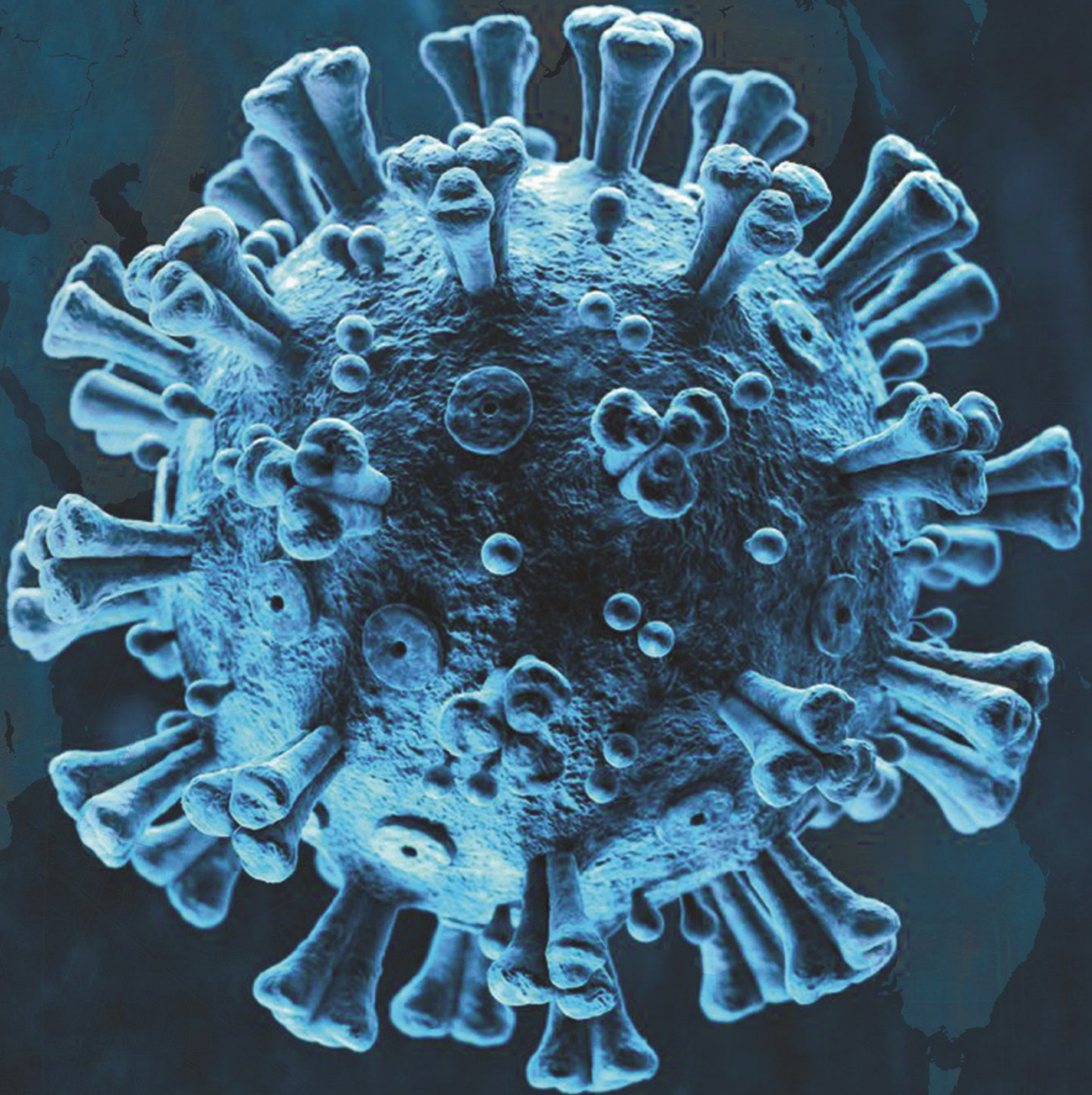


*Understanding International Politics after:*

*Covid -19*

*Challenges, Issues and Perspectives*



**Edited By:** Mahdi Javdani Moqaddam  
Amir Mohammad Esmaili

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

وَصَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ الطَّاهِرِينَ



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**Mahdi Javdani Moqaddam  
Amir Mohammad Esmaili**



