE NEED FOR MULTILATERALISM**

Pulling together for the common good

■ **PREPARING FOR THE WORST**

Improving crisis management systems

■ **MENA'S RESPONSE TO THE VIRUS**

Analyzing how governments performed

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Deciding when to mobilize the armed forces

PLUS

How former Soviet states reacted to COVID-19

Add the virus to Ukraine's many challenges

Eurasia and its long-term strategic changes



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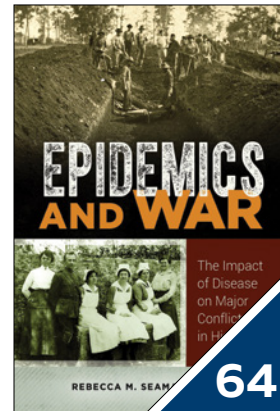
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## Book Review



*Epidemics and War:  
The Impact of Disease  
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in History*

Edited by **Rebecca M. Seaman**  
Reviewed by **Patrick Swan**,  
per Concordiam contributor

Military and civil leaders would be wise to study the history of pandemics to determine whether they have the proper medical protocols in place to avoid the worst effects.

## On the Cover



China was front and center as  
COVID-19 spread across the globe.

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**GEORGE C. MARSHALL**  
EUROPEAN CENTER FOR SECURITY STUDIES

*Thank You* for spending time with our 42nd edition of *per Concordiam*. We at the Marshall Center are grateful for your readership, and we are very much interested in your feedback! We have just endured the longest year that most of us have ever experienced. A year of hopes, fears, disappointments, challenges — and a lot of hard work by all. The intent of this edition is to take stock of where we are in the titanic struggle to contain this virus, to limit its deleterious effects and get on with our lives.

The pandemic has challenged us in many ways and dimensions, not only in our professional lives but also in our personal and family relationships. It is a multidimensional crisis that demands a multifunctional response, calling upon all of our abilities to rise to the challenge. Of course, the business of nations goes on during a pandemic. Countries negotiate, trade, disagree and join together. It is here, on the interplay of societies and nations, that this issue of *per Concordiam* is focused. The authors have taken a number of approaches in examining the challenges presented by COVID-19. Some have looked at regional implications, some at the effects on national policy, some at legal aspects and some at the impacts on our security forces. I am sure you will find each of great interest.

The Marshall Center is a different place without the presence of our participants. While we have tried to meet the challenges posed by the pandemic through our online and virtual course offerings, we know that, as good as they are (and our faculty has been brilliant at innovating in this regard!), they cannot be a substitute for the presence of participants on our Garmisch campus and the richness of the personal interactions they generate. On behalf of my colleagues on the faculty and staff of the Marshall Center, please allow me to wish you and your families the best of health in these trying times. This crisis has reminded us of how important our health is and that without it, all else pales in significance. We invite your comments and perspectives on this subject. Please contact us at [editor@perconcordiam.org](mailto:editor@perconcordiam.org)

Sincerely,

Keith W. Dayton  
Director



### Keith W. Dayton

*Director, George C. Marshall  
European Center for Security  
Studies*

Keith W. Dayton retired as a Lieutenant General from the U.S. Army in late 2010 after more than 40 years of service. His last assignment on active duty was as U.S. Security Coordinator to Israel and the Palestinian Authority in Jerusalem. An artillery officer by training, he also has served as politico-military staff officer for the Army in Washington, D.C., and U.S. defense attaché in Russia. He worked as director of the Iraqi Survey Group for Operation Iraqi Freedom in Iraq. He earned a Senior Service College Fellowship to Harvard University and served as the Senior Army Fellow on the Council on Foreign Relations in New York. Gen. Dayton has a bachelor's degree in history from the College of William and Mary, a master's degree in history from Cambridge University and another in international relations from the University of Southern California.





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**Dr. John L. Clarke** is a professor of security studies at the Marshall Center. His areas of expertise include homeland security and homeland defense issues. He has developed and taught numerous courses on homeland security, crisis management and stability operations, as well as developed scenario-based exercises and simulations. He is an authority on the role of armed forces in domestic contingencies. His most recent book is *What Should Armies Do? Armed Forces and Civil Security*.



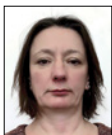
**Dr. Pál Dunay** is professor of NATO and European security issues at the Marshall Center. He was director of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Academy from 2014 to 2016 and was course director of the International Training Course in Security Policy at the Geneva Centre for Security Policy from 1996 to 2004 and from 2007 to 2014.



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## The Pandemic

Volume 11, Issue 2, 2021

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# PROFOUND IMPLICATIONS

## How the pandemic has affected security across the world

By **Dr. John L. Clarke**, Marshall Center professor | Photos by The Associated Press

**“This changes everything.”** “This is a game-changer.” Phrases like these have abounded in recent decades in the aftermath of catastrophes, market crashes, upheavals and revolutions. Yet after a suitable period of time, most things seem to return to normal or some recognizable semblance thereof. But most of those were one-off events, significant in impact but without the power to fundamentally change our societies, governments and business models.

Not this time. Unlike many other game-changers, the COVID-19 pandemic really seems to have changed everything. Everything. And it has staying power. In the past three decades, it can only be compared to the collapse of the Soviet Union and its empire. Nothing else really comes close — not even the stock market collapse in 2008, which eventually regained its standing. This pandemic is global in its reach, but local in its effects. Nations, communities, businesses, families — all manner of social and economic constructions — have had to react to the consequences of the pandemic and its impacts. Few have been spared, due to the manner and extent of globalization extant in our world. It has devastated national economies, personal relationships and everything in between.

This edition of *per Concordiam* looks at some of the pandemic’s most important impacts on security. The very nature of security, particularly national security, has been affected in very fundamental ways. Consider the rise of China. Although the virus originated there, China has managed to profit from its draconian repression measures and even appears to have weathered the economic impacts of this continuing crisis, while other countries, notably in North America and Europe, have been distracted (to say the least) by the pandemic.



A medic prepares to administer a dose of an AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine in Kyiv, Ukraine. The country was one of the last in the region to begin inoculating its population.

There is little question that the crisis has affected the focus of national security organizations worldwide and the readiness of armed forces to carry out their responsibilities. There are a number of reasons for this, many of which are set forth in this edition. In many countries, a combination of denial and lack of transparency has caused the public to lose faith or even ignore government edicts on how to respond to the pandemic. This has been exacerbated by false or misleading information shared on social media.

Another consequence of the pandemic is a loss of focus on security. People are concerned primarily about their health and about the secondary effects of the

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Countries are retreating from international trade relationships at a cost to other nations. Similarly, they are looking less at the value of security alliances and viewing their own security in strictly national terms.

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pandemic: loss of employment, loss of income, loss of personal relationships. This has understandably distracted countries from other issues, notably national security. Concomitant with this is the loss of funding for national security, particularly for the armed forces. Tax revenues used to fund the armed forces are down, and money designated for armed forces has been diverted to deal with the pandemic. This trend will accelerate as the pandemic wears on.



Workers repair communication lines near a home destroyed during the military conflict in the separatist region of Nagorno-Karabakh in 2020. The conflict disrupted the area's response to COVID-19.

The pandemic's impact on trade globalization and security alliances is also a concern. Countries are retreating from international trade relationships at a cost to other nations. Similarly, they are looking less at the value of security alliances and viewing their own security in strictly national terms. These twin consequences have significant impacts on every country, particularly those reviewed in this edition.

This edition of *per Concordiam* examines the continuing impact of the pandemic and the reactions and measures taken in response to it. It looks at the impact on several regions of the world that have not been closely examined in these contexts. It also looks at the impacts on decision-making and risk management in a national security context. Last, it examines the role of the armed forces in responding to this crisis.

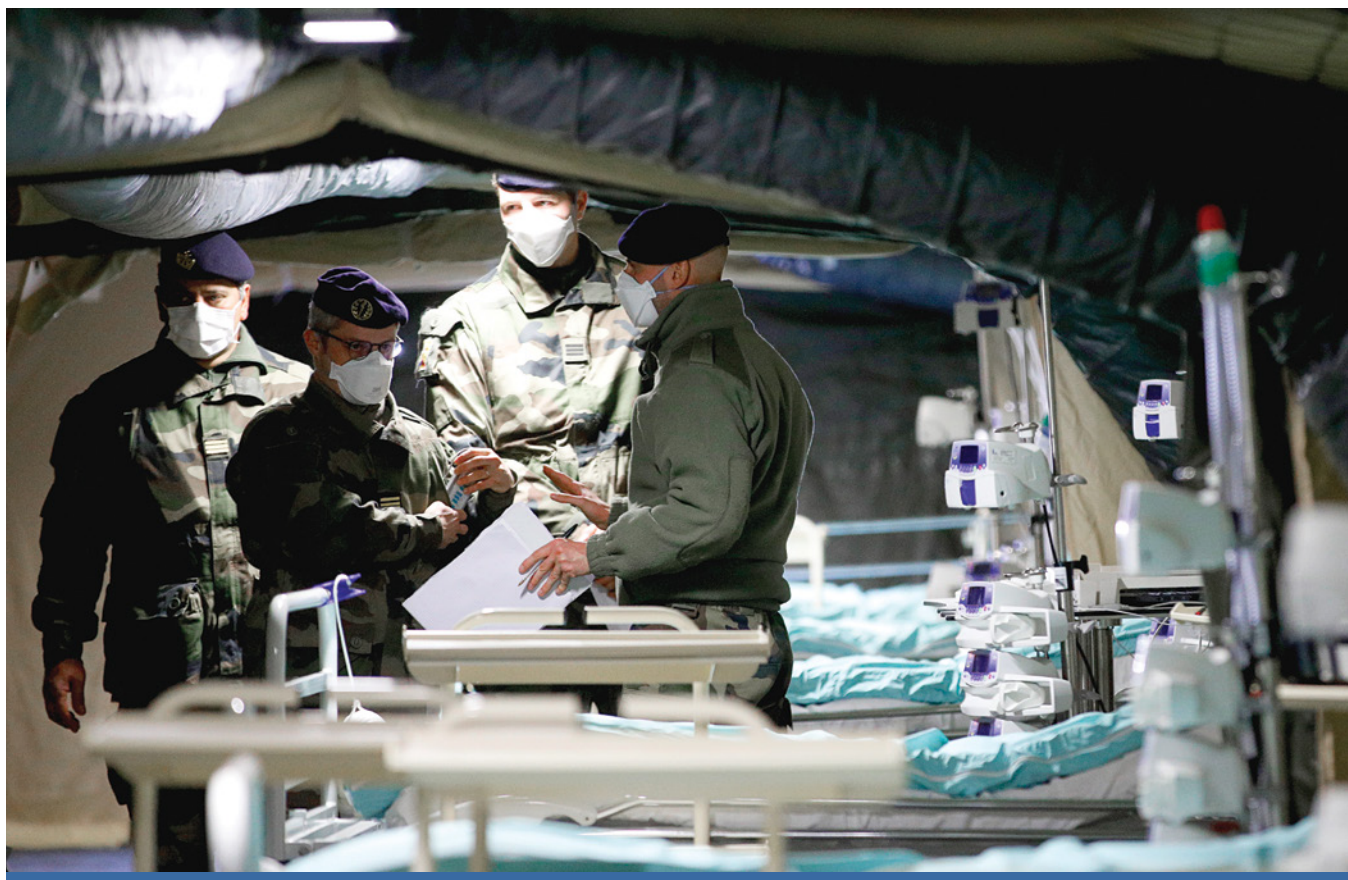
Małgorzata Jankowska, a counselor at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland, analyzes the effects of the pandemic on multilateralism. She asserts that the crisis has accelerated the trend toward deglobalization and makes the case for a return to multilateral efforts in security, as opposed to the renationalization of security. In particular, she examines the role of the European Union, which is of particular interest in view of the challenges Europe has had in coordinating a response to the virus while at the same time managing a range of other issues, notably China and Russia. Dr. Bernhard Wigger, head of the core planning team for Swiss Security Network Exercises, looks at the issue of preparedness in the face of pandemics and other crises. He notes that nations often seem ill-prepared for such events, and he emphasizes the importance, but limitations, of crisis planning. He makes the case for risk management, buttressed by realistic exercises for crisis-response organizations.

An article that I contributed examines two aspects of this crisis on many states' armed forces: their role in supporting civil authorities in crisis management and the impact that the virus has on the readiness of armed forces. The article lays out tasks that the military should undertake and notes many of the new roles — such as civilian-patient transportation and care — that armed forces have taken on in many countries. The risks involved in these new roles provide a cautionary tale for decision-makers when asking the armed forces to do more in response to the pandemic.

How the pandemic has affected armed forces readiness is discussed in an article on strategic deterrence that outlines the challenges and the methods used by the U.S. Strategic Command to ensure its nation's readiness. Given that there is no room for error in the field of nuclear deterrence, this is an impressive accomplishment.

Dr. Gregory Gleason, a Marshall Center professor, writes about trade issues, particularly as they relate to Central Asia. He notes how the current crisis has disrupted supply chains worldwide, and he puts these issues in the context of China's One Belt, One Road efforts. Gleason





postulates that China can capitalize on the land bridge that Central Asia offers, particularly as other means of transport, such as air travel, have been greatly disrupted by the pandemic. He points out that the region is turning to Russia and China for economic and political support.

U.S. Navy Cmdr. John “Eric” Ager, a Marshall Center professor, draws many of the same conclusions in his analysis of how Ukraine has fared during the pandemic. He notes that Ukraine’s response has been poorly received by the population because the government seems to lack direction and transparency. In addition, Ukraine has faltered in its defense reforms and in its response to Russian aggression and interference. Ukraine’s Western partners have understandably been distracted, and Russia has exploited this opening. He notes that it will require significant effort to get Ukraine back on the path to stability and reform.

Another Marshall Center professor, Dr. Pál Dunay, adds to this focus by examining the impact of the crisis on the post-Soviet space. He looks at the manner in which Russia has sought to control the crisis by extending and solidifying its sphere of influence. The post-Soviet states share a number of characteristics that influenced their responses to the crisis, including a lack of transparency, lack of efficient market structures and considerable instability in the region. He touches on the pandemic’s impact on border security and other crises, notably the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Mariusz Rzeszutko, a Ph.D. in security

French soldiers gather inside a military field hospital in eastern France. Italy, Spain and France were hit hard by COVID-19.

sciences, analyzes countries in the Middle East and North Africa. He focuses on the impact on Lebanon, Algeria and Saudi Arabia, which have their plates full with other internal and external issues. Similar to countries of the post-Soviet space, these countries have varying degrees of transparency issues and economic problems that limit their ability to effectively respond to the crisis.

It is natural that the focus for many in this crisis has been on their own health and work situations, but as we move into the post-pandemic world, with the virus becoming endemic, we will have to reinvigorate our relations with friends, neighbors, allies and competitors. This issue of *per Concordiam* is devoted to that time, which we all hope comes sooner than later.

During the stock market bubbles of the last century, when soaring stock prices bore little semblance to their underlying value, a number of stock market analysts assured investors that “this time it is different,” meaning that the old rules no longer applied. They proclaimed a new “normal.” We know what happened when stock prices fell back to Earth. But this time, the pandemic bubble really is different — and will stay so for a long time. We need to plan accordingly. □





# EFFECTIVE MULTILATERALISM

## The EU, Great Power Competition and COVID-19

By **Małgorzata Jankowska**, counselor  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Poland

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The turmoil caused by the outbreak of COVID-19 has been perceived by many European Union leaders as an opportune time to reinforce their calls to renew multilateralism. The need to deal in a cooperative way with the economic, social and political consequences of the pandemic proved the validity of multilateralism. At a basic level, multilateralism refers to at least three states working together to achieve shared objectives and refraining from acting in a unilateral or bilateral way. Multilateralism is first and foremost the preferred way of cooperation for states wary of great powers politics. It is no surprise that multilateralism is widely claimed to be a part of the EU's DNA. However, EU leaders are aware of the structural shifts within the United States-China rivalry revealed by COVID-19. In this new reality, a more effective multilateralism is urgently needed for Europe.

## EU Multilateralism

EU leaders such as French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen have spoken about a deep crisis of multilateralism at a time when China is on the rise. They stress that Europe has no choice but to step in and assume more responsibility. Otherwise, the EU risks losing its relevance and becoming an object of other powerful players. As summarized in a tweet by Charles Michel, president of the European Council, the “EU must be a player and not a playground.” The only way to achieve these goals is through a reformed and effective policy of multilateralism.

In 2019, France and Germany launched an initiative promoting effective multilateralism. In an article published in 2019 on Germany's Federal Foreign Office website, German Foreign Affairs Minister Heiko Maas and French Foreign

Clockwise from top left, Chinese President Xi Jinping, European Council President Charles Michel, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Angela Merkel meet in December 2020 via video conference to discuss the Comprehensive Agreement on Investment.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



Affairs Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian defined multilateralism as “an intelligent network of committed states in order to achieve maximum effectiveness through variable geometry and fluid membership.” They wrote that the aim of this network was to “safeguard multilateral diplomacy from false nation-state promises and unbridled power politics.”

A determination to grasp this opportunity was underlined by the title of their article: “Who if not us? When, if not now?” They explained in a subsequent article that multilateralism is “not just a way of regulating world affairs through cooperation between states. It is also a certain idea of the world order and of mankind, based on the legacy of the Enlightenment, rationality, adherence to the rule of law and the search for shared progress.” Thus, effective multilateralism means promoting a certain vision of a global order.

The Franco-German initiative was to a large extent embraced by the EU. Multilateralism was defined by the EU Council in 2019 as the “cornerstone of the EU foreign policy.” The council identified three broad objectives:

1. Upholding international norms and agreements.
2. Extending multilateralism to new global realities.
3. Making multilateral organizations fit for purpose.

These are hardly new objectives and the proposed measures — strengthening the EU’s existing partnerships, continuing human rights promotion, and continuing leadership on the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement and World Trade Organization reform — are mostly incremental.

At the beginning of 2020, during the initial phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, the EU and its member states focused on dealing with the immediate impact, mainly on health care and social and welfare policies. The EU and its member states worked together to prevent the unraveling of the European single market, especially the free flow of people and goods. Support was mobilized for extraordinary measures. Von der Leyen captured this mood in a speech at a Special European Council meeting in July 2020. “The pressure of the crisis has opened doors that for a very long time were locked shut,” she said. “As sad as the occasion may be, it is also a new opportunity for Europe, for our community.”

The pandemic served as a catalyst for promoting multilateralism as defined by Germany and France. Indeed, a world after COVID-19 has been painted as a dangerous place with the

ongoing rivalry between the U.S. and China, resurgent authoritarian regimes in China and Russia, and rising euroscepticism inside and outside the EU. In this new reality, Europe “must relearn the language of power,” according to Josep Borrell, the EU’s minister of foreign affairs. In fact, the EU has to defend its interests by making its own decisions, independently of other great powers. “To project the most effective role in the world we need to promote multilateralism and at the same time to strengthen our strategic autonomy,” Borrell said in 2020. “These are the two sides of the same coin.”

In May 2020, the European Commission presented its comprehensive proposal in response to COVID-19. The document, “Europe’s moment: to repair and prepare for the next generation,” laid the basis for a number of far-reaching measures, including a recovery fund adopted later that year. The document also called for strengthened multilateralism to build a stronger Europe. Stressing the urgency and unprecedented level of challenges, it called for mobilizing EU instruments and mechanisms to pursue geostrategic and geopolitical objectives and defend EU interests and values. In terms of trade policy, a key EU leverage when dealing with third parties, it advocated an “open strategic autonomy” with an emphasis on developing mutually beneficial bilateral relations. Seen from this perspective, promoting multilateralism has been mainly an instrument to internally organize the EU around a concept of international cooperation framed by Germany and France and promoted by European institutions.

### Effective Multilateralism in Practice

The EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment (CAI), signed in principle in December 2020, is arguably one of the EU’s first major decisions that follows the approach outlined in the COVID-19 response document. The negotiations, started in 2012, achieved mixed results, given the EU’s ambitions. Brussels perceived the agreement as an instrument to address in a structural/systemic way the asymmetries in market access. The EU insisted that the negotiations be driven by results and not the calendar. In the end, except for Ireland, all EU member states signed their own bilateral investment agreements with Beijing. A deeper and more comprehensive EU-level agreement remained an ambition until the second half of 2020, when exchanges accelerated and the agreement in principle was signed.

In a press release, the European Commission said the agreement would provide European



*“The pressure of the crisis has opened doors that for a very long time were locked shut. As sad as the occasion may be, it is also a new opportunity for Europe, for our community.”*

*Ursula von der Leyen,  
European Commission president*



investors with better access to Chinese markets, especially in the automotive, financial, construction, health, and research and development sectors. The agreement includes rules against the forced transfer of technologies, comprehensive transparency rules for subsidies, rules related to state-owned enterprises, commitments related to sustainable development, as well as labor standards. The EU described the agreement as the most ambitious that China has ever concluded with a third country. According to von der Leyen, the agreement will uphold EU interests and promote its core values. It will also help the EU engage China in protecting the climate and in promoting a rules-based multilateralism.

The agreement has been criticized by the media, China experts and by officials from EU member states and third countries. According to media reports, commitments undertaken by Beijing on some key issues leave a lot of room for omission and interpretation, including on binding, enforceable dispute settlements. There is skepticism that China will stop using trade

and economic cooperation as a weapon when pursuing political objectives. In addition, there are concerns that it could lead to increased reliance by EU companies to access Chinese markets despite the EU's calls to reduce dependency on China.

Some experts also wonder how the efforts to address issues such as forced technology transfer, subsidies and state-owned enterprises would impact efforts by the World Trade Organization to set global rules and standards. European Parliament members voiced their serious concerns regarding the rather loose commitments on the Chinese side — a regime that uses forced labor and internment reeducation camps for its Uighur minority. Officials from several EU member states pointed out that the agreement covers issues important mainly to Germany and France. They noted that the deal could relieve pressure on Beijing, weakening the EU's hand in pursuing other trade-related commitments such as tariff and nontariff barriers important for smaller member states. In fact, according to a

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen speaks at a news conference following a four-day European summit at the European Council in Brussels, Belgium, in July 2020. REUTERS



Reuters article, companies that could benefit from the agreement include Daimler, Volkswagen, BMW, Allianz, Siemens and Peugeot.

