

EFFECTS OF DETERMINING COVID-19 AS A THREAT TO INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY

Taking up the issue of COVID-19 and designating it a threat to international peace and security may also alleviate an increasing isolation towards China as well as several other states dealing with the outbreak. The pandemic is tipping the world into a dangerously volatile new phase. With supply chains fragmenting, food supplies coming under strain, and prices rising, the lights are flashing red. Not only will this translate into rising unemployment and food insecurity, but it could quickly escalate into political unrest, violence, and conflict. While some forms of crime have decreased, tensions are already flaring around the world, and not just in war zones.

The lack of international cooperation to tackle a global pandemic is not helping. The Security Council didn't meet to discuss COVID-19 until the 100th day of the pandemic, and then it failed to come up with any meaningful way out of its crippling paralysis. The global economy is headed for an economic nose dive that could rival, even exceed, the Great Depression. The G20 and G7 have yet to set out a comprehensive plan toward response and recovery. Calls for debt relief and cash injections for lower-income countries from the World Bank and IMF are critical.

COVID-19 is putting hard security threats between nations back into the spotlight. The geopolitical rivalry between the great powers is likely to worsen as the American and Chinese economies become less interdependent. The next tier of major powers poses risks as well. Europe has been hit hard by the virus, once again fraying ties between the Eurozone's stronger and weaker economies.

At the very least, the risks of violence will rise in the most vulnerable countries and cities. Keen not to let a good crisis go to waste, armed groups, terrorists and organized criminals are already exploiting the pandemic. They will find further opportunities including in cyberspace -once bailout packages begin to flow. Violence against women and human rights abuses have already spiked both of which are harbingers of other forms of violence. This is set to intensify as at least 1.5 billion children and young people are sent home from their schools and universities.

The risk of an upsurge in violence is both obvious and highly destructive. Lives will be lost, futures ruined. Governments already playing an exhausting game of whack-a-mole will be further

undermined if security is in short supply. Spiraling insecurity and conflict will also undermine the collective willingness to work together to tackle shared challenges. When people feel isolated and afraid, they can become defensive. While the many expressions of solidarity are to be welcomed, when in “fight or flight” mode people are more likely to support populist and nationalist responses.

CONCLUSION

Threats to peace and security in the twenty-first century include not just international war and conflict but civil violence, organized crime, terrorism and weapons of mass destruction. They also include poverty, deadly infectious disease and environmental degradation since these can have equally catastrophic consequences.