**Imam Sadiq  
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## Content

<b>Notes on Contributors</b> .....	7
<b>Acknowledgement</b> .....	19
<b>Introduction</b> .....	21
<b>① Global Conflict and Peace in the Corona and Post-Corona Era; Health is indivisible</b> .....	25
<i>Heinz Gärtner</i>	
<b>② No, the Coronavirus Will Not Change the Global Order</b> .....	37
<i>Joseph S. Nye Jr.</i>	
<b>③ COVID-19 Pandemic: A Desperate Attempt to Shore up US Hegemony?</b> .....	43
<i>Kevin Barrett</i>	
<b>④ The Future World and Possible Alternatives</b> .....	59
<i>Rooholamin Saeidi</i>	
<b>⑤ COVID-19 and Reload of the World Order: Russian Point of View</b> .....	73
<i>Leonid Savin</i>	
<b>⑥ China's Foreign Policy in the Post COVID-19 Era</b> .....	87
<i>Wang Mingjin</i>	
<b>⑦ Globalization and the Corona Crisis</b> .....	101
<i>Erik Ringmar</i>	
<b>⑧ Covid-19 and International Relations Concepts: Nationalism and Identity</b> .....	117
<i>Glen M.E. Duerr</i>	
<b>⑨ Covid-19, Ideology and Religion</b> .....	133
<i>Alhagi Manta Drammeh</i>	
<b>①⑩ Covid-19, International Media and Social Media</b> .....	147
<i>Xiguang Li</i>	
<b>①① Coronavirus and the New International Security Puzzle</b>	169
<i>Asghar Eftekhari</i>	

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**6 ♦ Understanding International Politics after Covid-19**

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<b>① ② The COVID-19 Pandemic, Price War and International Crude Oil Market Landscape .....</b>	<b>179</b>
<i>Yongzhong Wang</i>	
<b>① ③ Russia after COVID-19: Challenges and Possible Paths toward a Future.....</b>	<b>195</b>
<i>Petra Rethmann</i>	
<b>① ④ In following the United States, an Implosion of Europe Is at Stake? .....</b>	<b>203</b>
<i>Stefano Vernole</i>	
<b>① ⑤ Europe: To Remain or Not to Remain .....</b>	<b>217</b>
<i>Mohamad Kleit</i>	
<b>① ⑥ Islamic Republic of Iran and Covid - 19: External challenges and internal capacities in the global epidemic .....</b>	<b>229</b>
<i>Mahdi Javdani Moghaddam &amp; Amir Mohammad Esmaeeli</i>	
<b>① ⑦ Covid-19 and Development Challenges in the Third World</b>	<b>243</b>
<i>Eric Lob</i>	
<b>① ⑧ Covid-19 and Development Process in Southeast Asia together with The Major New Paradigm of the 4th Industrial Revolution.....</b>	<b>263</b>
<i>Rodney Shakespeare</i>	
<b>① ⑨ COVID-19 and Its Implications for Africa .....</b>	<b>275</b>
<i>Ian Taylor</i>	
<b>② ⑩ From Fighting Against COVID-19 Cooperation between China and Middle East Countries to the Construction of a New International Order .....</b>	<b>287</b>
<i>ZHANG Yuan</i>	
<b>② ① Coronavirus and Politics in Persian Gulf .....</b>	<b>301</b>
<i>Jonathan Cristol</i>	
<b>② ② Saudi Arabia and the Twin Shocks: Impact on Politico-Religious Relations.....</b>	<b>313</b>
<i>Paul Aarts</i>	
<b>② ③ Iran-US relationships under the influence of Covid-19's spread .....</b>	<b>337</b>
<i>Dr. Abuzar Gohari Moqaddam</i>	
<b>② ④ Covid-19 and Iran-China Relations with the US and Russian Factors .....</b>	<b>349</b>
<i>Li Li</i>	

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20

## **From Fighting Against COVID-19 Cooperation between China and Middle East Countries to the Construction of a New International Order**