The signing of the agreement also sent a signal to the U.S. during a period of transition in Washington. The EU proposed pursuing common interests and leveraging its collective strength to deliver results on strategic priorities as one of the guiding principles for a new trans-Atlantic agenda that puts a priority on dealing with an assertive China. Yet the EU concluded this important agreement with China when the incoming U.S. administration was not yet in a position to be engaged in setting policies, which was duly noted in Washington. While in a press release about the CAI, the European Commission reiterated in rather sober words the rationale for the recently launched EU-U.S. dialogue on China, the politics behind the EU-China agreement undermine the

idea of a reset in trans-Atlantic relations. It weakened the potential for collective leverage against an assertive authoritarian regime. Interestingly, 2020 was a year when China, in exploring the EU's initial difficulty in dealing with the pandemic, for the first time so openly and aggressively questioned the EU's political system and integration model. The impression is that a driving force behind the deal with China was strategic autonomy with an implicit distancing from the U.S. The fact that the agreement was reached a few weeks before the inauguration of U.S. President Joe Biden — a supporter of multilateralism and trans-Atlantic links with extensive contacts with European leaders — underlines this point.

The jury is still out as to whether the agreement as proposed would be a geopolitical and geostrategic win for Beijing, as claimed by many commentators. At the time this was written, the

The Russian vessel Akademik Cherskiy is moored at the German island Rügen in the Baltic Sea in preparation for work on the Nord Stream 2 natural gas pipeline.

AFP/GETTY IMAGES





agreement still needed ratification by the European Parliament, which, given the concerns already voiced, is far from certain. In a broad context, the deal with China is a signal that, despite all of the talk of being less naïve, the EU approach toward China has not changed substantially — its underlining tenet is engaging Beijing. In addition, the EU institutions supported by Germany and France prefer to deal with China “autonomously,” rather than move toward a collective effort with the U.S. It puts serious limits to the argument of an autonomous EU as an attractive partner for the U.S. when facing global challenges.

## Conclusions

The decisions by EU leaders raise serious concerns about pursuing effective multilateralism, as framed by European institutions, and whether that framework is conducive to upholding a rules-based global order that can challenge rising authoritarian regimes.

The EU’s efforts to demonstrate strategic autonomy and to position itself as an independent geopolitical actor in relation to the U.S. reveal an eagerness to engage in power politics. In addition, for a number of EU member states, the search for strategic autonomy can only be reached at the expense of the trans-Atlantic partnership, ultimately undermining security in Europe. An insistence on EU strategic autonomy fuels their concerns. Nathalie Tocci, director of the Rome-based Istituto Affari Internazionali think tank, has noted, “European strategic autonomy and a revamped transatlantic bond are two sides of the same coin.” A stronger, autonomous Europe should be a more attractive partner for Washington in addressing common challenges. However, the way the CAI was pursued is hardly reassuring for some EU member states.

Effective multilateralism demands concrete results, and some EU member states worry that for the sake of achieving results, their concerns and interests are not being fully considered. Post-Brexit, there is no credible counterbalance within the EU when France and Germany agree on certain policies. That only intensifies the pressure on EU member states to follow policies agreed to bilaterally with the recurrent call for an increased use of qualified majority voting. EU institutions, once a guardian for diversity and competition within the EU, are moving away from such a role by focusing more on protecting the EU from outside competition. More troubling is a growing perception that German and French interests constitute European interests. The signing of the CAI is hardly the only example of some EU member



states believing they were pushed aside for the sake of reaching a result congruent with the national interests of Germany and/or France. A salient example is the German-Russian Nord Stream 2 natural gas pipeline. It is called a European project despite strong opposition from a number of EU member states and the serious reservations of the European Commission.

The travails around the CAI reveal the limits and weaknesses of multilateralism as framed by EU institutions around Franco-German initiatives. It leaves no space for identifying alternative policies or applying differing interpretations. Because of its intrinsically divisive potential within the EU and toward the U.S., this kind of multilateralism can hardly be effective. It is more multipolar than multilateral. Such an approach involves a high risk of exposing and weakening the EU and making it more susceptible to external pressure at a time when authoritarian and corrupt regimes such as those in China and Russia do not shy away from exercising their power and influence. As such, it also involves a potential risk of fueling — rather than weakening — power politics. The legitimate national interests of Germany and France, as seen in the CAI, are an important driving force behind effective multilateralism for the EU. It is an open question as to what extent those interests fit into the EU’s broader goal to provide a true alternative to power politics. □

German companies such as Volkswagen are said to benefit from the EU’s tentative agreement with China. ISTOCK



# COVID-19 AND PREPAREDNESS

## LESSONS FOR FUTURE CRISES

By **Dr. Bernhard Wigger**, head of the core planning team for the Swiss Security Network Exercises at the Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport

Photos by Swiss Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport

Photo: Medics and military personnel in Bern, Switzerland, work together in the fight against COVID-19.



**D**espite warnings of the devastating effects on societies and globalized economies, a pandemic was not at the top of the list of risks in January 2020 when the World Economic Forum presented the 15th “Global Risks Report.” The survey focused predominantly on environmental risks. An infectious disease outbreak was considered unlikely, and the impact of epidemics/pandemics ranked last on a risk chart. Not surprisingly, the COVID-19 pandemic took national and international crisis management agencies by surprise, shattered the self-confidence of societies, and challenged international cooperation and multilateral organizations. The world was taken completely unaware and the results were devastating. How could this have happened? And what can we learn to prepare for similar events?

The coronavirus pandemic was still raging as this was written and a comprehensive evaluation of the handling of the crisis can be made after the world emerges on the other side, with the necessary objective distance. However, experiences to date and lessons already identified allow us to begin to consider how states and their governments could improve crisis management systems. The aim is to consolidate best practices to better prepare for future crises.

The lessons learned from COVID-19 can serve as an impetus to overhaul crisis management structures and equip them to handle the entire spectrum of crises. The challenge is to prepare for every type of disruptive emergency. A preliminary analysis suggests the following conclusions for the operational, strategic and political levels of crisis management:

- The operational level bears the brunt of the crisis and can build on its daily routine in handling events. However, changes must be made to the way data is collected and exchanged and to the way an integrated overview of the system is obtained.
- At the strategic level, the greatest potential for improved crisis management lies in developing strategic courses of action for political decision-makers. However, to work effectively, staff must be trained in scenario-based contingency planning.
- At the political level, at least in liberal democracies, politicians must win over the public by communicating and following a clear problem-solving strategy.

Dealing with a disruptive crisis goes beyond simply coping with technical issues. COVID-19 taught us that containing the epidemic is not enough. The overall situation must be mastered as well. Leaders must be mentally prepared for this task and have the leadership skills to work within national and multinational networks. The views expressed here relate primarily to the way the COVID-19 crisis has been dealt with in Switzerland. The conclusions are based on this author’s experiences working as a political advisor to the Swiss Armed Forces, as head of the Swiss Security Network office and as project manager for the 2019 national Security Network Exercise.

### The Limits of Specific Blueprints for Crisis Handling

In 2013, the Swiss government stipulated that a pandemic should be part of the first Security Network Exercise in 2014, which was designed to test the overall national security system. The main exercise focused on a blackout and subsequent electricity shortages. The outbreak of a pandemic further complicated the crisis management. The pandemic part of the exercise concentrated on an overhaul of the national contingency planning for pandemics. This revision work was successfully concluded in 2018 with the publication of an updated Swiss Influenza Pandemic Plan.



Soldiers report for duty in Chamblon, Switzerland, to assist with efforts to combat COVID-19.

The COVID-19 crisis has clearly demonstrated the limits of contingency planning. Contingency plans are basic documents that give direction and contain recommendations. A political decision must be made on whether to adopt the recommendations and how to implement them. Moreover, crisis handling is much more than implementing plans — it is well known that plans seldom survive contact with the enemy. Plans can be of assistance, mainly at an operational level. They cannot determine the overall management of a national crisis because they focus too specifically on one sector of the security system. Nor can they guarantee the smooth functioning of the main decision-making processes. This is the main challenge: preparing a whole system for a spectrum of major crises — what are termed “disruptive crises” in this article.

### A Wake-Up Call for Future Crises

The term “disruption” sums up the effects of the COVID-19 crisis very well. It invokes damage, destruction and interruption. In logistics, when production and supply chains fail, we talk of disruption. Above all, there is a fear of disruption in

## World Economic Forum's 'Global Risks Report 2020' Risk Chart

Categories	Top 10 risks in terms of Likelihood	Top 10 risks in terms of Impact
◆ Economic	◆ 1 Extreme weather	◆ 1 Climate action failure
◆ Environmental	◆ 2 Climate action failure	◆ 2 Weapons of mass destruction
◆ Geopolitical	◆ 3 Natural disasters	◆ 3 Biodiversity loss
◆ Societal	◆ 4 Biodiversity loss	◆ 4 Extreme weather
◆ Technological	◆ 5 Human-made environmental disasters	◆ 5 Water crises
	◆ 6 Data fraud or theft	◆ 6 Information infrastructure breakdown
	◆ 7 Cyber attacks	◆ 7 Natural disasters
	◆ 8 Water crises	◆ 8 Cyber attacks
	◆ 9 Global governance failure	◆ 9 Human-made environmental disasters
	◆ 10 Asset bubbles	◆ 10 Infectious diseases



connection with cyber risks. Disruptive effects are a predicted consequence of a pandemic. In October 2019, the comprehensive “Global Health Security Index” reached the alarming conclusion that no country was fully prepared to handle an epidemic or pandemic. The survey, covering 195 countries, found severe weaknesses in these countries’ abilities to prevent, detect and respond to major disease outbreaks. The current situation has confirmed this prognosis.

Disruptive events can be understood by the responses to them. The 9/11 terrorist attack brought fundamental changes in security policy; the 2008 financial crisis had a major impact on national economies; and the 2011 nuclear disaster in Fukushima led to changes in energy policy. COVID-19 can also be regarded as a disruptive event because of its vast social, economic and political effects. Although viral disease is a familiar phenomenon in the history of humankind, it is unlikely that COVID-19 would have caused much of a stir in earlier times; for example, its mortality rate is low when compared to the 1918 influenza pandemic. The devastating disruptive power of the current pandemic is due to the interconnectedness of today’s societies and economies. They are vulnerable to interruptions and sensitive to media hype and social network storms.

This predisposition in our societies leads us to expect other forms of disruptive crises, not just pandemics. These include natural or civil disasters and cyber or terrorist attacks. In the case of cyber risks, digital networking contributes to increasing vulnerability. In the case of terrorist threats, two developments accentuate the disruptive potential:

- First, the potential for developing the strategic planning and sophistication of attacks, particularly on soft targets in an open society, gives cause for concern.
- Second, there is a fear that sooner or later weapons of mass destruction will be used, with devastating consequences.

The lessons learned from COVID-19 will help security specialists anticipate and manage disruptive crises.

### Strategic Crisis Management as a Focal Point

The response to most crises, whether natural phenomena, terrorist attacks or cyber incidents, begins at the tactical level and escalates — depending on the threat to public safety and security — to an operational level. A typical example is a terrorist incident. Although such attacks are escalated immediately in the media at national and even international levels because of the high interest in terrorist threats, as far as crisis management is concerned they can normally be dealt with operationally by the specialists and their teams. Therefore, they are not a serious threat to national security and do not cause nationwide disruption.

In contrast, COVID-19, as a disruptive crisis, marks a turning point in crisis management. It has demonstrated that dealing with problems at an operational level — in this case through the work of epidemiologists — is no longer enough. The challenges posed by secondary problems and chain reactions require a strategy that addresses the overall problem and not just the public health situation. This is the only way





to bring the crisis under control; focusing on one aspect is not enough.

Strategic action on the supply of protective equipment, virus testing and tracing has remained inadequate under the current approach because of the vacuum between operational crisis management teams and political decision-makers. Because of this, the key question is how strategic crisis management can be improved. How can strategic planning teams (most of them ad-hoc bodies because of the low probability that disruptive crises will occur) be prepared for an emergency?

The importance of a functioning system of strategic crisis management becomes most clear at a political or executive level. This is where decisive leadership is required more than anywhere else. The public is rightly entitled to expect their political leaders to do everything to bring a crisis under control. Especially in the case of disruptive crises, which hit society so hard, people expect their leaders to reduce or at least manage the disruption.

Probably the most important lesson from the COVID-19 crisis is that the everyday administrative structures for the management of this type of crisis are insufficient. At a strategic level, teams that work specifically on devising strategic options for crisis management are required. Political leaders must then distill these strategic options to form a strategy, implement it and inform the public regularly of what progress has been made. Crisis managers at all levels, including political leaders, must be prepared for this task. To this end, scenario-based training sequences must be used to ensure mental readiness for disruptive crises. Large-scale simulation exercises can prepare structures and processes for a real crisis.

### War-gaming for Mental Preparedness

Preparation for future disruptive crises begins with an analytical evaluation of the scenarios to heighten anticipation. The scenarios developed must cover exceptional situations, ranging from natural disasters such as earthquakes, through civil disasters such as power outages

The Swiss Security Network Exercise 2019 involved personnel from police, civil protection, the Armed Forces and the private sector.





Swiss Armed Forces personnel support civilian authorities at the border with France during the COVID-19 crisis.

and public health crises such as pandemics, to threat scenarios where, as already mentioned, the current focus is on strategic cyber attacks and protracted periods under the threat of major terrorist attacks.

War-gaming is a method in which a group works its way through a variety of scenarios. In a threat scenario, participants discuss different modes of attack by their adversary and the best courses of action to counter them. When it comes to disasters, the courses of action relate to systematic consequence management.

At operational, strategic and political levels, formats must be defined that allow for a discussion of the lessons learned from the COVID-19 crisis, using the war-gaming method. In a pandemic, operational teams such as health care specialists or, more generally, civil protection teams function routinely through daily incident management. By analyzing exceptional situations and disruptive scenarios, those teams can anticipate and prepare for the special demands of such situations. COVID-19 has revealed deficiencies primarily in the ability to see the bigger picture and in the electronic exchange of data.

Regarding the bigger picture, the challenge lies in putting together an integrated strategic situation report that accounts for numerous sectors, such as health, the economy, society, international relations and the armed forces. This task must be assigned to a specific lead agency, the choice of which depends on the nature of the crisis.

Regarding data exchange, the aim is to automate so that all parties have a consolidated and reliable database. In addition, complex prognoses must be broken down into simple and comprehensible models that can be intuitively understood and used by crisis managers from outside the field. Switzerland emerged from the Security Network Exercise in 2019 with very positive war-gaming experiences. This sequence of the exercise involved about 50 representatives from the 12 main police, civil protection and Armed Forces units in combating terrorism. They worked their way through 19 scenarios, discussing potential responses. These analyses, based on the war-gaming method, can conceivably be used for other crisis scenarios.

Tabletop analyses must involve not only people working at an operational level, but also



those engaged at the strategic and even political levels. Here, national crisis plans and crisis structures can be discussed in senior executive seminars. Best practices can be identified that serve to prepare participants for the next crisis. In addition, participants in seminars on dealing with disruptive scenarios can bring back proposals for optimizing national crisis management.

### Exercises for Organizational Preparedness

Large-scale national exercises used to take place regularly in line with general national defense policy to test the capabilities of the overall security system. With the end of the Cold War, this training culture went into decline. In Switzerland, the government announced in its 2010 security policy report that it was again planning to hold complex, large-scale exercises regularly. In 2014, the first such security network exercise in 22 years was held. The final report recommended having such an exercise every four to five years, and the Swiss Confederation and cantons agreed.

The authorities and decision-makers in the Security Network should regularly simulate a serious emergency to identify weaknesses in the precautions taken and in the structures and processes, and to improve on them. Anyone who does not prepare and practice for crises will make avoidable errors in real emergencies and will cause unnecessary damage, which may include the loss of human life.

Undoubtedly, the largest challenges are coordinating the numerous actors at all levels of the state and in all sectors concerned, and communicating with the public and the media. This interaction with many different partners in an exceptional situation is unusual and must therefore be practiced regularly. Last, the central government and the cantonal governments must be included to ensure that the knowledge gained does not remain at the operational level only.

In a comprehensive security network, the armed forces fulfill the vital role of a strategic reserve. They can make both quantitative and qualitative contributions across the entire spectrum of crises. This flexibility to provide services as part of the National Security Network must therefore be considered an important factor in the development of the armed forces. By providing these essential services, the Armed Forces are recognized as a partner in the network. The Swiss Armed Forces have clearly shown during the COVID-19 crisis that they can provide substantial manpower in little time. In March 2020, when the Swiss Armed Forces ordered with a single text message the mobilization of about 5,000 members, 80% of those called up responded within 15 minutes to say they were on their way. In the following weeks, these Armed Forces members supported civilian authorities in providing medical services, embassy protection and border controls. The government had decided that the Armed Forces could call up a maximum of 8,000 of its members to meet civilian authorities' needs.

Last, it is important to publicize these exercises and to raise public awareness of how we can respond to crises. If the public can be made aware of potential problems by means of a major exercise, it will understand the difficulties better in the event of a real crisis and accept instructions from the

authorities. The inclusion of the public and its readiness to help solve the problem are important factors in successful crisis management in a free society. The current pandemic has shown us this with clarity. In the future, information on security policy must be provided not simply to a limited group of specialists but to the public in general.

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**To prevent and overcome such disruptive crises, all relevant authorities and instruments, such as security policy, intelligence, foreign policy, economic policy, the armed forces, police, civil protection, customs and border protection, health and civil aviation authorities, must be coordinated and synchronized.**

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### Conclusions

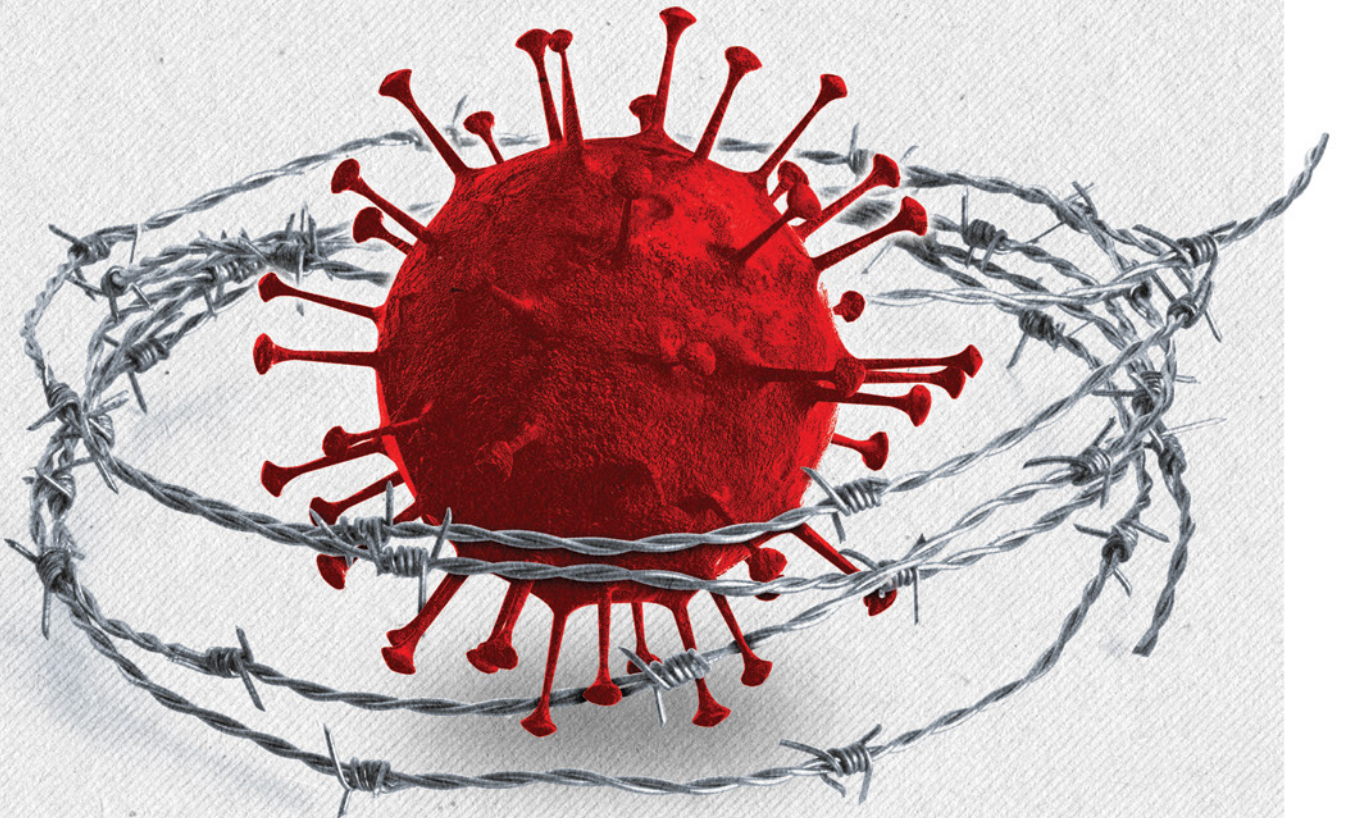
A clear-sighted security policy involves a systematic assessment of the dangers, risks and threats that are relevant today and in the foreseeable future. These include natural and civil disasters, interruptions in energy, commodity and food supplies, economic crises, epidemics, pandemics, mass migration, political and social crises, and threats to internal security from extremism and terrorism that endanger the population and critical national infrastructure. To prevent and overcome such disruptive crises, all relevant authorities and instruments, such as security policy, intelligence, foreign policy, economic policy, the armed forces, police, civil protection, customs and border protection, health and civil aviation authorities, must be coordinated and synchronized. The representatives of all the departments, institutions and organizations concerned must meet to make a comprehensive assessment of the situation and contribute to joint planning and decision-making. To prepare these mid- to high-level officials for this task, suitable training methods are required:

- Scenario-driven, tabletop formats such as conferences, seminars and workshops allow the physiognomy of different crises to be analyzed so that best practices can be identified and national approaches shared and disseminated. Scenarios are simulations of real-life events that help leaders develop the imagination required to anticipate and identify threats.
- Functional exercises are the appropriate maneuvers for the 21st century, not in the context of a total-defense concept, but in terms of comprehensive security. They serve as regular stress tests for national crisis management systems, including armed forces' support for civil authorities, thus preparing them to handle the next series of disruptive crises, which are sure to arise. □

— COVID-19 CHALLENGES —

# MENA REGION

THE



PER CONCORDIAM ILLUSTRATION



# THE PANDEMIC'S IMPACT ON THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

By Mariusz Rzeszutko

**B**efore the outbreak of the global COVID-19 pandemic, countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) were at a crossroads. Ten years after the Arab Spring, and as a result of unsuccessful reforms, MENA societies had returned to a state of growing dissatisfaction with the decade's changes. Following protests in Iraq and Lebanon, social turmoil spilled out in Algeria, Egypt, Ethiopia and Iran, while the situations in Libya and Sudan became significantly more complex.

