Global Insights: COVID-19 and the Global South
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Authors: Jonathan Crush, Ann Fitz-Gerald, Hallelujah Lulie, Briony Jones, Anja Osei, Shirin Rai, Rachel Robinson

Editors: Briony Jones and Maeve Moynihan

This post is part of a larger collection covering the Global Insights webinar series, hosted jointly by Balsillie School of International Affairs (Canada), the Department of Politics and International Studies at the University of Warwick (UK), the Institute for Strategic Affairs (Ethiopia), American University's School of International Service (USA), and Konstanz University (Germany). Global Insights webinars take place every Thursday at 16:00h (BST). You can access a recording of this week's webinar here.

Panelists: Ann Fitz-Gerald (Moderator - BSIA), Briony Jones (PAIS/WICID), Shirin Rai (PAIS/WICID), Jonathan Crush (BSIA), Hallelujah Lulie (ISA), Rachel Robinson (AU), and Anja Osei (KU)

COVID-19 is highlighting existing inequalities, exacerbating differences between the Global North and Global South, and bringing to light the gendered, racialised, and ethicised differences in the way people experience and can respond to crisis. COVID-19 is a health crisis, but it is also a crisis of security, governance, and democracy. The following post summarizes reflections through five questions and five policy recommendations.

In what ways does the pandemic in the Global South differ from that in Europe and North America?
Both scholars and journalists have been quick to highlight the differing experiences between the Global North and the Global South during the pandemic. A more nuanced approach that acknowledges similarities between the Global North and South as well as variations within the Global South itself is necessary. Within the Global South, economic consequences may be more severe, health burdens are greater, infrastructures for regulating populations are weaker, and trust in political institutions is lower, all of which may affect the capacity of governments to deal with the crisis. However, the population in the Global South is younger, less urbanised, has a history of dealing with health emergencies, and has fewer severe infections and fatalities thus far. This may just reflect a time lag and under-reporting in the Global South, but it may also demonstrate forms of resilience and early action which are not present in the Global North. There have been inspiring and effective responses throughout the Global South that disprove many flawed portrayals of the region, including effective

food and resource distribution, accurate and consistent global health messaging, and the preservation of human rights in a time of crisis.

How is the COVID-19 pandemic in the North affecting the Global South?
The possibility of declining capital flow for development was a recurring topic throughout the webinar discussion. This decline encompasses remittances, foreign direct investment, and overseas development aid. In 2019, over 250 million migrants collectively remitted over $600 billion to their home countries. Remittances fell by 7% during the 2008 financial crisis, and the World Bank estimates that they have already dropped by 20% during the pandemic. The closure of borders in the Global North has already affected migration and remittance flows. As demand for clothing and other consumer goods declines, factory workers in the Global South have lost jobs without any security or pay. Support for foreign direct investment to Africa has already declined, and argued that the 0.7 Gross Domestic Product development assistance commitment may soon come under pressure as well. Such dramatic decreases in capital flow to the Global South will have a sustained impact on economies there. The US government's attempts to defund the World Health Organisation exemplifies how governments may use COVID-19 as an excuse to limit funding to multilateral organisations. These tendencies towards isolationism, as well as neo-colonial trends as the Global North serve as concerning signs of what may come.

What is the response to COVID-19 taken by the South and what are we learning from it?
A variety of responses from the Global South have arisen so far, including quick and effective responses which demonstrate strong leadership at a time of crisis. National and local context drives this variation, but histories of responding to health crises and activism around the right to health impact it as well, as we see in Brazil for example. The Africa Centre for Security Studies has pointed to innovative responses such as Presidential Task Forces which mobilise professionals from different disciplines to share best practices like mobile testing. Governments in the South initially responded to the informal sector with tight spatial control, but later reversed this decision realising its vital importance for food security, among other aspects of daily life. In Addis Ababa for example, where around 40% of the economy is informal, the application of lockdown has to be different to contexts that we might see in London or Paris. In the context of the Global South, many populations see the lockdown response as more painful than the pandemic, leading to protest. As governments respond to this opposition, monitoring and observing in future elections will be affected, which may further cement authoritarian tendencies in government and increased dissatisfaction among populations.

Many countries in the global south are pursuing far-reaching democratization agenda. How is/could COVID-19 impact on these agenda?
The Global South is in a liminal moment in which xenophobic and populist politics may intensify, or a more collectivist political approach will triumph where states, civil society organisations, and multilateralism win out. For example, there is evidence in India of civil society organisations providing the much-needed food to the poor during lockdown, however there is also evidence of the pandemic being communalised to target India's Muslim populations. This moment shows how the state can mobilise crises to shut down democratic critique in the name of urgency. Scholars, practitioners, and policy-makers must remain vigilant in order to guard against these potential threats to democracy, particularly

in states where authoritarian tendencies are using such restrictions to quash opposition activism. In Senegal, for example, a recent study found that more than 80% of the population is suffering from the economic conditions due to lockdown, yet more than 80% approve of the government measures and are ready to comply. The pandemic and responses to it have and will continue to exacerbate inequalities surrounding gender and sexual orientation, in particular. For example, access to contraception and abortions is reduced and governments with a pre-exiting anti-LGBTQI stance continue to target sexual and gender minorities, but access to community support services are diminished. We have yet to see if this will also offer a powerful rallying cry for populations to demand more from the state.

How will/has COVID-19 impact(ed) Security Issues in the Global South?
In many places, the pandemic has emboldened state power and created an entry point to consolidate national consensus. The pandemic threatens security surrounding food, justice, equality, and more. In 2019 the FAO estimated that almost 2 billion people globally were either moderately or severely food insecure. Lockdowns have disrupted supply chains, reduced income, and increased food insecurity amongst the most vulnerable as the Hungry Cities Project has identified. The joint food and economic crises are forcing governments in some nations to relax lockdown restrictions before the health pandemic allows. The panel also highlighted the way in which the pandemic is widening the justice gap. In a report in 2019, the Task Force on Justice found that 1.5 billion people globally have a justice problem which they cannot resolve and that 4.5 billion people globally are excluded from the opportunities that the law provides. Current emergency measures may lead to, or indeed themselves be, violations of human rights for the general population and racial, ethnic, religious, and sexual minorities. A coordinated response from all justice actors – local, national and international, civil society and private sector – is necessary to independently monitor these measures, create safe zones in violence hotspots, and generate people-centred data on needs.

Key Conclusions: Five pieces of advice for policy-makers
1. Development agencies in the Global North should design aid programming that incorporates social care and social work. Governments in both the Global North and Global South should include increased resources for social care in relevant budgets, and recognise the value of care work being undertaken, as well as the gendered dimensions as women take up the burden of additional care work due to COVID-19.
2. Governments in both the Global North and Global South should invest resources in social infrastructure and build strong social welfare systems, considering policy tools such as universal welfare provision, basic income, wage protections schemes and public childcare provision.
3. Policy makers in governments as well as practitioners in development agencies should take an interdisciplinary approach including, but not limited to, health expertise.
4. Fund independent data collection, including a focus on people-centred data.
5. National governments and multilateral organisations should use this opportunity to create national consensus and dialogue.

Through these five pieces of advice for policymakers, the topic of COVID-19 and the Global South can spur conversation about how we understand the effects of the pandemic, how we construct narratives of the 'crisis' of the pandemic, and how we respond as scholars, practitioners and policy makers to ameliorate the impact of the crisis. While leadership, innovation and best practices are visible in the Global South, resource needs and declining development aid are growing. A multilateral response in conjunction with local and national action are of utmost importance to address the complexities and variations in the Global South at this time of crisis.