*ZHANG Yuan<sup>1</sup>*

The COVID-19 crisis is rapidly promoting the process of international Institution reform and is accelerating the formation of a new world order. Although the global spread of COVID-19 has not completely stopped, the urgent desire to facilitate resumption of work and reopen economy is the same all around the world. Both China and Middle East countries are active participants in the fight against the epidemic, and they are promoters and practitioners of

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1. This chapter has been inclusively written for the ISU Press and the author submitted it on August 20, 2020. Due to the significant position of the author and his views on Covid-19, some parts of the author's view might have been used by some other journals and websites.

international anti-pandemic cooperation. In order to protect the health of the people, improve public health security, and make the future a better world, the future and the new world order should first attach importance to and encourage all forms of international cooperation, taking the opportunity of contemporary health cooperation. Secondly, the ideal future world order should be multi-polar and abandon political stereotypes. Thirdly, it is more meaningful for the new world order to stabilize and rehabilitate economy and ensure people's livelihood than exacerbate political ideological disputes. Finally, it is also extremely important that the new world order should be dedicated to satisfying the common well-being of prosperity and stability, rather than competing for or preempting any world supremacy.

### **Introduction**

Since informed the WHO and other countries the unknown Pneumonia as soon as was identified, and released the genome sequence of the novel coronavirus, China has effectively curbed the New Coronavirus Pneumonia epidemic through difficult, brave but confident epidemic prevention and control campaign. China is open, transparent and responsible towards releasing information and sharing China's experience in virus control and the treatment of infected cases for promoting international cooperation. The epidemic is currently entering the gratifying stage of epidemic prevention and control, and full-scale resumption of work, resumption of business activities, and resumption of normal daily life have orderly returned in China.

In 2020, all countries are facing multiple pressures to curb turbulent epidemic pressures, gain economic recovery, ease financial crises, inspire people and rebuild public confidence. In fact, China, MENA countries, and all other countries around the world are constantly adjusting their epidemic prevention policies, economic policies, and public policies in

accordance with their respective national conditions and stages of epidemic. Although the epidemic is still in the process of repetition, and people are widely worried that there will be a second wave, but every citizen in the world is looking forward to defeating the epidemic as soon as possible, overcoming the technical difficulty of vaccines, and restarting a stable and developing new life.

The COVID-19 epidemic is forcing world reforms and accelerating the formation of a new world order. In what form should the future world order benefit the people and benefit the governance of all countries, it is currently a major international political issue that people are generally concerned about. Between the initiative and the passive, the views that contributed to the new world order are constantly colliding, and the political efforts to build the world order are constantly being restructured repeatedly.

#### **New international order requires comprehensive international cooperation**

In order to protect the health of the people in the future, in order to promote public health security and reconstruct a better new world, the new world order should first attach importance to and encourage all international cooperation, including health cooperation. The ongoing battle against the COVID-19 epidemic shows a truth: the virus has no borders, and public health security threats that may affect people's daily life also have no borders. Mankind is a closely connected community of shared future. To overcome the epidemic, sincere and professional international cooperation is necessary.

In May, the video conference of the 73rd World Health Assembly emphasized that countries should strengthen the coordination and cooperation of the international community in response to the COVID-19 epidemic, and emphasized that preventing the further spread of the virus is inseparable from

the work of the World Health Organization. In June, the Global Vaccine Summit hosted by British Prime Minister Boris Johnson welcomed more than 50 representatives, including 35 heads of state or government to discuss the goal of helping those poorest countries avoid fatal diseases and get rid of the threat of a COVID-19.

Among the Middle Eastern countries, Saudi Arabia's G20 presidency calls for further global organizing responsibilities, and COVID-19 increased overseas expectations. Saudi Arabia has hosted a series of high-level and professional international video conferences in response to the COVID-19 epidemic since March. The themes of those conferences involve agriculture, tourism, trade and investment and many other fields. China's leaders and delegations of important Chinese enterprises have attended all major international cooperation conferences and activities mentioned above.

During this epidemic period, China also took the initiative to build a platform for multilateral cooperation and communication. Taking June as an example, "Extraordinary China-Africa Summit on Solidarity Against COVID-19" and "High-level Video Conference on Belt and Road International Cooperation" are two of the most notable via video conferences that mainly focus on developing countries. In order to upholding multilateralism, President Xi pledge at the Extraordinary China-Africa Summit that "once the development and deployment of COVID-19 vaccine is completed in China, African countries will be among the first to benefit"<sup>1</sup>.