The region's circumstances changed considerably with the emergence of COVID-19. It not only revolutionized the sociopolitical and economic situation, but also seriously challenged governments and their crisis management abilities. Although each government chose its own management style and policies, most COVID-19 measures were quickly weaponized in fights with political opponents. Moreover, the spread of the virus also provided a wide range of tools to introduce restraints and public control.

Due to the size of the MENA region and editorial limitations, only certain countries will be analyzed here. They were selected for political and economic stability and the political systems and changes taking place therein: from Lebanon, which is transforming toward a technocratic government, through authoritarian Algeria, to the absolute monarchy of Saudi Arabia.

## PRE-COVID-19

Although **Lebanon's** internal policies maintained political stability, avoiding conflicts between religious groups, the government failed to implement long-promised political and social reforms, which contributed significantly to the deterioration of the economic situation. A protracted crisis associated with the inability to agree on the heads of cabinet and accelerated by the poor economic situation led to escalating dissatisfaction in October 2019, and consequently to protests.

In **Algeria**, an authoritarian country with a hybrid system of central control and capitalism, protests are ongoing against authorities associated with ex-President Abdelaziz Bouteflika's regime and the disputed presidential election of December 2019.

Apart from the worldwide condemnation over the assassination of Jamal Khashoggi, which caused a significant outflow of foreign capital and shook the economy,

**Saudi Arabia** has not struggled with social protests or economic collapse. Thus, it had a much easier start in the fight against the pandemic.

## IDENTIFICATION AND MEASURES TAKEN

In **Lebanon**, the first COVID-19 cases were officially recorded in February 2020 and were assumed to have arrived with airline passengers. The main outbreak of infection was in Beirut, from where it spread in large clusters. Authorities had only a few hundred test kits and space to isolate only 200 patients. The first fatalities had already occurred by the end of February. Lebanon began preventive campaigns, encouraging compliance with hygiene protocols and declaring restrictions on people coming from countries where the virus was confirmed. Within two weeks of the official announcement of the first infections, the government quickly decided on countermeasures, including steps with economic consequences.



The Lebanese Central Bank in Beirut was shut down to lessen the spread of COVID-19. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Authorities declared a state of emergency, shutting down cultural and educational centers and border crossings. Restrictions were introduced: a curfew, a ban on gathering and organizing mass events, and orders to work

in shifts in government ministries and other places necessary for the functioning of the state. The availability of commercial and banking facilities was significantly reduced, but pharmacies and petrol stations remained open. Many private health care facilities were transformed into isolation wards, and seaside resorts were used as places of self-isolation. There were appeals to the public, especially those over 65 years old, to stay at home. In March 2020 the government, trying to adapt to the dynamic situation, introduced restrictions similar to those enforced in European countries and considered a matter of state security. However, the decision-making process was noticeably chaotic.

The main burden of fighting the pandemic — from distributing aid and securing the transport of people and medical supplies, to patrolling cities — fell to the Lebanese military and (informally) Hezbollah in the area it controls independently of the government. Due to the dramatic economic situation, in April 2020 authorities introduced a five-phase plan to gradually reopen the country. In September, after another wave of COVID-19 cases, the Crisis Management Project was modified to classify geographical sectors into risk zones based on the United States Department of Health and Human Services system: The first/white zone meant very low risk of infection, while the fourth/red zone was characterized by a high risk of infection.

Restrictions were imposed on each zone depending on risk classification: from requirements to wear masks and maintain social distancing, to close monitoring of social contacts, to restricting movement in red zones. To better manage the zones, the Lebanese government created a digital platform to support the enforcement

of social discipline. When the situation failed to improve under the partial restrictions, the government implemented a total lockdown in November 2020. Restrictions were loosened before Christmas, but due to the resulting increase in infections, a full lockdown was re-introduced in January. In February, the government announced a limited easing of the restrictions on movement and public services.

**Algeria** implemented a slightly different scenario. While most of its measures were in line with those adopted by Lebanon, the Algerian authorities reacted quickly to the spread of the virus. Direct airline connections between Algiers and Beijing were suspended at the beginning of February 2020. At sea, land and air border-crossing points, extraordinary control measures and thermal imaging cameras were introduced. The country launched a media information campaign. As happened in Lebanon, social media reported unofficially about the first deaths in February 2020. Similar to Lebanon, the Algiers authorities denied these reports. However, at the end of February, under pressure because of published reports about the virus, Health Minister Abderrahmane Benbouzid confirmed the first cases of COVID-19, which most likely reached Algeria from Italy. More infections, thought to be from France, were also announced.

In the face of the accelerating spread of the virus in March 2020, the Ministry of Health decided to forcibly postpone the holidays of all doctors and medical personnel. Instructions were issued to ministries, offices and workplaces to take preventive and protective measures at places of work. Elderly and chronically ill people were ordered to avoid unnecessary contact. For preventive purposes, pharmacies were instructed to save their stocks of protective masks for medical personnel only. In early March, President Abdelmadjid

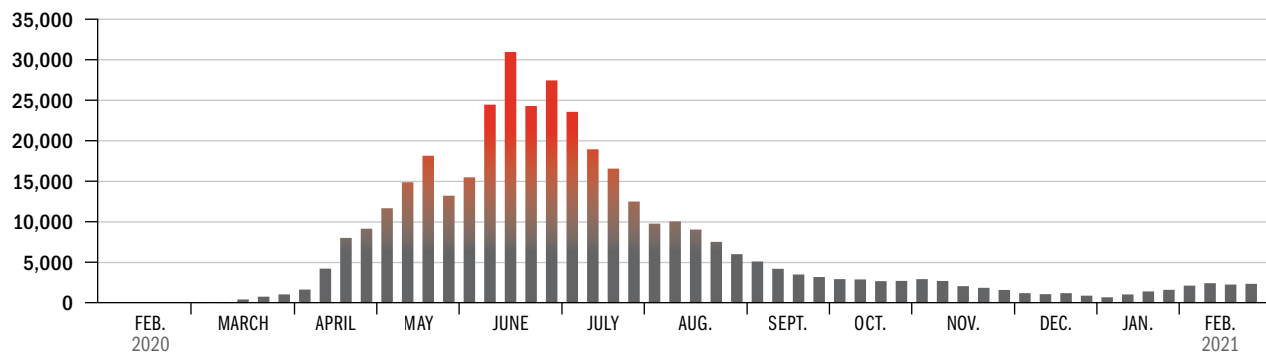
Socially distanced pilgrims circle the Kaaba in the first rituals of the hajj in the Muslim holy city of Mecca, Saudi Arabia, in July 2020.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS





**Figure 1:** Weekly confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Saudi Arabia, February 2020 – February 2021



Source: World Health Organization

Tebboune decided to close educational centers, and air and sea connections were suspended. Sports, cultural and political gatherings were banned. It was also decided to ban the export of strategic products, both medical and food, until the crisis has ended. The president authorized the National People's Army and the police to fight the virus by controlling the flow of people using increased checkpoints on roads into major cities, restricting access to vilayets, conducting assisted and even forced transport of people to places of isolation, and transport and distribution of materials (masks, decontamination gels etc.). Authorities quickly decided to issue 1.5 million masks to citizens and to order another 54 million as a reserve.

The minister of religion suspended public prayer gatherings — an action unheard of in Arab countries — ordering the closure of mosques and all places of worship. Court hearings in criminal cases were suspended. A special instruction from Prime Minister Abdelaziz Djerad imposed a number of restrictions and penalties on citizens who failed to comply with the government's directives. For instance, refusal to self-isolate was punishable by imprisonment for two to six months and a significant fine. The Scientific Commission for Monitoring and Assessment of the COVID-19 Pandemic was established to monitor and manage the crisis: Crisis cells were launched at the level of state institutions, and crisis management units were established in *wilayat* (administrative districts).

With technical support from the World Health Organization (WHO), the National Institute of Public Health initiated a process of support and capacity building to coordinate responses to the epidemic. The government also introduced a system of assistance and support for citizens to mitigate the negative economic and social impacts of the protective measures. It established a scientific committee to study COVID-19, created a campaign to clean and disinfect public spaces regularly, and authorized the army to fight market speculation in goods for basic needs. Despite rising infection numbers in Algeria, Djerad expanded the list of permitted commercial activity deemed necessary to avoid economic collapse,

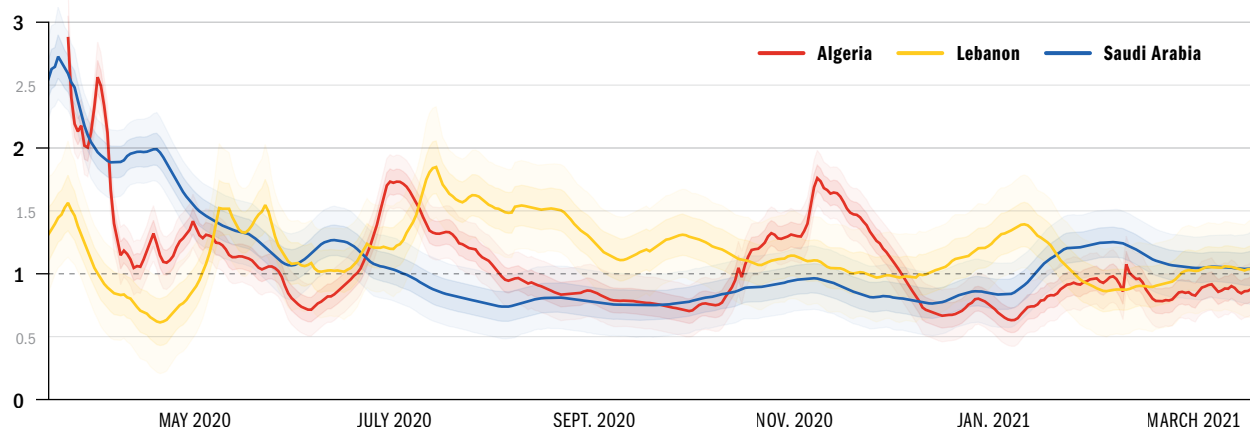
and the Directorate-General for Taxation announced new measures to alleviate the effects of the crisis on businesses. The government, under an accelerated procedure, facilitated the import of goods to counter the epidemic (primarily pharmaceutical products, medical equipment and basic food items). Some senior officials and military leaders, to help mitigate the financial effects of the crisis, agreed to transfer their monthly salaries to a solidarity fund.

**Saudi Arabia** quickly introduced a number of restrictions similar to those of European countries to reduce transmission of the virus and, among the countries analyzed, showed the greatest effectiveness in combating COVID-19.

Already by March 2020, flights and permits for citizens to travel to neighboring countries, as well as to Italy and Korea, were suspended. Sea transport options were limited. Similar to Algeria, commercial facilities were closed and access to services was severely restricted. However, pharmacies and supply companies remained open. Early on, the Saudi Food and Drug Authority began testing the effectiveness of disinfectants in eliminating the virus, and substandard disinfection measures were published on the agency's website. Grocery stores were allowed to remain open with a condition that items exposed to frequent contact by customers be frequently sterilized. Catering services were allowed to stay open as take-out only. Apps for the delivery of food and medicine were quickly introduced. Electronic transactions were welcomed to prevent transmission of the virus through banknotes. Supporting e-platforms were effectively developed and adapted to meet the needs of citizens. Mobile virus testing points were established.

Authorities mandated that people in vulnerable groups be allowed to work remotely, and employers had to strictly respect these provisions. The government ordered the implementation of a special tab on the Mawid (e-health services) platform, enabling registration with a doctor and being able to receive an early diagnosis using a mobile application. Punishment was imposed on medical and paramedical personnel who intentionally concealed or delayed providing information about a COVID-19 infection.

**Figure 2: Effective reproduction rate of COVID-19, May 2020 – March 2021**



The number of infected individuals increases when the basic reproduction number (the number of secondary cases produced by a primary case) is greater than 1.

Source: PLOS ONE, "Tracking R of COVID-19: A new real-time estimation using the Kalman filter"

To fight the pandemic, medical care was extended to people staying illegally in Saudi Arabia or those who did not submit documents. Curfew violations were punishable by a heavy fine, and recidivism could lead to imprisonment.

Scheduled military activities, including internal exercises and exercises with foreign partners, were canceled. Control over the business services sector was also maintained, preventing speculation on the prices of basic necessities and health care products. Similar to Algeria, religious gatherings were suspended. The state immediately implemented control over resources by verifying the number of necessary goods and food products. In mid-March, the Saudis, like the Algerians, stopped the export of medicines and medical devices. A campaign providing citizens with free protective measures against virus transmission was launched.

King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, in clear and concise messages, informed the nation about the government's activities and the state of emergency, preparing the public for a potentially deteriorating scenario. To limit the economic consequences of the pandemic, the government prepared stimulus packages for the private and banking sectors at the end of March 2020. The state-owned energy company provided services despite the lack of payments from citizens. Attempts to speculate, monopolize or inflate prices were severely punished.

Self-isolating people were placed in hotels, thanks to government subsidies. Industry, agriculture, energy and the health sectors also received subsidies. Funds earmarked for large projects were redirected to maintain the state's economy. As a result of these measures, the virus's effective reproduction rate (R index) and the number of reported cases began to decline significantly, which allowed the government to announce a three-stage plan for removing the restrictions. In addition, the Saudis decided to financially support Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, a global health partnership created to promote vaccine development and immunizations.

## DEFICIENCIES AND SOCIETAL JUDGMENTS

In **Lebanon**, the public accused the Ministry of Health of disregarding the seriousness of the threat, being unprepared for a global pandemic and sluggishly responding to the crisis. Passengers arriving at the airport were randomly selected for rudimentary screening, such as temperature checks. Workers were not properly equipped with protective gear, exposing them to the virus and potentially spreading it to healthy travelers.

Authorities were also criticized for failing to effectively enforce restrictions. Under public pressure, the government suspended travel connections first with Italy and Iran and later with other countries. As the situation deteriorated, the Lebanese government reduced traffic by allowing the use of vehicles with odd registration numbers on some days and those with even numbers on the others. However, the number of exceptions (including diplomats, the Army, security services, doctors, journalists, food suppliers and garbage collectors) significantly limited the intended risk reduction.

In addition, the public's compliance with the restrictions loosened over time. Gross violations of social distancing regulations were regularly presented in the media. Increasingly expensive fines had little effect, even in the face of the predicted May infection peak. In this context, there was a clear contrast between government-controlled areas and those overseen by Hezbollah. Restrictive measures taken by Hezbollah and Amal, such as motorized patrols and independent checkpoints, enforced preventive measures within the local populations.

Lebanon was saved by the fact that in the first wave of infection, more than 67% of those infected suffered relatively mild symptoms and only 9% of patients were in critical condition. The second wave of the virus, which emerged at the beginning of September, changed the situation significantly. Although the virus reproduction rate





was much lower, the number of daily infections exceeded the capacity of the health care service, with almost 100% usage of ventilators and an increased number of deaths in younger patients. It led the government to cooperate with Hezbollah, an unofficial competitor that financed preventive measures and operated some medical reserve centers to take pressure off state health services. Some critics also condemned what they considered a reckless use of military resources reserved for war.

The drastic increase in infections in May 2020 was likely the result of the resumption of social protests caused by the pauperization of society and income losses due to restrictions imposed by the state. The situation was reinforced by the illusory feeling of security because of falling transmission indicators early on.

In **Algeria**, independent observers were alarmed when the government's assurances of increased controls at airports and ports were not realized. The credibility of governmental information on resources and strategies also raised doubts among citizens and journalists. One of Algeria's most questionable decisions was to repatriate more than 130 Algerians who had been residing in China, 31 of them from the epicenter of the virus — Hubei province. Given the poor security measures and lack of preparation in a country mired in internal protests, the idea of bringing in so many potentially infected people was poorly received by the public. Additionally, April's repatriation of Algerian citizens from Turkey incurred a high risk of bringing terrorists associated with the Islamic State into the country.

Lebanese soldiers and police face anti-government protesters blocking a highway that links Beirut with northern Lebanon in October 2020.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

At the end of February 2020, the WHO alerted the world about the inability of African countries to deal with the pandemic. Following this announcement, Algerian authorities began censoring state media, effectively eliminating the possibility of leaking negative information, as had happened with the Algerian cholera outbreak in 2018. Therefore, independent media argued that the number of COVID-19 infections in Algeria may be much greater than what was announced by authorities. The public began to buy masks and disinfectant gels. People began to stockpile food and water. In just two weeks, cases of the virus were recorded in various wilayat. A particular failure of Algeria was its total lack of control over Chinese citizens living and working there, an estimated 400,000 to 1 million. These people, working in rotation, were not tracked by authorities within Algeria, nor were their movements tracked when moving between China and Algeria. The multivector actions taken to reduce the risk of spreading the virus were not sufficient, nor was the efficiency of the Algerian health service.

In **Saudi Arabia**, due to limitations on freedom of speech, only slightly negative signals reached the press. In typical Saudi manner, authorities forced citizens to respect the ban on creating and publishing photos and recordings of curfew violations. Breaking the order could result in punishment of up to five years imprisonment and exorbitant fines.





Despite numerous preparations and innovative solutions in places, Saudi Arabia did not protect itself against the negative economic effects of the pandemic. To stabilize budget revenues, authorities increased value-added taxes and customs duties on imported food.

### COVID-19 AS A POLITICAL TOOL

MENA authorities soon realized not only the health, economic and societal risks of the global virus, but also the political benefits it could bring. At the beginning of March 2020 in **Lebanon**, where there had been ongoing protests demanding a technocratic government, authorities banned mass events. Schools and colleges, which had played a significant role in organizing the protests — led mainly by the younger generations — were closed as well. To keep public order, mixed patrols of the army and internal security services were implemented and entitled to check the identification of citizens and use coercive measures or detention. Limiting the possibility of protests allowed the government to work to save the country from collapse and implement reforms required by the international community, a condition for receiving international aid. Despite the atmosphere of the persistent epidemic threat, intensifying social protests in more urbanized regions resumed in July. In the opinion of authorities, the protests created a situation that risked spreading the virus. Lebanese authorities have used COVID-19 to distract from the deepening political and economic crisis in the country and the failure of the main political blocs to build consensus and form a new government.

Believers prepare for the noon prayer at the newly reopened Am Rahma mosque in Algiers, Algeria, in August 2020, as the country eased COVID-19 restrictions. REUTERS

The COVID-19 pandemic, one of **Algeria's** biggest challenges, paradoxically constituted salvation for the authorities and, in retrospect, significantly helped the government to restore the country's internal stability. Stigmatized by protesters for failing to fulfill election promises, the new government gained tools to suppress the Hirk social street movement, which since February 2019 has been demanding the resignation of politicians associated with the former president's regime. A ban on gatherings and the requirement to quarantine solved a theoretically unsolvable problem at no cost, both in terms of image and the economy. Algerian authorities assigned blame for the developing pandemic on the relentless Hirk, which they believe greatly contributed to the spread of the virus. They also called for an end to excessive use of public spaces, alleging support for the movement from third countries. Soon authorities adopted a repressive attitude toward the protesters. On the viaducts over the highways to Algiers, the number of national gendarmerie observation posts increased to respond to crowds heading to join Hirk protests. The virus's spread was quickly used by President Tebboune to temporarily restrict civil liberties. Contrary to previous assurances of respect for Hirk, Tebboune strictly banned organizing and participating in rallies and marches, totally freezing Hirk activity.



## LESSONS LEARNED

**Lebanon's** efforts to fight COVID-19 are undeniable, although the consequences of concealing the real state of the disease in the first few weeks hindered any attempt to slow the infection's spread. The second wave that started in September exceeded the worst expectations, mainly due to the high percentage of people requiring hospitalization in intensive care units. A new crisis management plan, broken down into security zones, mainly aimed at fighting the virus ad hoc without presenting any reasoned strategy. Imposing obligations on the Army that are completely unrelated to its statutory tasks has disrupted the balance between protecting the nation's security and fighting terrorism. This situation could easily be exploited by neighboring countries, terrorist groups or religious militias, or lead to a potential junta. The state's biggest problem, however, was its inability to control a society that did not comply with restrictions. As Health Minister Hamad Hasan admitted in November 2020, partial blockades did not bring the expected results.

Lebanese authorities did not use the experiences gained during the first wave, instead repeating the reactive fight against the virus's spread. This contributed to a significant deterioration of the situation during the second wave of infections in the fall, at a time conducive to much faster transmission. In light of the decisions made by authorities, the effectiveness of the implemented programs largely depended on the discipline of citizens, which left much to be desired. On the other hand, imposing draconian restrictions on all sectors of the economy resulted in a significant decrease in quality of life, the loss of jobs and even livelihoods by many Lebanese who, frustrated, began to worry more about taking care of their families than being infected.

In **Algeria**, a lack of information about COVID-19 caused Algerians to disregard the fast-growing threat. Authorities allowed life on the streets to continue as it did before the pandemic, despite the announced restrictions. State media adopted a strategy of blaming foreigners and tourists for spreading the virus in Algeria. The president granted powers to prosecute those who spread disinformation and panic, such as calls to buy and hoard large amounts of food. On one hand, this action provided an effective tool for fighting disinformation; on the other, it was also useful in the authoritarian fight against societal opposition. Contrary to chaotic Lebanon, the Algerian government conducted a decisive and well-coordinated mobilization of crisis management units, which may become an example for other countries. Most likely, this was due to a centralized system of power concentrated in a narrow group of decision-makers.

Another example worth appreciating is the government's control of the market to eliminate the shortage of necessary foods, which helped reduce panic among the citizens. Despite the growing number of COVID-19 cases in Algeria, Prime Minister Djerad, after consulting with ministerial units, expanded the list of permitted forms

of commercial activity deemed necessary for society, thus preventing an economic collapse, and the Directorate-General for Taxes announced new measures to mitigate the effects of the crisis on enterprises. The government, under an accelerated procedure, facilitated the import of goods to counter the epidemic. Another lesson was the government's loss of vigilance in the cyber realm while dealing with the pandemic, which allowed hackers to access sensitive information about state-owned companies.



Hairdressers work on a customer in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, after the COVID-19 lockdowns were lifted in June 2020. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Among these countries, **Saudi Arabia** coped the best with the successive waves of COVID-19, learning from the mistakes of Euro-Asian countries and drawing appropriate conclusions. Unlike Lebanon or Algeria, Saudi authorities did not hide the presence of the virus and immediately began implementing measures to reduce its transmission. Restrictions on suspect visitors from other countries reduced the number of cases from the very beginning. Saudi Arabia took steps to lessen the risk of virus transmission from Yemen and supported its southern neighbor, which would not have been able to cope without outside assistance.

As a lesson learned, Saudi Arabia should examine a policy in Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman's Vision 2030 plan that includes a policy for reducing the number of foreigners in the domestic labor market. As this crisis highlighted, about 80% of doctors and nurses in the kingdom are foreigners who turned out to be irreplaceable during the pandemic. The Saudi success was helped by the provision of medical care for its citizens and the effective implementation of a virus-testing project. Contrary to the authorities in some European countries, the Saudis approached the downward trend of cases with a great deal of rationalism, while obtaining information from around the country and maintaining full control of the situation. Authorities also efficiently denied fake news, allowing Saudi Arabia to maintain peace and discipline. □

# MANAGING PANDEMICS

## WHAT ARMED FORCES CAN DO

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By Dr. John L. Clarke, Marshall Center professor

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**T**he pandemic has caused leaders across the globe to turn to their armed forces for support in an ever-expanding range of roles. As the COVID-19 crisis progressed and the tragedy intensified, armed forces assumed roles never before anticipated as countries reached the limits of what their civilian health organizations could provide. These demands are expected to mount even as the crisis abates. The range of roles, missions, tasks and functions of armed forces during this crisis can be placed within six mission sets under the Defense Support to Civil Authority (DSCA) rubric. Decision-makers must contemplate important considerations before asking the armed forces to undertake these roles.

Many of the tasks inherent in the DSCA have been prominent in the demands from political leaders for armed forces support during the pandemic, such as providing essential services (often logistical and medical) as well as search capabilities, decontamination operations and engineering support. For example, armed forces in Italy, Spain, France and the United States, just to name a few, have built and staffed medical facilities, transported virus patients, delivered food supplies, searched buildings for victims, and decontaminated residences and public facilities, such as train stations and airports.

In addition, armed forces have provided mortuary services, including the transportation and cremation of virus victims' remains.

Photos show convoys of Italian Army trucks loaded with coffins. Soldiers have provided medical support to overwhelmed facilities. Photos also show soldiers administering tests for the virus, moving patients within hospitals and providing basic services, such as changing bed pans and providing meals, all in a contaminated environment. French military aircraft, equipped for medical evacuation, have transported

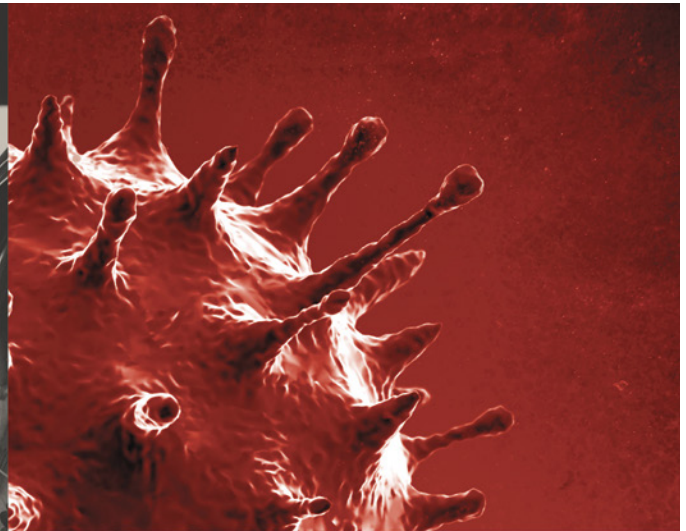
virus patients to less-stressed medical facilities in France. As societies come under increasing — and unrelenting — pressure due to the pandemic, political leaders are increasingly turning to the armed forces to provide support for their police and security forces as well as for stressed medical and public health organizations. The range of roles and tasks that armed forces personnel are being called upon to support is expanding rapidly and will have significant impacts on the ability of those military organizations to perform their principal missions as the COVID-19 crisis continues.

In Western countries, the armed forces have a long and honorable history of supporting civil authorities in coping with domestic contingencies. For many countries, particularly in Europe, supporting the civil authority is a principal military mission, equal to defending national security. In others, particularly in Africa and Asia, domestic issues are the principal focus of the national armed forces. Thus, the tradition of armed forces support for the civil authority — and in some cases even supplanting it — is well established.

The COVID-19 crisis of 2020-2021 has added another extreme dimension to this tradition; for the first time in many years, there has been talk of martial law in some countries should the political situation erode to the point where police and other law enforcement are unable to manage public security effectively. While still very much a nightmare scenario, if the crisis deepens, food may become scarce and the health threats so terrifying that law, order and stability begin to break down.

Short of that, national authorities are increasingly relying on military forces to take on a novel range of public tasks in response to the crisis. Given the trends in contemporary societies, it is worth exploring what political leaders are asking soldiers to do and where it may lead, for the demands on those forces are likely to grow.





## MISSIONS AT HOME

In the domestic context, there are essentially two mission sets: homeland defense and civil support. Homeland defense is the traditional task of defending the population, infrastructure and sovereignty of a nation against outside threats. This may involve such tasks as border defense (as differentiated from border security), air defense and defense of maritime approaches.

Of course, most military forces in NATO countries were designed for the Cold War mission of defending against the possibility of a Warsaw Pact attack; their legacy organization and equipment bear witness to this. However, while many European countries still retain relatively large numbers of soldiers on the books, they are not necessarily organized, configured, trained and equipped for modern, conventional, high-intensity operations.

In addition to homeland defense, NATO military forces have always been heavily involved in the second homeland mission, that of civil support, or DSCA. It supports civil authority, with responsibility and overall command remaining with that civil authority. These tasks include assistance to local authorities during disasters as well as support to law

enforcement authorities for select tasks. They may also include actions taken by the military to restore law, order and stability in the aftermath of a major catastrophe or an insurrection. Such operations may involve active and reserve forces as well as some specialized capabilities, such as airborne radar for border surveillance. In every event, the key is that civilians remain in control.

Some observers refer to this differentiation of roles in a domestic context as the tension between traditional and nontraditional roles. Inherent is the concept that homeland defense is the traditional role of armed forces, and all other undertakings are nontraditional in nature. However, this bifurcation fails to recognize that armed forces have been employed in many domestic roles, particularly domestic security roles, for centuries. The rise of professionalized, if not fully professional, armed forces is a fairly recent phenomenon, which drew upon the domestic security activities that European armed forces have long played. For example, many of today's militarized police forces, such as the French Gendarmerie, originated within and spent decades as part of their nation's armed forces, only having returned to their law enforcement roles in the post-World War II era.

Indeed, the range of tasks for armed forces has long been broad and continues to expand. Military forces have become in many instances a resource of choice for political leaders faced with intractable (often fiscal) problems, including many not related to national security or humanitarian relief.

Clearly, there are civil security tasks that armies can, should and must perform. Here we focus on identifying those domestic roles and tasks that are inherent to national armed forces, those that armed forces may be called on to support and those that are candidates for inclusion in this growing list, with particular emphasis on the role of armed forces in providing cyber security. But it is worth asking what tasks the army should not perform, as well. There are tasks for which military forces, for a variety of reasons, are not suitable. This is not to say that armed forces are incapable of performing them, merely that they are not consistent with what might be considered acceptable civil support tasks. Are there red lines beyond which armed forces ought not to tread?

## MANAGING PANDEMICS

As noted above, the range of roles and tasks that political leaders ask of the military in this crisis continues to burgeon. Armed forces are, despite their undeserved reputation for

rigidity, highly flexible instruments able to adapt to an extraordinary range of tasks. Much of this is due to the ability of leaders and soldiers to quickly reset and reorganize for tasks beyond their traditional combat roles. And armed forces are, in many ways, uniquely capable of responding to the demands of pandemic crises.

For example, they are almost always in a relatively high state of readiness, able to respond rapidly to emerging requirements. Unless they are engaged in other key missions, such as combat operations, they can be reoriented to civil support missions quickly. Readiness is one of the key attributes of military forces, and this can be leveraged in a time of rapidly escalating pandemic crises.

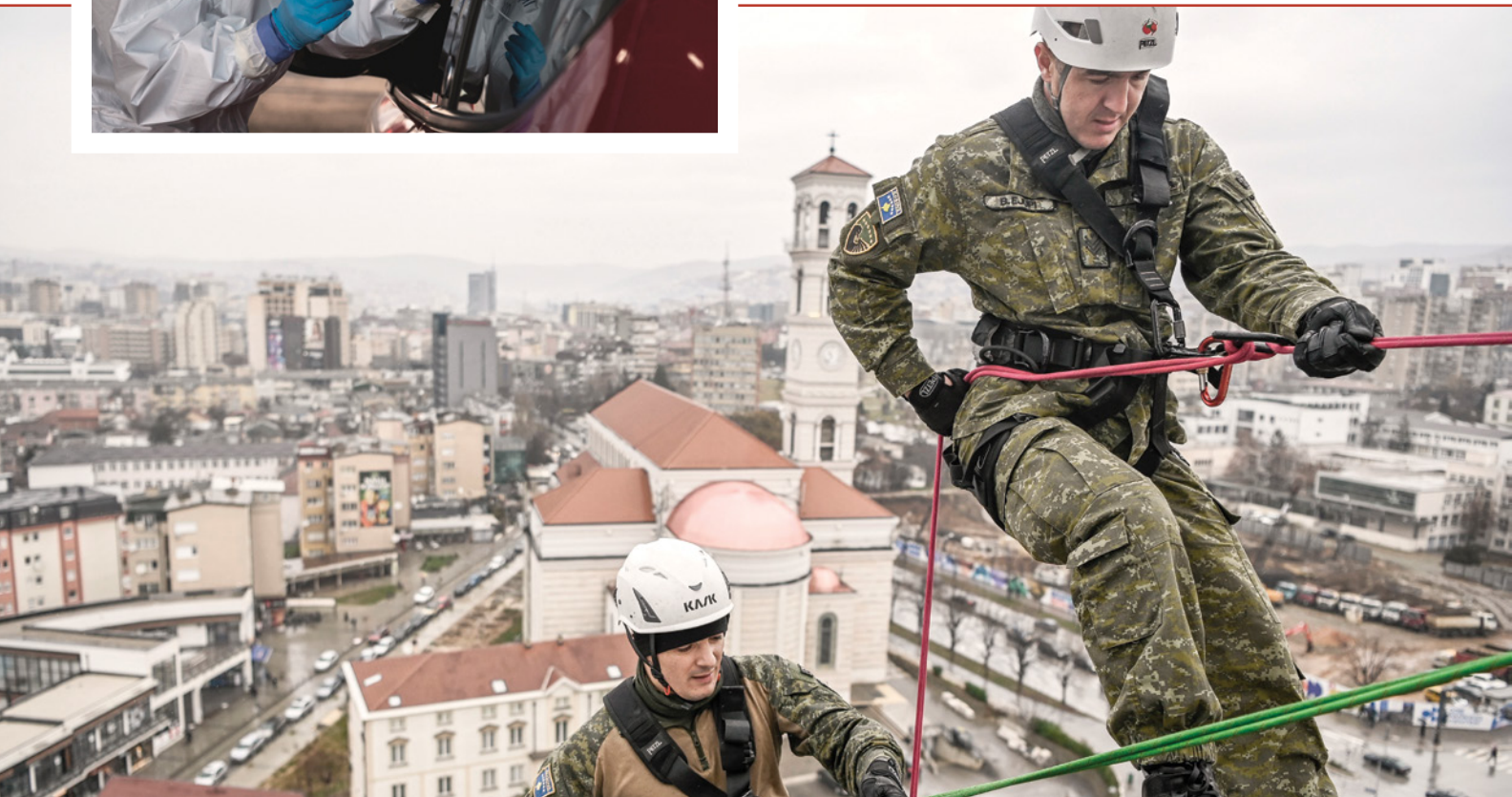
Moreover, they are able to provide their own logistical requirements. Military units almost always have their own transportation; they are generally able to provide their own food and water; they have, or can build, their own lodging; they can usually provide their own medical and health requirements; and they have their own dedicated communications capabilities that can prove critical in crises. This level of self-sufficiency is unusual for most kinds of emergency response organizations and is one reason that armed forces are so flexible.

Two other aspects of armed forces are also unique, and they may be of great importance during a pandemic. The



An Italian Army medical worker conducts COVID-19 testing at a drive-in site in Turin in January 2021. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Kosovo soldiers abseil down a building in Pristina in December 2020 to hang a giant banner thanking health workers on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic. AFP/GETTY IMAGES





## *Logical, straightforward criteria are clearly required to evaluate situations in which the armed forces might be used in domestic contingencies, particularly with regard to a pandemic.*

first is that armed forces are able to provide for their own security and for others. In crises, security is one of the highest priorities for leaders, and most other kinds of crises response organizations, aside from law enforcement, are consumers of security. Additionally, the armed forces are able to operate in contaminated environments. Their protective equipment usually exceeds minimum requirements in pandemics, and personnel are trained to carry out their duties in contaminated situations. Military medical facilities established to support the civilian effort are often better prepared to operate in such environments than are the civilian facilities.

Most prominent among the roles and missions for armed forces in support of civil authorities in pandemic management is providing medical capabilities. This includes establishing and operating military medical facilities to care for pandemic patients as well as providing medical personnel to civilian medical facilities to expand or sustain their capabilities. Many civilian hospitals have experienced overwhelming numbers of patients requiring high level care, and military medical personnel can assist. Notable examples include the deployment of U.S. Navy hospital ships to New York and Los Angeles, as well as the deployment of German Army personnel to nursing homes.

Other medical-related tasks include logistical support to civilian medical institutions, such as providing food and water, as well as the transportation of infected individuals from overcrowded facilities to less-stressed ones, often by air. Armed forces may also assist in testing and inoculating populations for diseases. This may include the transportation to and storage of vaccines in special facilities. For example, the Austrian Armed Forces recently helped manage an effort to test the Austrian population for COVID-19.

Last, armed forces may assist in managing contaminated mortal remains. The Italian Army was tasked with transporting and disposing of the remains of many Italian citizens who died of the disease and whose remains could not be managed by overwhelmed civilian mortuary service providers. This may include the provision of refrigerated storage facilities.

Of course, military medical facilities and personnel are not optimized for pandemic outbreaks, but rather for battlefield trauma operations. Moreover, using military medical facilities and personnel to support civilian facilities inevitably affects the military's ability to provide medical services to its own forces.

The second major task for armed forces in pandemic management is support of law enforcement. Depending on the extent of the disease and the rules governments employ to

control its spread, situations may arise that call for increased law enforcement. The requirements may exceed the capabilities of existing law enforcement organizations. For example, it may be necessary to provide traffic control for testing stations or immunization sites. Soldiers may be called upon to provide support for these activities to permit law enforcement officers to focus on other issues.

Other law enforcement functions the armed forces may assist with include border security, particularly when borders are closed due to a pandemic, and security for other first responders. For example, firefighters have been attacked when responding to fires, and the armed forces may be called upon to support them.

Depending upon the severity of the pandemic, the armed forces may need to support law enforcement in managing civil disturbances. Populations may panic, and the police may need the support of the armed forces. This support may be logistical or, in extreme cases, may include crowd control measures. In the most extreme of cases, crowd violence may require the use of force to limit the spread of the disease. Obviously, use of force, particularly deadly force, to enforce pandemic management measures is a matter of extreme concern.

It is important to note that, whatever the circumstances, armed forces should always be employed in support of law enforcement, and not in place of them. There may be instances in which soldiers take over some law enforcement functions, but such employment should remain under the command and control of civil authorities. Only as an absolute last resort should military leaders assume political responsibility, and then only until such control can be returned to the civil authority.

This discussion does not exhaust the range of tasks that armed forces may be called upon to execute. For example, in some countries, the armed forces have been asked to conduct decontamination operations in areas affected by viruses, as well as to conduct search and recovery operations when citizens, particularly elderly ones, fail to appear over time and may be sick. Similarly, air forces may be employed to conduct repatriation flights for citizens stranded by disease control measures in foreign countries.

### **CRITERIA FOR DECISION-MAKERS**

Logical, straightforward criteria are clearly required to evaluate situations in which the armed forces might be used in domestic contingencies, particularly with regard to a pandemic. There are six considerations that should be



examined in vetting requests for assistance. Of course, it is recognized that in some countries and at some times, these criteria may be overlooked or ignored if the threat of catastrophic disease is significant enough.

The first and foremost consideration is legality. Each request should be evaluated in terms of compliance with the laws of that state and its international commitments. Is the request and the manner in which it has been made compliant with the laws of the land, in particular with the constitution and those laws which have been established to govern the employment of the armed forces? While many states, such as Germany and the U.S., have laws restricting the domestic deployment of their armed forces, others, notably France, do not. There may also be exceptional events, such as major catastrophes or outbreaks of highly contagious diseases, resulting in the breakdown of law and order, which may require capabilities that only the military can provide, even if that employment contravenes the legal construct. While this has not yet been the case with the COVID-19 crisis, it cannot be excluded, particularly as unemployment rises and if access to food becomes difficult.

The second consideration is lethality. This is the issue of whether the military may be required, as part of providing support, to use force, particularly deadly force. The use of force in domestic contingencies is fraught with danger, as discussed previously. Lethality also considers the possibility that force may be used against those military forces engaged in DSCA efforts. The potential need to use force may require that the military have special equipment and training and be issued appropriate rules of engagement that govern the use

Hungarian Army recruits participate in a training exercise at the military camp in Győr in May 2020. The Hungarian military implemented a program to create jobs in the depleted COVID-19 economy by starting a special volunteer reservist military service. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

of force. As a general rule, military forces in support of civil authorities should avoid the use of deadly force except in extreme situations. Nevertheless, circumstances may require engagement in potentially lethal activities in self-defense or to prevent greater harm to the population, as might be the case in an outbreak of a highly contagious and deadly epidemic. If it were to become necessary to enforce quarantine orders, the use of force may be necessary, with all of the implications of such a decision.

Risk is the third consideration governing the use of armed forces in DSCA. While similar to lethality, risk is more concerned with the safety of the soldiers. It seeks to evaluate whether there is enhanced risk to the safety and health of soldiers who may be exposed to harmful agents, such as biological or chemical toxins, or be required to undertake hazardous acts, such as rescuing civilians or extinguishing large fires. For example, supporting civil authorities in the COVID-19 crisis may expose soldiers to the virus itself; likewise, decontaminating an area with radiation or chemical contamination poses risks to the force given this task. Risk further seeks to determine the long-term effects on the force, both physical and psychological, of carrying out tasks that may be disagreeable, such as the collection and disposition of large numbers of bodies after a major disaster



or pandemic. Putting soldiers on the streets in uniform can provide a sense of increased security, but it may render them more vulnerable to attack.

Readiness is the fourth consideration in deploying military forces on DSCA missions. Armed forces exist to defend the nation against external threats; to the extent that they are engaged in DSCA tasks, they may not be available to carry out national defense. Undertaking DSCA tasks that have little relationship to military functions, such as, say, trash collection, and which may be of long duration, may lead to some erosion of primary military skills, such as tank gunnery or artillery fire support, which will require time, effort and resources to recover. Readiness also seeks to measure the opportunity costs associated with the military's ability to perform other military and DSCA functions. If the army, or parts of it, is engaged in DSCA tasks, it may not be available to perform other tasks in a reasonable amount of time. During the pandemic, the recruitment and training of new members is also likely to be negatively affected.

The fifth consideration for evaluating a request is cost. The issue of who pays for the military's involvement in DSCA is of great, and increasing, importance. Many DSCA missions and tasks can involve considerable expenditure of resources. When the military provides disaster relief support to civil authorities, it may involve significant costs for supplies, transportation and personnel. In Europe, these costs are, in some cases, borne by the ministry of defense itself; in others, the ministry of defense expects reimbursement for some or all of those costs by the ministry or agency to which assistance was provided. These considerations should be laid out well in advance of the need for the military's support.

With respect to the current health crisis, the costs incurred by the armed forces are likely to be substantial — and unlikely to be readily reimbursed. Since engagement of the armed forces is likely to be long term, it would seem evident that the forces will be required to pay for their operations out of existing funding, supplemented to a degree by other appropriations. But the armed forces should not expect to see much in the way of additional funding for COVID-19 support operations.

The last consideration is appropriateness. It seeks to answer the question of whether it is right, or seen by the public to be right, for the military to carry out a DSCA task. This is connected to the larger issue of the image of the armed forces. Appropriateness is also concerned with whether conducting the task is in the interest of the ministry of defense. In cases of disaster relief, the military almost always will answer in the affirmative, but there are instances, particularly those involving the potential use of lethal force against citizens, that may be viewed by the military as inappropriate and detrimental to its image.

The response of armed forces to the challenges of the COVID-19 emergency has almost exclusively been applauded by populations everywhere, even when forceful methods to ensure security and safety have been required. It is to be expected that, absent a requirement to use force against the public, this will continue to be the case.



U.S. Army medical specialists test soldiers' COVID-19 samples during Phase II of the Defender-Europe 20 military exercises at Drawsko Pomorskie Training Area in Poland in July 2020. JASON JOHNSTON/U.S. ARMY

While these six criteria are those which most often govern the military's evaluation of a request for assistance, there may be others, such as whether the military has the capacity, in terms of numbers of soldiers or their training, to provide assistance. The military, because of deployments or other engagements, may simply lack the surge capability to provide support.

One further consideration is the issue of unique capability. As a general rule, the military should be asked to provide DSCA support only when it has a unique capability, not resident in type or numbers in other agencies. A typical example involves the provision of decontamination support. Most other agencies lack the military's capability for chemical or biological decontamination; therefore, it may be appropriate to request military support in the event of such an incident. COVID-19 support operations may require capabilities that only the armed forces possess in sufficient quantities, such as soldiers with protective clothing and equipment.

## CONCLUSION

It should be clear that the armed forces represent a huge capacity for decision-makers to consider when confronted by pandemic disease crises. The armed forces have a range of capabilities, many of them unique, that can make a critical difference in a state's ability to survive a crisis such as COVID-19. The increasing trend to continue adding to the nonmilitary roles of armed forces, while of great importance, is not without costs, which at some point must be considered.

There is frankly little question that, as demands on medical services grow and the economic environment continues to deteriorate, political leaders will turn increasingly to their armed forces to carry out an ever-increasing range of roles. This will include more and different types of security tasks in addition to other technical and medical functions. We should applaud the ability and readiness of soldiers to do so. These contributions should not be forgotten when the crisis has passed. □

# *THE RAPIDS* *and* IMPLICATIONS

The Consequences of COVID-19  
in the Post-Soviet Space







A man with a face mask to protect against coronavirus looks at the feet of a famous sculpture of Atlas at the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg in May 2020.