On June 18, in order to globally overcome the epidemic and to reopen the world economy as soon as possible, China hosted High-level Video Conference on Belt and Road

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1. "Full Text: Xi Jinping's Speech at Extraordinary China-Africa Summit on Solidarity Against COVID-19," *CGTN*, Jun 18, 2020, <https://news.cgtn.com/news/2020-06-17/Full-text-Xi-s-speech-at-China-Africa-summit-on-COVID-19-fights-Rp7hgf5tu0/index.html>.

International Cooperation. The Foreign Ministers or ministerial officials of 25 countries and the Director-General of WHO and the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations attended the video conference. In the joint statement of this conference, China and the participating countries jointly expressed support for the multilateral trading system and will advance practical Belt and Road cooperation in a people-centered approach towards a “Health Silk Road”<sup>1</sup>.

When China was hit hardest by the epidemic, Middle Eastern countries expressed their sympathy and assistance to China. When countries in the Middle East are facing the pressure of the epidemic, China has actively given the human, material, financial and technical support and assistance to the countries in the Middle East by virtue of Chinese experience in fighting the epidemic. When China is busy fighting the epidemic situation in its own country, all Arab countries and regional organizations in the Arab world unanimously support China's fight against the epidemic. The member states of the Arab League donated about 10 million masks, nearly 3.2 million pairs of gloves, 100,000 sets of protective suits, and 65,000 goggles.<sup>2</sup> By the end of June, China had provided about 8.4 million masks, over 1.1 million test kits, and nearly 300,000 protective suits to Arab countries. China held video conferences of health experts for 17 Arab countries and the Arab League and GCC, dispatched medical expert teams to 8 Arab countries with urgent needs to share mature diagnosis and treatment experience and prevention and control solutions without reserve. China has also provided 1 million US dollars in annual donations to the

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1. “Full Text: Joint Statement of the High-level Video Conference on Belt and Road International Cooperation: Combating COVID-19 with Solidarity,” *The State Council Information Office the People's Republic of China*, Jun 22, 2020, [http://english.scio.gov.cn/beltandroad/2020-06/22/content\\_76188774.htm](http://english.scio.gov.cn/beltandroad/2020-06/22/content_76188774.htm).

2. Wang Guangda, “Joining Hands in Fighting Against Epidemic and Pushing China-Arab Cooperation to New Heights”(in Chinese), *Guangming Daily*, June 22, 2020.



United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), provided anti-epidemic material assistance to the medical institutions under the Agency, and provided help to Palestine refugees in Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria through the Agency.<sup>1</sup>

China has established comprehensive strategic partnership with Iran. At the end of January, when the Chinese Lunar New Year coincided with the fight against the COVID-19, the Iranian foreign minister wrote on Twitter: "No matter whether it is prosperity or adversity, Iran will always stand with the Chinese people" that moved Chinese netizens. Iran was the first country to openly support China in fighting the epidemic and provided material assistance to China.<sup>2</sup> After coronavirus outbreaks and the number of COVID-19 infections increases in Iran, as early as February 28, a team of volunteer medical expert team from the Red Cross Society of China dispatched to Tehran to provide support to the COVID-19 prevention and control in Iran.<sup>3</sup> This is the first group of volunteer medical experts dispatched by China. In fact, not only provides medical and technical supplies and support to Iran, China also sends medical teams to Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Algeria, Sudan and other Middle Eastern countries. China also provides medical supplies to other Middle Eastern countries to help improve the detection capabilities, provide China's experience of treatment and share lessons.

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1. Li Chengwen, "To Make 'China-Arab Contribution' to Overcome the Epidemic"(in Chinese), *The People's Daily*, June 22, 2020.

2. 中国驻伊朗伊斯兰共和国大使馆：《驻伊朗大使常华在伊朗迈赫赫尔通讯社发表署名文章<巩固和发展中伊全面战略伙伴关系是双方的共同意愿>》，*中华人民共和国外交部*(Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China), April 30, 2020,

[http://new.fmprc.gov.cn/web/dszlsjt\\_673036/ds\\_673038/t1775135.shtml](http://new.fmprc.gov.cn/web/dszlsjt_673036/ds_673038/t1775135.shtml)。

3. 《中国红十字会赴伊朗志愿专家团队与伊朗红新月会进一步交流中国疫情防控经验》，中国红十字会（Red Cross Society of China），March 12, 2020, <https://www.redcross.org.cn/html/2020-03/68347.html>.