By Dr. Pál Dunay, Marshall Center professor | Photos by The Associated Press

The coronavirus that dominated the 2020 agenda and continues to have major influence in 2021 caused the loss of millions of human lives, resulted in the loss of national incomes and in some cases contributed to political instability. It has noticeably contributed to the ongoing adjustment of power relations among the most influential states in the world. This article looks at the consequences of COVID-19 and the way 12 states that were once constituent republics of the Soviet Union bore its burden and reacted to the challenge. It considers the medical situation while it focuses on the socioeconomic and political consequences, with an emphasis on similarities and dissimilarities.

### Pandemic With Regional Particularities

Thirty years have passed since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, an “amalgamated” community of putative republics with no sovereignty. But belonging to the Soviet state also meant there were certain standards that the republics could benefit from and that have residual relevance for the COVID-19 pandemic. Among them:

1. Although the Soviet health care system was not the most modern or the best organized, it was large and provided basic treatment on a standard level. Medical education was of fairly high quality. The post-Soviet republics lost some of these advantages. However, the fact that most of them did not modernize their health services or rely on shorter, technology-based treatments, such as one-day surgeries or other outpatient treatments, meant that many had a fairly high number of hospital beds available when the pandemic hit, with Belarus, Ukraine and Russia having the most (10.8, 7.5 and 7.1 beds per thousand inhabitants, respectively). The number of medical doctors per thousand inhabitants presented a different picture, with Georgia, Belarus and Armenia having the most (7.1, 5.2 and 4.4 per thousand, respectively).
2. The use in the Soviet Union of the Bacillus Calmette-Guérin (BCG) vaccine against tuberculosis seems to provide some protection. In July 2020, medical science recognized a possible link between that vaccine and a reduction in severe COVID-19 cases, particularly in the elderly. BCG vaccinations continue to be mandatory in every former Soviet republic with reported cases, sending a message to vaccination skeptics.
3. The average life expectancy in the post-Soviet space is shorter than in more developed countries. On a list of 174 countries, the 12 states are ranked in life expectancy between a high of 81 (Armenia) and a low of 129 (Turkmenistan). Russia is 111th on the list, with a female life expectancy of 77.6 and a male life expectancy of 68.2 years. This means that the older generation represents a smaller portion of the population in the former Soviet region than in Western Europe, North America or Japan. Because of that, fewer older people were exposed to a pandemic that hit the elderly more severely than other population groups.

4. The post-Soviet republics inherited a high degree of civil obedience that was maintained by various authoritarian regimes following the breakup. Whether people followed the rules voluntarily or because they saw no alternative is of secondary importance for this analysis.
5. A low level of trust in the health services in much of the post-Soviet space conversely has been a contributing factor to the lower number of recorded fatalities. People knew that going to the hospital meant putting their lives in the care of a health service that may be unable to guarantee their survival.

### Socioeconomic Consequences of the Pandemic

Most states in the former Soviet space reacted similarly to the pandemic. They recognized that the situation was severe, cut international travel to a minimum, reduced human contact, closed schools and universities, banned cultural and sports programs, and requested that people keep distance from each other and not hold large gatherings, like weddings. Lockdowns were introduced and testing slowly started. Nine of 12 states followed mainstream solutions adopted by countries across the world. It is impossible to address each of the 12 states individually in the given framework here, so only a few are highlighted. Russia's multifold, although eroding, centrality in the post-Soviet space, and the fact that its gross domestic product (GDP) represents more than half of the region's total, requires that the presentation start there.

With its many hospital beds and large strata of medical professionals, Russia was well positioned to address COVID-19. However, it quickly became clear that the specialized knowledge necessary to treat COVID-19 patients was concentrated in a few population centers. To address the pandemic in other places, new hospitals had to be built at a rapid pace. Russia's economy appeared to be relatively resilient to the effects of the pandemic and lockdown in the first half of 2020. It had a budget surplus, foreign reserves of \$592 billion and a sovereign wealth fund amounting to \$174 billion. In addition, Russia had planned its budget based on an oil price of \$42 per barrel and oil prices were somewhat higher during most of the second half of 2020. However, the Kremlin still faced a decision. It wanted to avoid a depletion of its financial reserves that would potentially expose it to pressure from the West. Therefore, it allocated only 2.8% of GDP to an emergency aid package for the public. Only 3% of this package was designated to support small- and medium-size businesses and workers, according to Russian political scientist Lilia Shevtsova. Russian President Vladimir Putin made some minor attempts to redistribute the financial burden by ending a flat income tax rate and increasing the tax rate for the highest earners, from 13% to 15%. However, these are regarded as little more than a cosmetic demonstration of solidarity.

Russia wanted to avoid a second lockdown in the fall of 2020. It had left some production sites open even during the worst moments of the pandemic. Oil and gas production and diamond mining (the latter representing 28% of the world's production) never stopped, illustrating Russia's intention to



Federal workers disinfect a platform in the Leningradsky railway station in Moscow in May 2020.

guarantee a continuing inflow of cash. Diamond mining stands out because production was suspended everywhere else in the world, which helped Russia's profits. Although Russia's economy contracted in 2020, it was only about minus 4%, a reassuring result when compared internationally. It is clear that Russia can preserve a sustainable economy. However, it will be sustainability with a relatively low economic growth rate (projected at 2.8% in 2021) that will make some highly ambitious development plans impossible to realize.

A closer look at Russia's performance during the first year of the pandemic finds mixed results. Russia followed mainstream solutions enacted elsewhere in the world. It introduced a six-week lockdown between late March and mid-May 2020, when 30% of its labor force was teleworking. It increased the number of hospital beds with ventilators (reaching 31,000). Federal health care spending increased by approximately \$13 billion. Following a very difficult period in late autumn and early winter 2020, the occupancy of hospital beds was reduced to 69.2%, according to official Russian sources. Russia also introduced a tax exemption for medical products.

The Russian Federation performed poorly in two areas: First, it did not support small- and medium-size enterprises sufficiently, which resulted in the closing of 1.1 million companies. However, the government opened a centralized digital website (Opора Rossii) to help those small-business





owners, and there is reason to assume that at least some of those companies will reopen. Second, and more worrying for Russia, is that foreign direct investment (FDI) nearly collapsed in 2020. Whereas the inflow of FDI reached \$31.7 billion in 2019 (a massive increase from \$13 billion in 2018), it was reduced to \$1.2 billion in the first half of 2020 (compared to \$16 billion in the first half of 2018). Because of that, Russia should consider the economic consequences of its political decisions.

**Georgia** is perhaps the country that has moved furthest from the old Soviet mentality in the 21st century. It is one of few countries praised by the United Nations for its fight against COVID-19. Georgia's success is attributed to the strategy taken by its medical experts. Georgian experts, aware of the weaknesses in the health care system, realized that the country lacked sufficient equipment and personnel to deal with the pandemic. They decided to slow the spread of the disease in a strict, immediate and systematic manner, employing three main tactics. First, Georgia quickly canceled all flights to and from China and introduced strict measures to identify, track and quarantine travelers, particularly those from severely affected countries. The government also benefited from having modern biological laboratories to conduct rapid testing. Second, all schools were closed, gatherings of more than



Russia aggressively promoted its Sputnik V vaccine.



three people were banned, a night curfew was imposed and nonessential businesses locked down. The government took those measures at the expense of the economy. In the end, its GDP contracted by 5% in 2020. Third, the authorities held a massive information campaign to convince people to stay at home and comply with restrictions. Although in the end, the country reported more than 3,000 deaths in 10 months, the way it addressed the public made the country distinctly different from other post-Soviet states.

In **Belarus**, President Alexander Lukashenko made pronouncements true to the image he has always intended to project, that of a macho man. His advice on how to fight COVID-19 was extremely simple: He characterized the pandemic as a “psychosis,” and went so far as to suggest remedies such as “drinking vodka, taking saunas and playing ice hockey.” Lukashenko’s rhetoric aside, the reality of Belarus’ reaction was more complex. Belarus benefited from a high number of hospital beds. In addition, unlike in several other former Soviet states, the quality of the medical personnel was largely preserved after the Soviet breakup.

Belarus, with a population of 9.5 million, conducted nearly 4.26 million COVID-19 tests between May 2020 and January 2021. Although more than 236,000 people were infected, about 221,000 recovered. The number of fatalities remained below 1,700, according to the country’s official

numbers. Instead of a lockdown, the country’s Ministry of Health issued recommendations for COVID-19 prevention and physical distancing. Despite the president’s pronouncements, it appears that Belarus successfully addressed the health hazards of COVID-19.

The broader economic, social and international repercussions were more mixed for Belarus. Because the country attempted to weather the pandemic without a lockdown, Western countries warned against travel to and from Belarus. Russia, the country’s most important neighbor, closed its border between March and July. A gradual easing of the restrictions helped to relieve the economic impact in crucial areas, like the Russian-built nuclear power plant in Belarus that was put into operation during this period. Lukashenko claimed there were three factors that contributed to the economic difficulties: first, the relatively low price of crude oil and the declining demand for Belarusian oil products due to the contraction of the world market; second, the cost of treating COVID-19 patients; and third, the rallies protesting his presidential election. It is evident that Belarus used COVID-19 as an excuse for its existing economic malaise. The coexistence of factors, including the decadelong economic stagnation, the rapid decline of political support for Lukashenko, and a rejection by many of the “socialist/communist” political model, is an indication that the times of heated political tension are far from over.



Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, right, speaks with medical staff at a hospital near Minsk that treats COVID-19 patients.



In 2020, Russia provided Belarus with a \$500 million loan and also forgave \$1 billion of debt. This helped Belarus regain stability during protests against Lukashenko and demonstrated Russia's support of Belarus. During the COVID-19 crisis, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) provided Belarus with \$90 million. However, a much larger support package in the range of \$940 million was not agreed upon because the IMF required quarantine, isolation and curfew measures. Lukashenko called the conditions unacceptable. The European Union allocated funds to Eastern Partnership states, including 60 million euros for Belarus, with a reminder of the benefits of bilateral cross-border cooperation with neighboring EU member states.

**Tajikistan** did not immediately recognize the pandemic's challenges and took only partial measures. Tajik citizens were evacuated from Wuhan, and Chinese citizens in Tajikistan were monitored medically and later quarantined. It was apparent the Tajik health services would have been overwhelmed had COVID-19 reached the country on a large scale. Tajikistan published very low infection numbers, identifying many as suffering from pneumonia and dying because of illnesses other than COVID-19.

Tajikistan has among the lowest per capita GDP among former Soviet republics. Some population segments suffer from malnutrition and the country had to rely on help with basic commodities, including 6,000 tons of wheat flour (5,000 from Kazakhstan, 1,000 from Uzbekistan). When taking a closer look at the assistance Tajikistan received, it becomes clear that its partners, including China, Iran, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and German nongovernmental organizations, such as Caritas Germany, preferred to provide masks, gowns, ventilators, testing kits and other medical support rather than provide financial assistance. This is understandable when considering the level of corruption and the political system. Even the IMF limited its emergency financing to \$240 million, the equivalent of the IMF's quota for Tajikistan and a relatively small sum.

Tajikistan's heavy dependence on remittances from its migrant laborers aggravated the economic situation, especially when Russian firms laid off Tajik *gastarbeiters* (guest workers). The situation became so severe that the Tajik ambassador to Russia requested that large companies discontinue the practice because the missing remittances were a burden on the troubled economy.

**Turkmenistan** did not adopt the preventive measures accepted by many other countries. Although Ashgabat suspended all flights to and from China and Thailand, and then denied entry to foreigners infected by COVID-19, no other measures were taken. A distinguishing feature of Turkmenistan's response is banning the term coronavirus. At the same time, President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, a dentist by training, recommended that people use traditional medical methods to treat the virus, such as the burning of an herb, claiming it could kill viruses "invisible to the naked eye." So confident were the Turkmenistani authorities, and so

farical their pandemic denialism, that 3,500 people gathered to celebrate World Health Day in April 2020 without taking precautionary measures against the spread of the disease.

The authorities established a team of medical experts to prevent an outbreak, with a focus on schools. Near the end of April 2020, the country's minister of foreign affairs claimed there were no COVID-19 cases in Turkmenistan. By mid-June, however, reports began to appear in social media about confirmed cases and later that month Human Rights Watch accused the government of "jeopardizing public health by denying an apparent outbreak of the coronavirus." Also that month, the U.S. Embassy in Turkmenistan said that citizens with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 were being placed in quarantine in infectious diseases hospitals, despite government claims to the contrary. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs responded by accusing the U.S. Embassy of spreading "fake news."

In July 2020, an official World Health Organization (WHO) mission arrived in Turkmenistan and later urged the government to adopt "measures as if COVID-19 were circulating;" to "fully investigate cases of acute respiratory infections and to step up testing for suspected cases of COVID-19." This was an extremely diplomatic way for the WHO to express its concerns. The government's denials, its refusal to provide the WHO with data, and its haphazard approach in countering the virus could have disastrous consequences for the country. Even into January 2021, no COVID-19 cases and deaths were reported by the government, meaning there is no way to adequately ascertain reality.

### International Cooperation, Vaccine Diplomacy

During a pandemic, it is understandable that countries would put their own people first and use their capacities domestically. After states are sufficiently reassured that they can cope with the domestic emergency, they then can reach out to others and offer support. However, Russia did not follow that sequence. As part of its recognition-seeking activities, Russia sent a highly publicized team to support anti-COVID-19 efforts in northwest Italy, where health and sanitary services were overwhelmed. But it was not the indispensable support Italy needed. The Russian team mainly engaged in cleaning and sanitizing social institutions and elderly homes. Nonetheless, it was a major public relations success for Russia that also drew attention to the EU's initial reluctance to help Italy.

Russia then turned its attention to its own medical emergency. In the summer of 2020, Russia reached out to former Soviet republics with offers of assistance in an effort to keep its influence in the region. A number of former Soviet republics had turned to other actors, including global and regional international financial institutions such as the IMF or the Asian Development Bank, and states such as China and the U.S. The EU also contributed assistance to its six eastern partners and to a lesser extent to the Central Asian states. The Russian support included deliveries of masks, gowns and visits by expert teams to some Central Asian countries. Kazakhstan also announced that it was ready to purchase and produce the Russian-produced Sputnik V vaccine.



Turkmen soldiers, dressed in national uniforms, celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Nazi defeat in World War II in Ashgabat in May 2020. Turkmen officials claim there are no COVID-19 cases in the country.

Russia was the first state to declare that it had invented a vaccine against COVID-19. But Putin's announcement in August 2020 was apparently premature and was not followed by the registration of the vaccine in Russia or beyond its borders. However, because Putin made the announcement, there was no way to take it back. It is clear there were disagreements inside the Russian leadership about making the announcement without proper testing, which eroded confidence among the public and other states. Months passed before vaccinations started in December 2020, and they weren't extended to the entire eligible population until mid-January 2021. Russia wanted to sell the vaccine globally, but that was only partly successful for a variety of reasons:

1. The first two trial phases were done without a placebo being administered.
2. The approval was granted before the vaccine had gone

through a third trial and there were no published results of the earlier trials.

3. Months separated Putin's announcement and the availability of the vaccine.
4. Timely delivery could not be guaranteed due to production problems.

When taking a closer look at Russia's effort to be competitive with its vaccine, the reasons for its partial failure are clear and manifold:

1. It did not follow universally established medical procedures.
2. It did not have an adequate communication strategy to dispel concerns reported in the international media.
3. It did not take into account that many people doubt the quality of Russian products.



4. It did not sufficiently consider that it was entering a highly competitive environment.

By January 2021, 13 states had agreed to buy the vaccine from Russia or produce it under license. They included three former Soviet republics (Belarus, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan), and a number of Latin American, Asian and African countries (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Egypt, India, Mexico, Nepal, South Korea with only local production under license for export, Serbia and Venezuela). Negotiations continued with other states that included Turkey, an important target for Russia.

One EU member state, Hungary, bought the vaccine. Hungary expressed its dissatisfaction with the speed of the delivery of vaccines produced in the West and ordered 2 million doses of Sputnik V. However, according to surveys, at the time only 6% of the Hungarian population was ready to be vaccinated by Sputnik V (the survey showed 52% for Pfizer-BioNTech and 26% for Moderna). And the so-called emergency use permission issued by Hungarian authorities was based not on Hungarian tests, but on data supplied by Russian institutions reporting interim results of phase-3 testing. The door probably opened for a wider acceptance of Sputnik V after a report in February 2021 in *The Lancet*, a reputable medical journal. Russian experts reported that phase-3 trials showed the vaccine was safe and 91.6% effective. The first Sputnik V doses arrived in Hungary that month. Although it was somewhat less trusted by the public than Western-made vaccines — be it Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna or AstraZeneca — it was more trusted than the Chinese vaccine Hungary had ordered in large quantities.

Sputnik V also caused controversy in countries considered unlikely customers, such as Ukraine. It was highly unlikely that Kyiv would purchase Sputnik V. However, the second largest political party in the Ukrainian Parliament, the pro-Russian Opposition Platform – For Life, used the opportunity to drive a wedge into Ukrainian society. Viktor Medvedchuk, its most visible leader, paid a high-profile visit to Russia, including meetings with Putin and those involved in the development, production and marketing of Sputnik V. Upon his return, he announced that Russia was ready to sell Sputnik V to Ukraine. The Ministry of Health declined the vaccine's registration with reference to its incomplete phase-3 testing. But the effort fit into Moscow's attempts to demonstrate that, unlike the West, it was willing to help Ukraine. The matter took a sudden turn in February 2021 when Ukraine's government effectively banned the Sputnik V vaccine and President Volodymyr Zelenskiy approved a decision by the National Security Defense Council to take the pro-Russian television channels ZIK, 112 Ukraine and NewsOne off the air, citing the hybrid war Russia is waging against Ukraine.

## Economic Recovery

Every man-made or natural disaster is followed by an economic recovery. According to economists, deferred demand by the public for goods and services and a need for reconstruction after wars and major natural disasters can spur

recovery. However, the severity and longevity of a crisis make a huge difference. If a second wave of COVID-19 is not as severe as predicted, economists can envision what is known as a V-shaped recovery, one that rebounds quickly. A more severe second wave would give way to the expectation of a recovery in the shape of the Nike swoosh logo (a slowing recovery, after an initial sharp upturn) or a W-shaped recovery that indicates a contraction.

Yet another possibility is a K-shaped recovery, with some sectors recovering more quickly than others. This is a realistic scenario after COVID-19, considering that some sectors will suffer for longer periods, such as the hospitality industry, and air, rail and bus transportation. However, the post-Soviet republics are not particularly exposed to contractions in the hospitality industry; some are among the world's least visited countries. Therefore, if vaccinations prove effective, there is a fair chance that the IMF's prediction will prove correct and that economic contractions in nine former republics in 2020 will be followed by GDP growth in 2021 in each of the 12 states.

In some of the former republics, economic recovery is also dependent on the recoveries of other countries, first and foremost Russia. Recovery in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, and to a lesser extent Armenia and Moldova, depend on Russia accepting migrant labor from those countries. There is good news in this respect because Putin, in early 2021, tasked the government to facilitate the entry of citizens from countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States to work in the construction sector. This return of cheap labor counteracts the growing distance between Russian society and the societies of former Soviet republics.

## Conclusions

Most former Soviet republics adopted the same methods to contain the pandemic that were adopted across the world. The COVID-19 pandemic coincided with instability in a number of states, including Armenia, Belarus and Kyrgyzstan. However, dissatisfaction with the management of the pandemic did not appear to contribute to that instability.

The economies of the 12 states coped with the challenge, although their responses demonstrated the limits of their capacity to provide support to society's most severely challenged strata and to small- and medium-size enterprises. In some cases, this will contribute to further divisions and increase poverty. Although labor migration was interrupted for some time, that only caused problems for those states where migrant revenues form a large portion of the GDP. Due to the severe labor shortage in certain sectors of the Russian economy, a return to the pre-pandemic pattern can be expected.

International cooperation somewhat alleviated the socioeconomic problems that stemmed from the pandemic. Understandably, that cooperation did not play a decisive role in the pandemic's management. Russia helped some of its partners to demonstrate its *primus inter pares* (first among equals) role among the post-Soviet states. However, it is clear that its resources could not make a fundamental difference and could not sufficiently counterbalance the centripetal tendencies among the 12 states. □



# COVID-19 AND KYIV

## THE PANDEMIC AND ITS IMPACT ON UKRAINE

By **Cmdr. John "Eric" Ager**, U.S. Navy, Marshall Center professor

**T**he COVID-19 pandemic shuttered most of the world's economies and upended the regular conduct of government, diplomacy and international cooperation. While the impact of the crisis has been significant worldwide, it struck during a particularly difficult period for Ukraine, which faces a tough fight to reassert its sovereignty over the Donbas region and Crimea, while trying to reform its government and reduce corruption. Following the 2014 protests across Ukraine known as the Euromaidan revolution, which led to the departure of then-President Viktor Yanukovich, Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and a Russian-backed insurrection in the Donbas, Ukraine embarked on an ambitious effort to shift the orientation of its foreign policy and to reform its government, especially the defense establishment, in line with Euro-Atlantic principles.

### BACKGROUND

With the election of Petro Poroshenko as Ukraine's president in May 2015, and the subsequent victory of pro-Western

parties that fall, the government made a concerted shift toward European integration and began an ambitious reform agenda despite the continuing armed conflict in the Donbas. Though there were notable reforms in the years that followed, including passage of the Law on National Security, the Poroshenko government was hampered by the continuing conflict with Russian-backed separatists and a number of high-profile corruption scandals.

The waning ability of the Poroshenko administration to implement the changes demanded by the electorate led to a resounding victory for Volodymyr Zelenskyy, a new arrival to Ukrainian politics, in the 2019 presidential election and, initially, renewed energy in the government and society for reform. The Zelenskyy administration began with a lot of hope

Dr. Viktoriya Mahnych rides in the back of a horse-driven cart on her way to visit COVID-19 patients in the village of Verhovyna in western Ukraine in January 2021.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



and significant political capital stemming from an electoral victory with more than 70% of the vote. The new president started off auspiciously by appointing a number of prominent reform figures to serve in the government, including Oleksiy Honcharuk as prime minister, Andriy Zagorodniuk as minister of defense, and Oleksandr Danylyuk as secretary of the National Security and Defense Council. Zelenskiy and his government, with a supermajority of his Servant of the People party in the Verkhovna Rada (parliament), took steps to directly confront the nation's challenges. They engaged in concerted diplomatic efforts to begin resolving the conflict in the Donbas; continued reforms in the judiciary and in the defense and security establishment; and confronted significant third-rail roadblocks to economic progress, such as land reform.

However, the new government's political honeymoon was short-lived. It quickly ran into difficult obstacles, including efforts by the country's oligarchs to reassert their influence, a lack of progress toward ending the conflict in the East, and an inability to rapidly modernize the economy. In March 2020, Zelenskiy moved to shake up the government, removing Honcharuk and a number of other government ministers, just as the pandemic was beginning to impact the world.

## COVID-19'S EMERGENCE

As the initial COVID-19 cases surfaced in Ukraine, new Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal and several other new ministers were just coming into office and struggling to gain political traction. According to the World Health Organization, the first death attributed to COVID-19 in Ukraine occurred on March 14, 2020, just 10 days after Shmyhal became prime minister. As the new government was seeking its footing in a difficult political environment and facing strong criticism from voices in the reformist community, they were forced to refocus their priorities on dealing with the threat of COVID-19. The response consumed the government. As time progressed, while Ukraine's experience with the virus was not notably worse than others in the region, it struggled to execute a common-sense public health strategy while preventing economic collapse.

The government executed a straightforward, standard strategy to deal with the virus in the early part of 2020, though the initial response caused some political turmoil. In February, when the Ukrainian government evacuated 45 citizens and 27 foreign nationals from Wuhan, China, and quarantined them in the town of Novi Sanzhary, it caused serious political unrest in the local population, which feared that the returnees were infected. As the crisis heightened, the new government implemented a three-week national quarantine on March 12, and Zelenskiy ordered the borders closed on March 13. The quarantine was eventually extended through May 11, 2020, when the restrictions began to be eased, but the decisions to close

the subways and public transportation to most citizens, as well as the closing of businesses, were politically unpopular. The health minister, who had been appointed along with the new government in early March, was replaced before the month was over. Though the government allocated \$221 million to pay unemployment benefits in April 2020, it was unable to prevent growing unrest in the business community. Like most countries, Ukraine was able to execute a limited easing of restrictions in May 2020, and air service began to return in June 2020, allowing embassy personnel who had evacuated to return. Of particular concern during the initial stages of the

**The full impact of the pandemic on Ukraine is not perfectly clear from our current historical perspective, but it is likely that the indirect effects will last longer than the direct effects.**

pandemic was how to limit the spread of the disease from the eastern parts of the country not under government control. To prevent spread in the Donbas region, the government closed the de facto border, preventing many in the conflict zone from reaching medical care and other necessary services.

Though the pandemic receded during the summer, cases began to rise in the winter, and the government, concerned about widespread travel for the holiday period, implemented another hard quarantine January 8-24, 2021. Significant overcrowding of the hospitals was prevented, but enforcement of the restrictions was uneven and Zelenskiy was criticized for taking selfies without a mask while visiting a ski resort in January. It remains to be seen whether the restrictions were enough to limit the impact of the virus until wide-scale vaccinations can return life to normal. As the pandemic and its effects continue around the world, it is clear that it is having an ongoing impact on Ukraine's delicate diplomatic position in international politics and on the progress of governmental reform, especially in the areas of justice and defense.

## INTERNATIONAL EFFECTS

Ukraine's international relationships play a critical role in the government's ability to defend the nation and develop it in a way that will lead to stability. Ukraine relies on support from the international community to maintain its economy and preserve its sovereignty. Its diplomats' ability to navigate shifting global power balances has an inordinate impact on Ukraine's economic and physical security, and the pandemic has exacerbated long-standing international challenges and created new dynamics. For instance, China is Ukraine's largest trading partner and Chinese investment is a key component of its economy. Balancing the need for investment from China with the need for security assistance from the U.S. and NATO — as global competition between these two parties intensifies — will not be easy.

Since vaccinations began in 2021, the Ukrainian government has had to manage competing international vaccine efforts. Russia's promotion of the Sputnik V vaccine and domestic political pressure to begin distribution have placed pressure on Ukraine's diplomats to satisfy citizens' demands without weakening its diplomatic position. The Western vaccines that have been rigorously tested and proven safe and effective are difficult to procure on the market. Pressure to pursue other options will continue until the crisis recedes. For example, Viktor Medvedchuk, leader of the Verkhovna Rada's pro-Russian opposition party, traveled to Russia and made a deal with the Russian Direct Investment Fund and the Sputnik V vaccine developer, Gamaleya Center, to manufacture the vaccine in Ukraine, a nontransparent Russian attempt to take advantage of the fact that the West had not yet provided vaccines to Ukraine. This forced Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba to come out strongly against the plan, claiming, "Russia doesn't care about the health of Ukrainians; it cares about forcing its own propagandist cliches and ideology via the supplies of the vaccine." The pandemic has created opportunities for Russian disinformation in a population ripe for political exploitation, and the government's ability to pursue effective policies will inevitably be impacted.

## A LOST YEAR

Much of the energy of the Euromaidan revolution grew out of a desire to reform Ukraine's legacy governmental structures, which had progressed little beyond their Soviet origin. The challenges are numerous: a judicial system easily

influenced by money and politics, a Defense Ministry and Armed Forces with inefficient command and control mechanisms, and a limited tradition of civilian and parliamentary oversight. Though the pandemic is not solely responsible for the waning of reform efforts in 2020, it shifted the government's focus toward dealing with the health crisis and away from efforts to implement reform within the government.

The Zelenskiy government had emphasized reform of the judiciary and worked to strengthen the Special Anti-Corruption Court since taking office, but as the pandemic struck, these efforts were already beginning to crumble under political pressure. The decision in March 2020 to replace well-respected Prosecutor General Ruslan Ryaboshapka with the controversial Iryna Venediktova, a political supporter of the president and member of his Servant of the People party, raised questions about the government's commitment to anti-corruption measures and judicial reform. A lack of consensus and the influence of oligarchs in the Verkhovna Rada, along with the pressure of the pandemic, made further legislative changes difficult and efforts to reform the judiciary were pushed back. The Constitutional Court's decision in the fall of 2020 to declare unconstitutional many of the activities of anti-corruption bodies put International Monetary Fund loans to Ukraine at risk and created a full-blown constitutional crisis as Zelenskiy fought to limit the court's authority. Overall, 2020 was not a productive year for transforming Ukraine's judiciary, an indirect result of the political turmoil created by the raging health crisis and its economic impact.

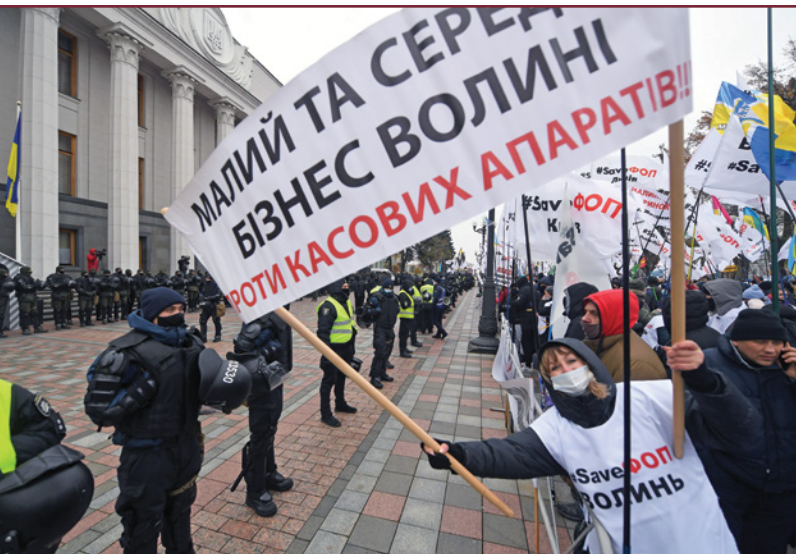
The ineffectiveness of Ukraine's Armed Forces was



Ukrainian lawmakers attend an extraordinary parliamentary session in Kyiv on March 30, 2020.

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Small-business owners protest outside the parliament in Kyiv, Ukraine, against government-imposed COVID-19 lockdowns and tax policy in November 2020. Some signs read, "Save small business" and "Save private entrepreneurs."

AFP/GETTY IMAGES



Ukrainian war prisoners, wearing masks to protect against COVID-19, cross a mine barrier during a prisoner exchange near the village of Mayorske in the Luhansk region of eastern Ukraine in April 2020. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

immediately apparent in 2014 as they struggled to respond to Russian-backed aggression in Crimea and the Donbas. Despite resistance from some military leadership, who pointed to the immediate necessity of fighting a war, then-Defense Minister Stepan Poltorak pushed for slow, steady reform and had some notable successes, including passage of the new Law on National Security and implementation of a process to transform the command and control system in line with NATO principles. Following Zelenskiy's election and the appointment as defense minister in August 2019 of the reform-minded Zagorodniuk, the Ministry of Defense introduced ambitious plans to push forward with reform of the command and control system, revamp the procurement process and reorganize the ministry. However, Zagorodniuk was replaced by retired Lt. Gen. Andrii Taran as part of the government shakeup just as the COVID-19 crisis hit Ukraine. Taran faced the immediate need to ensure the health of the force while supporting the government's COVID-19 response. These immediate challenges drove the ministry's agenda and slowed efforts to transform the decision-making processes within the defense establishment. The leadership shakeup at the Ministry of Defense and the challenges of dealing with the pandemic within the Armed Forces — and the country — inevitably slowed progress on reform.

Reforms in Ukraine may have stagnated in 2020 even without COVID-19, but the pandemic caused the dispersal of many international advisors who had been in Kyiv assisting and advising Ukrainian institutions on democratic reforms and holding the government responsible for progress. Additionally, the pandemic allowed ministers and senior officials to shirk the hard work of transforming their institutions because the crisis consumed scarce resources and the human capital essential to pushing ahead with reform. In the end,

2020 was a lost year in Ukraine's uneven march toward more effective governance and corruption prevention.

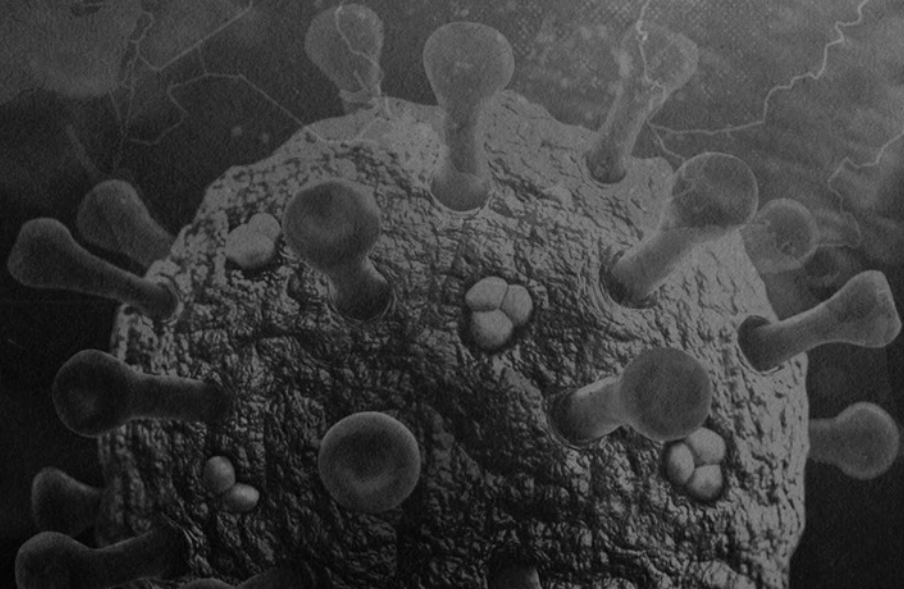
## CONCLUSION

The full impact of the pandemic on Ukraine is not perfectly clear from our current historical perspective, but it is likely that the indirect effects will last longer than the direct effects. The primary indirect effects have been the distraction of Ukraine's foreign partners, an increased sense of crisis within the government, and the government's loss of focus on reform. These challenges have clearly prevented Ukraine from making the progress in diplomacy and reform that might otherwise have been expected. The loss of momentum could have long-term effects on Ukraine's ability to turn the corner toward full Euro-Atlantic integration as enshrined in the policies of both post-Euromaidan governments.

Ukraine will face a difficult path in a world economy that is likely to emerge slowly from the pandemic, and in a region where the security situation remains unsettled. Though the political pressure to focus on near-term challenges is not likely to fade, the long-term success of the nation will require the government to refocus on its relationships with supporting partners in the trans-Atlantic community, on developing governmental mechanisms that are able to implement policies that improve people's lives, and on continuing to push for reform despite the inevitable setbacks that will occur. The pandemic has made the task more difficult, but the vision of a Ukraine that is whole and free within a stable Europe, a vision that has animated political life in Ukraine since the Euromaidan, will allow the government to meet the long-term expectations of Ukrainians. Progress is unlikely to proceed in a straight line, but the fits and starts of democracy in action will lead to steady improvement, despite the pandemic's emergence at the top of Ukraine's long list of challenges. □



# TRADE ROUTES AND SECURITY ALLIANCES







# THE POST-PANDEMIC SECURITY TERRAIN IN CENTRAL EURASIA

By Dr. Gregory Gleason, Marshall Center professor

As the human costs of COVID-19 mount on a global level, the world struggles with the immediate medical consequences and lives lost during this unprecedented pandemic. Medical organizations such as the World Health Organization and the Johns Hopkins University of Medicine Coronavirus Resource Center record the millions of infections worldwide. The numbers are expected to rise until populations develop sufficient immunity, either through natural means or through vaccines, to combat the spread of this dangerous virus. Until that point is reached, the only effective way to combat the virus is through reducing transmission. The only sure way to reduce transmission, in turn, is to reduce interaction and that means disrupting the interaction of people all around the world.

The disruptive effects of interrupted supply chains for goods and services in 2020 may have curtailed the transmission of COVID-19, but it also imposed severe constraints, depressing trade and commerce and having an exceptionally deleterious effect on the livelihoods of individuals and profits of businesses. Economic activity has been severely constrained, and national and state government revenues, which rely heavily on the turnover of commerce, have been dramatically curtailed. At the same time, states have faced soaring expenses for social protection programs.

While the success of counterinfection programs ultimately rests on the behavior of individuals and families, governments play a critical role in medical programs. National governments around the world are reeling from the economic costs of the pandemic and turning to international organizations for support. The events of 2020 have set in motion processes that will lead to a fundamental transformation of the global order. States face similar challenges, but the choices each makes will entail opportunities and risks that are quite different.

The broad region of Central Eurasia links the countries of the Far East and South Asia with the countries of the Middle East and Europe. Central Eurasia is often defined as including the countries of Central Asia and the South Caucasus: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan,

Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. All these countries have deep historical roots and are rich in natural resources and agricultural potential. But an important reason these relatively sparsely populated countries are of importance to the world as a whole is that their territory is a “land bridge” connecting the densely populated regions to their east and west and their north and south. Supply chains connecting the primary commodities and the trade in goods and services across the land bridge are of great and growing importance in contemporary globalization.



A man is helped to an ambulance outside a COVID-19 medical center in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, in July 2020. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

The COVID-19 pandemic magnified the importance of the Central Eurasian land bridge in the early part of 2020. As global transportation hubs drew to a standstill, air, rail, road and maritime connections throughout the Eurasian region either closed down or greatly reduced volume. Governments in China, Russia, Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan, as well as the Central Asian states and Caucasus states, implemented emergency measures, imposing curfews

in many urban areas and having law enforcement and even their militaries enforce strict lockdown measures. In all of the states, these measures have further magnified the interaction between political and economic challenges. State governments can disengage and seek self-reliance for only a limited time; eventually, economic and political relationships need to be restored to survive in today's highly globalized, technological world. The only way to restart state-to-state interaction is through multilateral cooperation.

Stable and productive regional communities typically arise from one of two motivating factors — political or economic values. The core political interest of states in regional interaction is national security. The core economic interest is trade and development. Both core goals are typically pursued through formal cooperative organizations. Regional international security communities arise out of common political concerns regarding the protection of national security interests. Regional economic communities arise because of commercial interests driving economic actors to engage states in creating and sustaining conditions favorable to international trade and commerce. In some cases, either the political or the economic factors are predominant, but in most cases the two interact and reinforce one another.

This reinforcement of economic and political factors tends to make formal regional institutions resilient and resistant to change. Economic actors become resistant to change, which implies economic loss, and political actors also become committed to continuity. The formalization of relations among states on a regional level, through the articulation of trade agreements and the establishment of security cooperation organizations, holds down economic transaction costs and ensures transnational political predictability. The establishment and proliferation of supply chains are the basic building blocks of modern, technologically advanced globalization.

#### **ECONOMIC DOWNTURN IN CENTRAL EURASIA**

The disruption of transnational and even transregional supply chains is a familiar historical phenomenon associated with epidemics. The spread of COVID-19, beginning in late 2019 and early 2020, was unprecedented in terms of the disruptive effects it had on interaction among countries. By March 2020, borders had closed around the world, bringing to a halt much of the supply-chain commerce between East and West, which traversed the countries of Central Asia and the South Caucasus. In rapid succession, the countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus imposed extraordinary measures, drastically

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A construction site in the central business district of Beijing. The Chinese-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank is part of China's efforts to challenge established international institutions. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS





**TABLE 1: COVID-19 CASES REPORTED TO THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION**

	<b>Population</b> (millions)	<b>Cumulative Cases</b> as of January 16, 2021	<b>Deaths</b> as of January 16, 2021
<b>Armenia</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>164,235</b>	<b>2,987</b>
<b>Azerbaijan</b>	<b>10.1</b>	<b>226,549</b>	<b>2,983</b>
<b>Georgia</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>247,025</b>	<b>2,916</b>
<b>Kazakhstan</b>	<b>18.7</b>	<b>211,901</b>	<b>2,885</b>
<b>Kyrgyzstan</b>	<b>6.6</b>	<b>82,986</b>	<b>1,382</b>
<b>Tajikistan</b>	<b>9.4</b>	<b>13,705</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>Turkmenistan*</b>	<b>6.0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Uzbekistan</b>	<b>34.2</b>	<b>77,904</b>	<b>619</b>

\* Turkmenistan did not provide data to WHO

Sources: Population data: Population Reference Bureau; COVID-19 case and death data: World Health Organization

reducing interaction of all forms and, in many cases, imposing lockdowns requiring individuals to shelter at home. Supply chains relying on transportation of goods and services were greatly restricted and, in some cases, simply halted. Measures were adopted, particularly in urban areas, to contain, mitigate and contact-trace transmission and provide therapeutic medical response. At the same time, staggering economic effects in terms of interruptions in the exchange of goods and services and the loss of incomes and revenues were borne particularly hard by the Central Asian and South Caucasus countries.

In the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, the specific features of how the virus was transmitted were not well understood. Governments imposed measures they expected to be necessary and sufficient to slow the spread of the disease. By and large, aggressive measures were justified by the dangers to public health. The experience of the first 10 months of the pandemic in Central Asia and the Caucasus (Table 1) illustrates that significant progress was made. To the extent that the data reported is accurate, the levels of infection are appreciably lower than in countries that were less assertive in adopting control measures.

Epidemiologists point out that the spread of infectious disease tends to follow typical patterns of periodic phenomena. COVID-19 is more aggressive in its expansion than most other virus strains and has created more havoc than is common, but it is nonetheless expected at some point to recede in influence. Moreover, the rapid development of a number of different vaccines may further contain the spread and damage done in the period ahead. The disruption will continue to affect the social, political and economic life of the countries in the region as well as their land bridge role. This raises serious questions concerning the potential effects of the disruption on closely linked security and economic relationships in the region. When the influence of COVID-19 recedes, what will be the likely effects on renewed supply chains throughout the region and how will this influence regional security cooperation?

### EMERGING FROM THE ECONOMIC DOWNTURN: TWO CHALLENGES

Globalization creates gains in efficiency and effectiveness that offer vast economic advantages to states, producers and investors. The technological change that brings down the transaction costs of everything from researching, exploring, mining and producing to transporting and marketing, is a driving force moving everything in the direction of greater and greater modernization. The economic integration facilitated by globalization is inevitable, but that does not mean that the specific directions it takes are predetermined by the process itself; there are many highly varied forms that integration can take. One important difference in the process of integration is the degree to which it is an advantage to vertical connections as opposed to horizontal ones. Vertical forms of integration start from a single point, identify a single terminal state and then manage the process to move to that state. Horizontal forms of integration rely on price factors to guide the process, seeking to reward efficiencies of production and transportation to decide what gets produced and how it gets distributed. Vertical forms of integration tend to identify actors and end up picking winners and losers in the process. Horizontal forms of integration tend to conform to scarcities reflected in price differentials and allow the winners to emerge from the process.

The restoration of the supply chains disrupted by the COVID-19 national lockdowns will have to address the conventional problems of state-to-state relations. There are two fundamental, age-old problems for collective action: In political relationships, the main problem is overcoming the security dilemma; in economic relationships, it is avoiding the pitfalls of economic nationalism.

Economic nationalism refers to a country's efforts to achieve unilateral economic advantage in trade relations. Policies of economic nationalism usually involve mechanisms to increase a country's foreign trade surplus with respect to its major trading partners. Currency regulation, state subsidies or government-financed parastatals are used to promote targeted and sanctioned exports. The

unsanctioned export of state-subsidized consumer goods such as food and clothing are usually restricted. Tariffs, quotas and mechanisms such as unrequitable documentation requirements are established to discourage unwanted imports. Customs inspectorates are established at plane, rail and road border stations, creating long delays. Because these delays cause losses for shippers, they also create almost irrepressible inducements to circumvention through bribery and corruption. They thereby create a need for the state to reinforce itself against itself, by sanctioning police to monitor and control the customs inspectorate.

The security dilemma refers to a country's competitive search for assurances that its integrity, territorial or cultural, will not be compromised by the actions of foreigners. The security dilemma was first articulated by Thucydides in his discussions of the Peloponnesian Wars. It describes a situation of antagonism, in which one party seeks to increase security to prevent being attacked, subjugated or annihilated by another party. In the context of nation states, as countries strive to maintain security from foreign threats, they are driven to acquire more and more power to offset the power of others. This creates a situation that renders the other countries more insecure and compels them to prepare for the worst. Because none can ever feel entirely secure in such a world, power competition ensues, and a vicious circle of security and power accumulation is initiated. Thus, even if we make the minimalist assumption of only legitimate self-preservation goals — and obviously countries often have more aggressive goals — the anarchic state of international society drives countries to adopt policies that impel them toward conflict with their neighbors. In circumstances of rapid institutional change, such as the collapse of an empire or the outbreak of a pandemic, stable expectations break down and are replaced by apprehension, anxiety, distrust, suspicion and fear. Anticipating the worst, countries begin to feel that they must “get their retaliation in first.” They often turn to the realist self-help maxim of the Ancient world: *Si vis pacem, para bellum* (If you seek peace, prepare for war).

The conventional solution to problems of the security dilemma and economic nationalism are typically regional cooperation organizations, focusing on either security or economic policies, which are mutually beneficial.

## MULTILATERAL COOPERATION

Globalization has brought us to an era when the world's established leading institutions — the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the International Atomic Energy Agency and many other regional cooperation institutions — are being challenged by competing institutions championing a new global political and economic “architecture.” The most significant among these in the greater Central Eurasian region in political (security) respects are the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). The most significant new institutions in the economic realm are the Eurasian Economic Union, or Eurasian Union, and One Belt, One Road (OBOR), since renamed the Belt and Road Initiative.

The CSTO is a regional international security organization with origins in a military treaty signed to address security and defense issues in the wake of the breakup of the Soviet Union. In 1992, Russia, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan signed the Collective Security Treaty (CST) at a meeting in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. Three other post-Soviet states (Azerbaijan, Belarus and Georgia) signed the CST the following year, and the treaty came into force in 1994 with the codicil that it would be reviewed every five years. In 1999, the CST was renewed by six members, but three (Azerbaijan, Georgia, Uzbekistan) did not renew. The six remaining members established the CSTO in the form of a military alliance. Uzbekistan joined in 2006 but withdrew in 2012.

The SCO is a regional international security organization. Multilateral cooperation grew out of two-party, Sino-Soviet diplomatic negotiations starting in 1986 over border cooperation, and culminated in a five-party treaty (China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) on border agreements signed in April 1996 as the Shanghai Accord. The cooperation led to continued and expanded discussions, resulting in the establishment of the SCO in June 2001. The SCO has since added members (Uzbekistan, India, Pakistan) and observing states (Afghanistan, Belarus, Iran, Mongolia), as well as dialogue partners (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Turkey).

The idea of a Eurasian economic community emerged from negotiations at the December 1991 Alma-Ata Agreement. However, for many years the economic integration movement was pushed forward only by Kazakhstan and was opposed or hindered by others. Following Russia's economic default in 1998, Russian support for the idea of economic integration shifted. In October 2000, the Eurasian Economic Community was formally formed at a meeting in Astana, Kazakhstan. The goal was to promote the movement of people, goods, services and capital throughout Eurasia by creating a system of regionwide standards, a customs union and by taking over the responsibility for negotiating with the World Trade Organization as one party. The Eurasian Customs Union came to life in January 2010 and was followed by the treaty that formed the Eurasian Economic Union, which came into effect in January 2015. But the idea of the “Union” went beyond the loose fabric of the Commonwealth of Independent States or the Economic Community; it was to create an interlocking system of institutions involving economic, legal and political dimensions. After beginning his third term, Russian President Vladimir Putin refocused the idea of a new overarching architecture by emphasizing consolidation in the post-Soviet space. Putin introduced the idea of “multidimensional integration” as a means of bringing together security, political and economic concerns in the format of the Eurasian Union.

The idea of OBOR emerged as a platform for Chinese foreign investment in 2013 and was soon championed by Chinese President Xi Jinping. It is a global infrastructure development program adopted by the Chinese government.



Xi originally called it the “Silk Road Economic Belt” during an official visit to Kazakhstan in September 2013. “Belt” refers to the idea of an economic belt, reminiscent of the overland routes for road and rail transportation through Central Asia and the Caucasus region along the famed historical Silk Road trade routes of the era of Marco Polo. “Road” refers to Indo-Pacific sea routes, a 21st century maritime Silk Road.

OBOR is associated with a parallel project, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). The AIIB is a multi-lateral development bank and is an international financial institution. The bank was proposed by China in 2013, and the initiative was launched at a ceremony in Beijing in October 2014. Founding members joined China, and the AIIB started operation after the agreement entered into force December 25, 2015.

#### **NEXT GENERATION ‘HARDWARE’ AND ‘SOFTWARE’**

Logic, no matter how clear and compelling, does not always guide politics. In politics, sometimes matters of principle and logic are important, but calculations of self-interest get in the way. The early stages of development in the post-Soviet space, after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, provide a good example. When the founding meeting of the Commonwealth of Independent States took place in Alma-Ata, Kazakhstan, in December 1991, one of the few things the political leaders could agree upon was the idea of maintaining a “common economic space” throughout the entire Eurasian region. To all of those present at the first post-communist negotiations, the traditions

of cooperation in economic and commercial relations were uniformly desired, the economic relationships were seen to be practical and the idea of maintaining a “single economic space” was expected to be easily achievable. However, the collapse of the Soviet Union was not followed by the emergence of graceful economic cooperation. The period was characterized by a great deal of economic one-upmanship and narrow, self-interest-driven protectionism. The dedicated efforts of the post-Soviet negotiators to coordinate currency, customs, trade and investment policies produced far more cooperation on paper than in practice; an enduring diversity and incompatibility of standards, policies and practices slowed integration and harmed trade within the entire Eurasian region. This experience of the Central Eurasia states underscores the importance of finding cooperative relationships to build the infrastructure for trade, transportation, energy, telecommunications and natural resource management in the region, as well as the policies, financing and expertise to operate these systems effectively and efficiently. There are two aspects of any infrastructure system: the material “hardware” systems and the “software” policies. In 2020, the Central Eurasian countries started a rapid phase of infrastructure development to facilitate the new land bridge concept throughout the region. The COVID-19 pandemic slowed down much of that development, although it may soon regain momentum. But there are important questions regarding the way these systems are developed.

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Workers build a stretch of highway in Haripur, Pakistan, constructed as part of China's One Belt, One Road infrastructure program. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS







Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization peacekeeping forces take part in the Unbreakable Brotherhood 2020 training exercises on the Losvido firing range in Belarus. REUTERS

A good example is OBOR investment in roads, power, telecommunications and energy in the Central Eurasian countries. Many large OBOR infrastructure projects are now in the first stages of implementation. Examples are the interconnection of rail, road, port facilities, power grids and airspace control, and fixed electronic communication systems including transmitters, relay towers and receivers, and so on. These projects raise important questions: Can the construction of the new OBOR hardware of infrastructure projects in transportation, energy and telecommunications create a new framework for cooperation in the greater Silk Road-Eurasian region? Will the software of government policies and practices sync with the hardware, or will government policies lead to inefficiencies or conflicts? To the extent that these fixed infrastructure projects can offer greater operational efficiencies, will these also introduce inflexible geostrategic implications? Will an enlarged prosperity zone also result in a parallel security sphere?

Fixed physical distribution systems such as roads, railways, oil and gas pipelines, water distribution systems, irrigation systems, electrical distribution grids and fixed telecommunication networks often come with features of a natural monopoly. Commodity markets are economically most efficient where there are many producers, many consumers and competitive prices determine the terms of exchange. These features describe the standard market model. Natural monopolies do not share all these market features. Fixed distribution systems tend to fail the conditions of efficient markets, particularly if there is low diversity of producers and consumers.

The case of a single oil pipeline between a producer and a consumer illustrates the problem of a natural monopoly. If the consumer is offered only a limited number of suppliers — as is usually the case with oil pipelines — the price of the commodity will be determined not by a market equilibrium, but by the supplier's determination of what is a "fair" price. Oil and gas consumers served by transport pipelines with a limited number of alternative sources or substitute energy fuels are familiar with the problems of energy dependence and the results of price gouging, shortages and disruptions. The energy dependence of consumers is a common complaint and a public concern. Producer energy dependence, in contrast, is less often discussed. But producer dependence is also a major factor in shaping the national policies of energy producers and the governments that rely or even depend on energy sales revenues.

Electrical power transmission provides an important example of the distorting effects of natural monopolies on prices. One of the traditional constraints of electric power systems is that production has needed to be closely linked to consumption. However, new electric storage capabilities are rapidly expanding with technological changes and large-scale electric storage costs are decreasing. Traditionally, however, electricity has not been storable in large volumes. Consequently, production has needed to be flexibly scaled to meet fluctuation in demand. This has been a source of great difficulties for large, regional electric transmission projects. Due to these market features, electricity distribution systems tended not to be organized in terms of supply and demand,



but rather in terms of the engineering aspects of the facilities for production, transmission and distribution.

Forms of economic and political organization tend to be interrelated and the forms of foreign policy, which countries adopt with respect to their foreign partners, tend to reflect these differences. States that possess horizontal, deliberative and civil forms of government tend to have market-based economies. Those that possess vertical, summary and praetorian forms of government tend to have concentrated and state-administered economies. As it is common for like entities to associate with like entities, vertical states tend to associate more readily with other vertical states in the political aspects of their foreign policy, even when the supply and demand requirements of their economies might dictate otherwise. Because many of the formal and policy-oriented relationships of trade agreements have a political character, vertical states tend to form trade agreements and maintain partner relations with similar states. Formal trade agreements bundle a variety of values, norms, standards, policies, instruments, mechanisms and channels of trade. Currency arrangements, customs controls, health and safety standards, banking practices, financial regulatory institutions, such as ratings agencies and certification bodies, and many other administrative details are resolved in the format of state policies and state-to-state agreements.

The vertical and horizontal aspects of the form of integration are important because they also reflect the political influence in the economic decision-making. The Eurasian Union provides a good example: Some critics see it as basically a political project. The goal, they claim, is to bring together under one political structure the territories of the former Soviet Union. The Eurasian Union is essentially a vertical integrative process, driven by centralized objectives, with top-down processes managed by the Kremlin. It is not a horizontal integrative process, driven primarily by economic or informational factors that lower costs and increase efficiency through the conformance of standards and the convergence of interests. The Eurasian Union serves as an economic complement to the CSTO. Success of the Eurasian Union project would, in the eyes of its supporters, make it possible for the CSTO to assume the status of an organization similar in function to the Warsaw Treaty Organization.

#### STRATEGIC DESIGN IN POST-PANDEMIC RECOVERY

The efficiency and the effectiveness of infrastructure improvements in the Central Eurasian region is highly dependent on the extent to which the dynamic potential of horizontal drivers wins out over the tendency to establish and ossify vertical relationships. At the same time, it is important to resolve whether integration efforts are to be driven primarily by economic objectives or by political (meaning national security) objectives. The political and economic institutions are, of course, always at play in some mixture and mutually reinforcing. But a great deal depends on which is the primary vector, making the most important contribution, and which institutions are sponsoring the integration makes a critical difference. Key sponsors

have differing interests in the political-economy of Central Eurasia's next generation of infrastructure development. China, backing OBOR, is clearly driven primarily by its economic objectives. Conforming political pressures can be expected from Chinese sponsorship. In contrast, Russia's sponsorship is primarily political and geopolitically strategic in its design. Russia can be expected to continue to push the CSTO and rely upon the Eurasian Union for support.

As Andrew Michta, dean of the College for International and Security Studies at the Marshall Center, has argued, the shift to new sinews of power amounts to a "grand inversion." In his article, "U.S. Alliances: Crucial Enablers in Great-Power Competition," published by the Heritage Foundation in 2020, Michta contends that China's OBOR policy, which is heavily focused on Central Eurasia, may have geostrategic importance. He writes that for hundreds of years, the prevailing maritime trade routes preempted land routes, shifting international power toward maritime resources and away from land forces. Initiatives such as OBOR are premised on inverting those age-old relationships. Beijing is calculating on replacing this maritime supremacy in such a way that the European Rimland would cease to be the transatlantic gateway to Eurasia, becoming instead the terminal endpoint of a China-dominated Eurasian empire. China's OBOR would tie the economies of Europe, Russia and Africa to China as part of its larger effort to form a single Eurasian supply-chain network.

#### CONCLUSION

COVID-19 caused unprecedented supply-chain disruptions throughout Eurasia in 2020, with immediate social, economic and political effects, but 2021 is apt to witness long-term strategic changes. In ages past, the expression "sinews of power" referred to the fusion of financial advantage with military might. Grand strategies of great power competition of the leading nation-states from the 17th to the 21st century were founded in industrial prowess, financial wherewithal and military might. In blunt terms, the industrial age produced international competition where success in iron and steel output joined tactical and strategic military capacity as the leading factors in determining the outcome of competitions.

Today, in the post-industrial, information-dominated age, bits and bytes are just as significant as guns and butter. The expression "sinews of power" may still refer to a combination of military capacity and economic influence, but in very different contexts where the hardware and software are of equal importance. The Central Eurasian region is a good example of the importance of the success of the hardware of fixed infrastructure for transportation, energy and telecommunication, in conjunction with the successful software of efficient policy and financial relationships. The belt of states linking the Far East and the West — the states of Central Eurasia — are positioned at the dynamic seams of the international system and will serve as a critical connecting region among today's major powers. □



# STRATEGIC DETERRENCE UNABATED

## DEFENDING THE NATION DURING A PANDEMIC

By U.S. Strategic Command

**W**hile much of the world scaled back or shut down due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the United States Strategic Command (USSTRATCOM), with headquarters at Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska, continued business as usual in maintaining the nation's deterrence posture. The command continued to fulfill its 24/7 real-world, global responsibilities, including strategic deterrence, nuclear operations, joint electromagnetic spectrum operations, global strike, missile defense, and analysis and targeting.

At the outset of the pandemic, new protective measures were implemented at headquarters and at units in the field to ensure the safety of assigned personnel while maintaining mission readiness. To inhibit spreading the virus, many personnel changed to teleworking from their residences and only the most critical personnel, including those required for the Global Operations Center, continued to work in the headquarters building. New procedures there ranged from temperature checks and contact management to emphasizing individual hygiene and contact tracing when someone tested positive for the virus. As virus-related procedures matured, most teleworkers phased back into daily work at the headquarters building.

During the pandemic, the 16-year Continuous Bomber Presence mission of long-range bombers at Anderson Air Force Base, Guam, made a previously planned transition to the more agile and less operationally predictable Bomber Task Force model under the Pentagon's Dynamic Force Employment concept. Since standing up the

A Minuteman III test launch at Vandenberg Air Force Base in California.

SENIOR AIRMAN CLAYTON WEAR/U.S. AIR FORCE

Bomber Task Force concept, there have been 12 forward deployments and 24 missions starting and ending in the U.S., using B-1 Lancer, B-2 Spirit and B-52 Stratofortress long-range bombers. These missions demonstrated the U.S.'s ability to project power anywhere in the world on short notice and provided training opportunities for U.S., allied and partner-nation forces. Operating from U.S. and forward-deployed bases, B-1, B-2 and B-52 bombers flew long distances to conduct integrated training missions with allies and partners in Australia, Canada, France, Greece, Japan, Morocco, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Saudi Arabia, Sweden, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine and the United Kingdom. "Long-range bomber training missions strengthen our steadfast partnerships with allies across both Europe and Africa and showcase our ability to respond globally from anywhere," said Gen. Jeff Harrigan, commander of U.S. Air Forces in Europe and Air Forces Africa.

The successful pivot from Continuous Bomber Presence to Bomber Task Force generated envy from Russia and China. Russian defense officials claimed to set "a world record for [the] longest non-stop flight" with a pair of Tu-160 Blackjack long-range bombers launching from and returning to Engels Air Base in western Russia on a 25-hour



flight September 18-19, 2020, primarily over the Russian landmass. While that was a long flight for the Tu-160 Blackjack, it falls well short of a 30-hour mission flown by the U.S. Air Force's B-1 Lancer — that the Tu-160's design was copied from — and is a mere shadow of the 45-hour round-the-world flights by the B-52 Stratofortress.

On September 19, China's People's Liberation Army Air Forces posted a video titled *The God of War H-6K Goes on the Attack!* on the Chinese website Weibo. This video showed what appeared to be computer generated imagery of two H-6K bombers, with J-11 fighter escort, launching an attack on what was described as a U.S. air base on Guam. The sequences were clearly from Hollywood movies, including *The Hurt Locker*, *The Rock* and *Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen*. While it is true that posting video of training exercises is common practice for many nations, it is not accepted practice to use intellectual property (such as movie clips) without permission or payment. It is also unprofessional to imply that such footage represents a nation's actual military capabilities. The U.S. and our allies choose to publish actual footage of our responsible and relevant training exercises.

Over the past several months, USSTRATCOM held several small, in-house exercises. While limited in scale, they were deep in innovation and successfully tested and validated current and new operational concepts. One concept demonstrated is the ability to resupply submarines at sea. Nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines can cruise the seas for years before requiring refueling. But the crews need to refuel more frequently, requiring the submarines to return to port or rendezvous with a replenishment ship at sea. A third resupply option was successfully tested off the coast of Hawaii using remotely controlled drones and manned rotary-wing and fixed-wing aircraft to air drop resupply packages on or very near a submarine running on the surface. During the pandemic, such resupply methods have the added benefit of reducing human-to-human contact between members of an isolated submarine crew and the crews of replenishment ships or port supply personnel.

At the end of October 2020, the command conducted one of its two annual capstone exercises, Global Thunder 21, involving thousands of personnel across the globe and allied partners. From the depths of the oceans to the canopy of space, strategic systems, personnel, processes and communications were tested against both a notional adversary and the COVID-19 virus, and USSTRATCOM was victorious. Throughout the exercise, USSTRATCOM continued to fulfill its 24/7 real-world, global responsibilities, including strategic deterrence, nuclear operations, joint electromagnetic spectrum operations, global strike, missile defense, and analysis and targeting ... business as usual continued. As the exercise concluded, Adm. Charles "Chas" Richard, USSTRATCOM commander, commented: "Bravo Zulu [nautical expression for 'well done'] to all those who were involved in development and execution of this year's exercise. I have complete confidence, now more than ever, in the men and women standing watch around

the globe 24 hours a day, seven days a week who provide the credible deterrent which underpins all other joint force operations." The command's annual checkup is complete, with a clean bill of health to deter or respond to any threat against the U.S. and its allied and partner nations. USSTRATCOM's never-ending vigilance continues.



A drone leaves a ballistic missile submarine after delivering a replenishment package. U.S. NAVY

One of many important activities is testing the readiness, reliability and lethality of the intercontinental ballistic missile force with test launches from Vandenberg Air Force Base, California. Since the COVID-19 outbreak, these "Glory Trips" — intercontinental ballistic missile test launches without a nuclear warhead attached — have continued, with three test launches of Minuteman III missiles since March 2020. Once launched, the missiles travel 4,200 miles (almost 6,700 kilometers) in about 30 minutes to strike simulated targets in the ocean near the Kwajalein Atoll in the Marshall Islands in the South Pacific Ocean. These test launches are conducted by crews deployed to California from active combat squadrons to test their preparedness and provide live training. Regarding the purpose of the October 29, 2020, test, Gen. Charles Q. Brown Jr., chief of staff of the U.S. Air Force, said: "Like previous test launches, this event demonstrated the Air Force's commitment to the nation's nuclear enterprise while ensuring the United States' nuclear deterrent is safe, secure and effective to deter our adversaries while reassuring our allies and partners."

Operationally the pace of the command's critical, must-be-right-every-time, worldwide mission continues and has even improved during the COVID-19 pandemic. "Throughout the challenge presented by COVID-19, U.S. Strategic Command continues to be fully mission capable. We're ready," Adm. Richard confirmed. USSTRATCOM remains poised and ready to fulfill its global missions. □

The mission of U.S. Strategic Command is to deter strategic attack and employ forces, as directed, to guarantee the security of our nation and our allies. The command's vision is to deliver a dominant strategic force and innovative team to maintain our nation's enduring strength, prevent and prevail in great power conflict, and grow the intellectual capital to forge 21st century strategic deterrence.

# BRINGING FOREIGN FIGHTERS HOME



## HOW KOSOVO REHABILITATES REPATRIATED ISLAMIC STATE FIGHTERS

By Ramadan “Dani” Ilazi, Teuta Avdimetaj and Skënder Perteshi, the Kosovar Centre for Security Studies

Since its declaration of independence on February 17, 2008, Kosovo has made great strides in grounding its liberal-democratic framework, with vital support from the United States and the European Union. Although a young European democracy, Kosovo has developed a pluralistic political scene and a strong civil society. However, it has also faced significant challenges, including violent extremism. In the aftermath of the collapse of the Islamic State (IS), the government of Kosovo expressed willingness to repatriate its citizens being held in Kurdish-run camps for IS members in Syria. Kosovo’s readiness to pursue a policy of repatriation in addressing the foreign fighter threat stands in stark contrast with other European countries that are hesitant or directly oppose the idea.

Questions about Kosovo’s ability to effectively prosecute those suspected of crimes, navigate the logistical challenges associated with their return, and manage the security threat that returnees pose loom large in the minds of decision-makers. Some EU countries, among others, fear that bringing back their IS-affiliated citizens will lead to a public backlash with considerable political ramifications and are instead opting for an approach that leaves these individuals — mostly women and children — in a state of limbo. In spite of the challenges, many experts view repatriation as the more appropriate response to prevent new cycles of violence, even more so since the disease-ridden and overcrowded detention camps are breeding grounds for further radicalization. There are also serious considerations about a state’s moral obligation to take responsibility for its own citizens. In this vein, Kosovo’s then-Minister of Justice Abelard Tahiri declared in 2019 that

Police officers at a detention center in Pristina watch women and children who are related to Kosovo extremists who returned from Syria. REUTERS

Kosovo would not abandon its citizens regardless of their past actions and that it cannot allow them to be a threat to the West and to our allies.

That year, Kosovo, with U.S. assistance, repatriated 110 individuals, raising the total number of returnees to 200, including those who between 2012-2018 returned from Syria and Iraq through informal channels. Of the 403 Kosovo citizens who left for the conflict zones in Syria and Iraq, 255 are considered to be foreign terrorist fighters (FTF). Yet, repatriation is only an initial step in the long-term effort necessary to successfully rehabilitate and reintegrate former FTFs and their family members — an approach that Kosovo is determined to follow, complementary to prosecution.

### PUNITIVE APPROACHES

In response to the growing number of its citizens traveling to the foreign conflicts in Syria and Iraq, alongside terrorist groups such as IS, in 2015 the Kosovo Assembly adopted the Law on Prohibition of Joining Armed Conflicts Outside State Territory of the Republic of Kosovo. This law establishes heavy penalties for those participating, inciting, funding or not reporting efforts to join a foreign conflict. Participation in armed conflicts of other countries is punishable by up to 15 years in prison, while recruiting and organizing participation in foreign conflicts are also punishable by up to 15 years in prison. Calling or inciting



others to join foreign armed conflicts are punishable by up to five years in prison. Additionally, the law criminalizes funding for the purpose of recruiting and organizing Kosovo citizens to join foreign armed conflicts.

From a legal perspective, all returnees from the war zones of Syria and Iraq are inherently suspects and are therefore required to undergo legal screening to determine if they committed an offense. The European Commission considers Kosovo's legal framework to be in line with the EU *acquis* and international instruments on anti-terrorism, including United Nations Security Council Resolution 2178 of 2014. Kosovo's legal framework enables the prosecution of cases, though challenges persist in obtaining and verifying evidence related to the suspects' roles in the foreign conflict zones.

In 2014, the Kosovo Correctional Services (KCS) started receiving the first FTFs. The KCS had previous experience with religiously radicalized individuals, or violent extremist offenders (VEOs), who were incarcerated, but the battle-hardened FTFs introduced a new set of challenges. With the support of the U.S. Justice Department's International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program (ICITAP), the KCS conducted an internal assessment of its correctional services, which found that the incarcerated FTFs were not separated from the general prison population. This made the rehabilitation process more difficult.

The assessment also noted the need to develop the capacities of KCS personnel for dealing with FTFs and ICITAP supported training programs. By 2016, the KCS had rehabilitation and resocialization (R&R) programs in place for handling FTFs. These programs sought to support FTF deradicalization, which primarily involves persuading FTFs to renounce their extremist belief systems.

To avoid making the FTFs feel targeted by the program, and therefore risk their voluntary participation, R&R programs have been open to the wider prison population and include courses to support completion of high school as well as vocational training in areas such as carpentry, water supply systems and welding. Other courses work on communication skills to facilitate FTF resocialization. However, it is not clear how many of the vocational training participants were actual FTFs and if it has been successful.

Ideology is the quintessential barrier to deradicalization and efforts to rehabilitate VEOs who maintain strong commitment to the beliefs and religious interpretation promoted by radical imams and reinforced by IS. Addressing it effectively is a complex undertaking. From the security perspective, the commitment of radicalized individuals to use violence to promote their beliefs is a major concern. In 2018, the Ministry of Justice and the Islamic Community of Kosovo (ICK) cooperated to implement a new program in the KCS for deradicalizing FTFs. The ICK provides verified imams to conduct religious lectures in the KCS, while the Justice Ministry organizes the logistics. The purpose of this program is to debunk radical, religiously laced ideologies that influenced FTFs to join the foreign conflicts in Syria and Iraq.

Kosovo's FTF repatriation approach merits recognition; however, there have been important shortcomings and

challenges, both technical and with aspects of program implementation and effectiveness. By 2016, when the KCS properly developed capacities and established its FTF repatriation programs, the majority of those incarcerated had been released. A number of repatriated FTFs rejected Kosovo's institutions and laws out of ideological conviction, which made it harder to ensure their cooperation and participation in deradicalization programs. Participation of FTF inmates in the KCS programs has been very low. Based on interviews with FTFs, as well as public officials, FTFs see Kosovo's institutions, and especially its security mechanisms, as an extended arm of the U.S. government that does the bidding of the U.S. Some of the FTFs believe that they are still fighting for their extremist ideology, even after returning to Kosovo.



Kosovo police officers guard a court in Pristina in September 2014 after 15 people, including a number of imams, were arrested in an operation to stem the flow of young ethnic Albanians joining Islamist fighters in Iraq and Syria. REUTERS

Politics represents an important lesson for Kosovo's experience. While political will has been essential to repatriate Kosovars and focus on their R&R, in one case it has had a negative impact. Civil society actors and public officials maintain that the involvement of politics, specifically the need for politicians to publicize deradicalization efforts, often has a negative impact on the process. One example is the cooperation with the ICK to shift VEOs away from radical ideologies. The cooperation had been widely promoted, and public statements were made that the imams who will conduct the deradicalization lectures would be verified by the Kosovo Intelligence Agency. This damaged the imams' credibility before they even got to work. According to government officials, some incarcerated returnees saw the imams as colluding with the government and the security institutions.

Another important shortcoming is a lack of mechanisms to follow up with VEOs who are processed out of the system. Based on interviews with public officials, Kosovo's approach in this regard is highly securitized, meaning that mainly the security apparatus is involved in R&R while there are no



Police escort a Kosovo man to court in Pristina in August 2014 on suspicion of having fought in Syria and Iraq alongside extremists. AFP/GETTY IMAGES



A boy and a girl, among 110 Kosovo citizens repatriated from Syria, reunite with family members as they leave a detention center in Vranidoll in April 2019. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

mechanisms in place for social workers or other professionals to follow up with former FTFs post-prison release. Some former FTFs remain committed to their system of beliefs, including the legitimacy of violence in pursuit of their goals or against the so-called enemies of Islam after they are processed out of the correctional services. Additionally, they remain committed in their rejection of the institutions and laws of Kosovo, potentially giving them cause to seek to change the status quo. This shows that deradicalization efforts in the correctional services, while very important, can be only part of the process: It is essential that these efforts continue after release from prison. Perhaps, different approaches from nongovernmental actors can be more effective in reaching radicalized individuals.

In the broader efforts to rehabilitate and reintegrate returnees, it is necessary to also consider how gender dynamics influence the radicalization process as well as prospects for successful R&R programs. In Kosovo, all women who have returned from the conflict zones in Syria and Iraq are being prosecuted. However, when charged, female returnees tend to receive more lenient sentences, which may indicate difficulties in determining their culpability but may also signify differential treatment primarily based on their sex. Because gender stereotypes are still pervasive, such as perceiving women as inherently more peaceful, there is a tendency to view women's involvement and experiences in violent extremism through a narrower lens. There are documented cases in which women were coerced to accompany their husbands or other male relatives into foreign conflicts and should thus be treated as victims, but women's involvement in violent extremism can take many forms (e.g., facilitators, perpetrators, preventing radicalization). Disregarding their personal agency can create a security blind spot. Individual circumstances for radicalization, involvement in and disengagement from violent extremist groups should take precedence in informing the R&R response.

## SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC REINTEGRATION

Kosovo has adopted a number of measures to support the social and economic reintegration of its repatriated citizens. The Division for Prevention and Reintegration of Radicalized Persons (DPRRP) was established to coordinate government reintegration support, operating under the Department for Public Safety of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Kosovo is the first country in the Balkan region, if not beyond, to have established a specialized unit to deal only with reintegrating citizens who participated in foreign conflicts, in this case Syria and Iraq. The DPRRP has conducted a number of activities to support societal reintegration, including training parents on how to approach their children, efforts to include returnee families in social welfare programs so they receive monthly stipends, as well as coordinated efforts with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) to register children in school. DPRRP has tried to coordinate with the KCS to respond to the challenges for inmates who are paroled or have concluded their prison term, but according to DPRRP, these efforts have not been very successful.

Besides establishing the DPRRP, the Kosovo government's approach is cross-sectorial. The MEST has spearheaded efforts to register repatriated children in the school system. In April 2019, there were 74 children among the 110 Kosovars who were repatriated from Syria. While children ages 6-7 have been registered in the first grade, there were cases of children ages 12-13 who had not had any formal education. MEST enrolled them in the technical learning track, enabling them to start from the first grade and catch up with their peers. MEST has also conducted training for schoolteachers on the subject of preventing violent extremism. A small number of children also need support to improve their understanding and ability to speak the Albanian language, and this too has been provided.

The Ministry of Health plays an important role in



reintegration. Medical care has been provided to all repatriated citizens. The April 2019 group included six children who had injuries and several women who had health complications. One person had a liver infection, requiring a liver transplant, and since it could not be treated in Kosovo, the government organized the needed operation in Turkey. The University Hospital and Clinical Service of Kosovo has assigned a psychiatrist to coordinate the hospital's role in reintegration efforts. Staff have helped assess the mental health needs of the repatriated citizens and supported treatment. Government support includes home visits, and individual and family sessions. The Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare includes repatriated citizens in social welfare programs.

Local involvement in the reintegration process is crucial. Some municipalities established referral mechanisms as part of the action plan for Kosovo's national Strategy on Prevention of Violent Extremism and Radicalization Leading to Terrorism 2015-2020. The purpose of these mechanisms is to support deradicalization through early detection and prevent engagement in violent extremism, but it has not been utilized in the process for repatriated citizens from Syria and Iraq. According to officials from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the pilot referral mechanism in the municipality of Gjilan in southeastern Kosovo has shown great potential, with 12 cases of successful early detection and rehabilitation of young adults who were on a trajectory to radicalization. The government plans to move forward and establish similar mechanisms in other municipalities. Some municipalities have shown self-initiative. In 2017, South Mitrovica, in cooperation with a local civil society organization, Community Building Mitrovica, developed a municipal strategy for countering and preventing violent extremism among young people.

There are several challenges with social and economic reintegration support of repatriated citizens. One of these is coordination among institutions, and especially with municipal authorities. Much reintegration support focuses on repatriated citizens who were not FTFs. Therefore, former FTFs who are processed through correctional services are not covered. There is also a need to extend reintegration programs to all women returnees with a focus on supporting their economic self-sufficiency and addressing stigmas. This will require the identification of intervention/training programs that are suitable for the returnees but also take into consideration their level of radicalization.

Of particular concern is the marginalization of repatriated children, especially the older ones, who were raised in a different cultural and societal context and experience difficulties integrating. Civil society has implemented important intervention programs to reach out to these children, help them to re-socialize and bring them out of isolation. For instance, the Kosovar Centre for Security Studies has organized a number of activities with children repatriated from Syria to facilitate their integration into society by fostering communication and critical thinking skills. Even when interacting with child returnees, it is important to be mindful of how factors such as gender may have influenced their upbringing and experience in IS-controlled territory,

including their level of indoctrination or exposure to violence. It is important to mainstream a trauma-informed approach across institutions to ensure that child returnees grow up in a safe and secure environment, conducive to their healthy development and free from violence.

Civil society organizations in Kosovo continue to have limited engagement with supporting the reintegration of repatriated citizens from Syria and Iraq, although they have increasingly assumed more responsibility. One area where the partnership between government and civil society can be helpful is in ensuring gender-responsive policies throughout all stages of the design and implementation of rehabilitation and reintegration programs.

## CONCLUSION

Kosovo has demonstrated the necessary political will to address the threat of violent extremism and prevent the country from becoming a safe haven for terrorists, but its ultimate effectiveness hinges upon a number of measures that require long-term efforts, including the successful rehabilitation and reintegration of former FTFs and their family members. Kosovo amended its legal and institutional framework to facilitate the prosecution of terrorism-related suspects, which was critical to bringing individuals to justice and creating a deterrent effect. Importantly, it acknowledged that the complex issue of radicalization and violent extremism requires a multi-sectorial approach with concerted and coordinated efforts among stakeholders within the society. In repatriating its citizens from the foreign conflict zones in Syria and Iraq, Kosovo set an important example for the region and beyond that, even as a young state with limited resources, it will live up to its moral and constitutional obligations to its citizens and international partners.

Thus far, Kosovo has put in place rehabilitation and reintegration programs that are promising but continue to face shortcomings. Interventions aimed at dissuading people from engaging in violence and renouncing radical ideologies are being implemented in prison, but concepts such as deradicalization are inherently problematic and often produce limited results. Notably, interinstitutional coordination needs to improve to better align efforts and resources for rehabilitation and reintegration processes at national and local levels. Moreover, these programs need to take into consideration the individual circumstances of the radicalized, such as age and gender, to ensure that interventions correspond with individual needs and experiences.

In the backdrop of a global pandemic that has left many countries struggling to manage the health risks and keep their economies afloat, Kosovo faces the challenge of sustaining rehabilitation and reintegration programs in the long run. Thus, strengthening partnerships with local communities, the families of those affected by violent extremism and civil society writ large is key to ensure the provision of services and the maintenance of a social support system for those undergoing rehabilitation and reintegration. □

# A NEW NORMAL

## HEALTH SECURITY MAY BECOME A CORE TASK OF MILITARIES

By Dr. John L. Clarke, Marshall Center professor



Georgian soldiers staff a checkpoint in Tbilisi in March 2020 to enforce compliance with government mandates meant to check the spread of COVID-19.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



**V**iruses never die. And they don't ever really go away. Variants of the Spanish flu have been with us for more than 100 years, and the same can be expected of the COVID-19 virus. It will, like its Spanish cousin, mutate many more times, become more or less infectious and is highly likely to become endemic, which is what the Spanish flu has done.

The advent of vaccinations, and the remarkably quick process of developing them, bode well for a return to a semblance of normality, though it is highly likely that annual booster vaccinations will become part of our future, just as they have with the influenza. We can expect that the availability of such vaccines will also become far more prevalent.

What are the security implications of such an endemic disease? It is difficult to say because we don't know how virulent and lethal it will be in a year's — or a decade's — time, but it seems safe to say that we will learn to live with it. It's unlikely that life will return to normal in the near future, but some sense of normality is likely to return in the next year or so.

This doesn't necessarily mean a return to business as usual for security professionals. As our focus returns to traditional security concerns, we must be on guard for those actors who may try to weaponize the response to the virus. Already we have seen China and Russia seek to leverage their relative positions to their advantage in international affairs through select deliveries of vaccines and other assistance.

Several factors are apparent in the articles in this edition of *per Concordiam*. First, we will have to revise our crisis and risk management paradigms to account for the staying power and chameleonlike quality of the virus. Health security is taking on a whole new dimension and will compete with other forms of security, such as

human and climate security, not to mention national security.

Second, national armed forces will assume an entirely new role in the health security concept. They are likely, in many countries, to become prime providers of this security through their logistics and medical support capabilities — and thus relatively less able to carry out traditional national security functions.



Third, regions of the world, such as Central Asia, the Middle East and Africa, will continue to be disadvantaged in terms of their ability to counter the virus and the effects it will have on their health security and national security. Migration in search of a less virus-impacted life cannot be excluded. And the impact of disease on economic livelihoods is likely to continue to be devastating for a long time.

No, the virus is not going away. But neither is the human race, though it is under pressure. As has always been the case, humans will adapt and may, through the knock-on effects of vaccine development, enjoy an even healthier life in the future. □

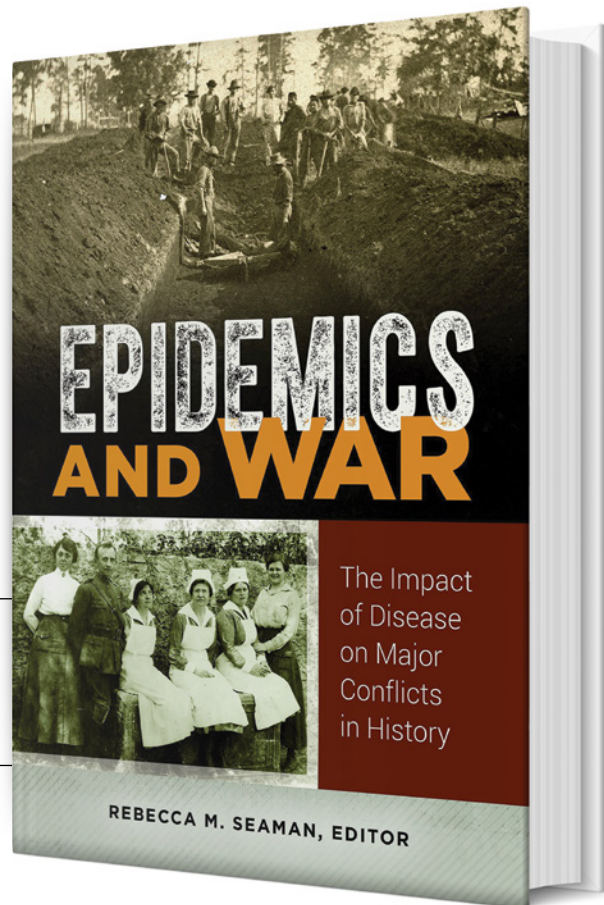
Military personnel at Figo Maduro military airport in Lisbon, Portugal, transport medical equipment arriving from Germany in February 2021 to help fight COVID-19. REUTERS

# THE TWO HORSEMEN: WAR AND PLAGUE

EDITED BY: Rebecca M. Seaman

PUBLISHED BY: ABC-CLIO

REVIEWED BY: Patrick Swan, *per Concordiam* contributor



**W**ar and disease appear to go together like love and marriage: There is an attraction at first blush, a courtship, an intense union, and then, until death do they part.

Rebecca M. Seaman's *Epidemics and War: The Impact of Disease on Major Conflicts in History*, analyzes how epidemics can unleash a cycle of war, famine and pestilence that brings much death and little peace. Wars leave populations malnourished, which in turn weakens immune systems, opening the way for an increase in disease-related deaths. Such deaths put increasing strains on political systems, which may then alter the course of wars and how they are waged.

Seaman edited and wrote for this volume, which includes a collection of distinguished historians from varied backgrounds. Their focus encompasses the Athens and Antonine plagues from antiquity along with the spread of disease, facilitated by war, from the 15th century to the present. In a world racked by the COVID-19 pandemic, military leaders will find great value in this book's guidance regarding the connection between epidemics and wars.

Humanity has been down this road before. One would be wise to take stock of what has happened in the past, how people addressed the epidemics, and

what was learned and forgotten. Most important, military and civil leaders can use this history to determine whether they have the proper medical protocols in place to avoid the worst effects of an epidemic or pandemic, which can leave militaries vulnerable.

Each essay serves to build an irresistible case for why, what, how, where and when warfare has historically encouraged the dissemination of disease, with certain diseases being more prevalent on battlefields: dysentery, typhus, malaria, typhoid fever, and problems from secondary infections, such as flu virus and pneumonia.

## THE WHY

Seaman explains why war so readily spreads disease: "There must be a source of infection, a population that is vulnerable to that infection, and direct contact between populations that enables spread. ... Without these three things, it is impossible for an epidemic to occur." Disease spreads through modes of transportation and routes of human migration and travel, and warfare creates the necessary contact because, as adversaries clash over territory and resources,



they exchange bacteria, viruses and parasites in the process. “This diffusion is especially dramatic when one party is left more vulnerable to infection ... because of existing stressors, such as famine, or simply because the population has no existing immunity.” Wars may create the conditions for the dissemination of disease, or they may exploit the damage from disease already in place. The Spanish conquests of Mexico and Peru come to mind.

### THE WHAT

As the essay on the great plague of Athens points out, even after 2½ millennia, historians and physicians are not sure exactly which plague devastated the populace. Instead, we are left only an account of the conditions and symptoms that existed when the plague struck. It is likely that Athens’ war with Sparta and Corinth in 431 B.C. exacerbated or merely enabled the plague. We do know that it struck a newly concentrated urban population filled with rural refugees fleeing plundering armies. Likewise, for the so-called Antonine plague of the late A.D. 100s. A Roman army campaigned in the Middle East, contracted a plague, and then brought it back upon their return. We call both “plagues,” but we really don’t know if they genuinely fit the term or if they were diseases more familiar to us today with predictable glide paths of infection, havoc and recovery.

### THE HOW

The French fought the Haitians in 1802 and suffered debilitating losses to yellow fever and malaria, but never recognized that the mosquitoes in their midst were the transmitters. Had they known how the disease spread, perhaps they could have devised remedies to lessen the impact. Instead, the French expeditionary force took horrendous casualties with large-scale ramifications.

### THE WHERE

For Napoleon, Haiti was a key factor. When he recognized that pestilence-spreading disease conditions similar to those in Haiti existed in the Port of New Orleans, Napoleon decided to wash his hands of the North American continent and recoup some of the losses to his treasury from the failed Haitian mission by selling the Louisiana Territory to the fledgling American republic. The Haitians retained their independence, and the Americans doubled the size of their country. The diseases in Haiti affected Napoleon’s choices and the course of history.

### THE WHEN

The season also affects the spread of disease. During the Second Seminole War in Florida, the U.S. Army

postponed campaigns because it viewed the summer months as a sickly season. Other diseases thrive in cold weather. Typhus, for instance, all but annihilated Napoleon’s Grande Armée on its sojourn into Russia and return to France. We know now that typhus is spread by the common body louse, and soldiers on campaign often didn’t practice proper hygiene. In cold climates in particular, bathing by soldiers is more difficult, and they will sleep in close proximity to maintain warmth, allowing infected lice to spread rapidly. Malnourishment weakened a soldier’s immune system, making it hard to fight the typhus infection. From a force in the hundreds of thousands, Napoleon’s army limped back to Paris numbering about 3,000.

Today, we know many whats, whys, hows, whens and wheres about diseases and the requirements to prevent, avoid and treat them. Immunizations and booster shots are key to keeping soldiers fit for duty. Prepackaged field rations reduce the likelihood of dysentery. Basic hygiene mitigates diseases known to spread through close-quarters living. Areas susceptible to disease are fumigated. Properly dug latrines deter typhoid. Soldiers bathe in the field to reduce the possibility of contracting typhus.

In peacetime, soldiers are sometimes employed to bring these measures to poor or beleaguered communities. But in wartime, soldiers are focused on fighting, and a populace is mostly left to fend for itself. Two essays address civilian outbreaks that occurred when war or unrest from war prevented nations from protecting their people against invasive diseases. After the Soviet Union dissolved, Tajikistan endured a brief civil war followed by an outbreak of diphtheria — a disease all but eradicated in economically advanced nations through regular inoculations — because medical supply channels were not reestablished from Russia and regular inoculations were not resumed. In Bosnia, the 1992-1995 civil war interrupted normal immunizations, especially of young people. In 2012, mumps struck those without the initial immunizations or necessary booster shots.

Today’s military and national leaders generally have the resources and the knowledge to quell an epidemic or pandemic, or at least to minimize the harmful effects from new viruses such as COVID-19 until herd immunity is reached, treatments to aid speedy recovery are discovered or a vaccine is developed. Learning what militaries and societies did during previous epidemics and pandemics can be a guide to making better decisions. Seaman’s book is a comprehensive and timely source that provides appropriate historical examples to educate military leaders on time-honored practices that shed light for a murky course ahead. □

# Resident Courses

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This program is designed for government officials and military officers employed in midlevel and upper-level management of counterterrorism organizations and will provide instruction on both the nature and magnitude of today's terrorism threat. The program improves participants' ability to counter terrorism's regional implications by providing a common framework of knowledge and understanding that will enable national security officials to cooperate at an international level.

### SENIOR EXECUTIVE SEMINAR (SES)

This intensive seminar focuses on new topics of key global interest that will generate new perspectives, ideas and cooperative discussions and possible solutions. Participants include general officers, senior diplomats, ambassadors, ministers, deputy ministers and parliamentarians. The SES includes formal presentations by senior officials and recognized experts followed by in-depth discussions in seminar groups.

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### SEMINAR ON REGIONAL SECURITY (SRS)

The seminar aims at systematically analyzing the character of the selected crises, the impact of regional actors, as well as the effects of international assistance measures.



In the next issue of *per Concordiam*.

# A NEW FRONTIER: GREAT POWER COMPETITION IN THE ARCTIC



The USS Toledo arrives at Ice Camp Seadragon, a temporary camp established on Arctic Ocean sea ice, in March 2020. REUTERS

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