The image of China and Middle Eastern countries cooperating in fighting COVID-19 and working together in the same boat is a reflection of the deep friendship between countries and a good example of close cooperation within the international community. The composition of the new international order is inseparable from responsible big powers and healthy international institutions working together to jointly provide global public goods.

**New international order should be an unbiased multi-polarization pattern**

The ideal future world order should be multi-polarized and should abandon political stereotypes. To promote the joint cooperation of the international community to fight against the epidemic, it is necessary to support the international mechanism represented by WHO to play a role in the global anti-epidemic cooperation, and to maintain the status and role of the United Nations. A fair international order is also related to whether backward countries that do not have sufficient healthcare infrastructure and vaccine research capability can also have fair access to treatment and prevention of COVID-19.

The COVID-19 treatment and control cooperation between China and Middle East countries is a positive example of cooperation between developing countries. Effective protection, enforced quarantine and isolation, monitor examination and testing, clinical treatment, epidemiological tracking, information sharing, vaccine research and many fields are inseparable from the cooperation of developed and developing countries. When irresponsible and irrational populist politicians are busy playing the blame game, successful communication and mutual help among professional medical experts and professional technical teams from various countries are still

modeling the impression that multilateral cooperation is still feasible and effective.

Even if there is no challenge of the COVID-19 threat, the cooperation between China and Middle East countries is a good manifestation of an unbiased and multi-polar order. There are frequent head of state diplomacy and high-level visits between China and Middle East countries. Take the China-Arab Cooperation Forum established in 2004 as an example. The China-Arab Cooperation Forum is a multilateral platform for deepening cooperation in the Arab region. China and the 22 member states of the Arab League have built joint efforts to make BRI a road for peace, prosperity, openness, innovation and civilization on the principles and idea of achieving shared growth through discussion and collaboration.<sup>1</sup>

The China-Arab Cooperation Forum formulates a platform for regional collective cooperation and pragmatic cooperation. The cooperation between China and Arab countries in fighting against COVID-19 reflects the concept of building a global community of shared future, and enriched the connotation of the promising international community.

The Middle East countries' support for China's fighting COVID-19 is comprehensive. Unlike the situation in the western developed countries that stigmatized China's achievements in fighting the epidemic, media reports from the Middle East countries on China's epidemic prevention and control generally support China's policy. In February, when China fighting against the novel coronavirus, the Burj Khalifa in Abu Dubai, the UAE's main landmarks, were illuminated with the Chinese color to send out a message of

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1. 《中国和阿拉伯国家合作共建“一带一路”行动宣言》，中阿合作论坛 (China-Arab States Cooperation Forum) , July 13, 2018, <http://www.chinaarabcf.org/chn/zagx/gjydy/t1577010.htm>.

UAE's solidarity with China.<sup>1</sup> Middle East' epidemic news are not hesitant to report on China's achievements in resuming work and resuming business, nor are they afraid to criticize the US government for its ineffective treatment. This is an expression of unbiasedness and upholding international justice.

The direction of future international order should abandon the Cold War mentality and respect the true national capabilities and governance levels of all countries. The comparative advantage between countries is reflected in their governance capabilities, not so-called the pros and cons of political system.

### **New international order should focus on economic development**

Jointly boosting the economy, securing the wellbeing of humanity, improving people's livelihood and maintain world prosperity is more meaningful than political ideological disputes. In addition to the public health security crisis brought to the world by COVID-19, the more serious impact is the enormous pressure on public finances. In the World Economic Outlook report published by the IMF on June 24, the global economy will shrink by 4.9%<sup>2</sup> this year. This scale of economic shrinkage is the worst recession since the Great Depression in the 1930s. World Bank is even more pessimistic. According World Bank's Global Economic Prospects report, the world economy is expected to shrink 5.2%<sup>3</sup>, which is the deepest global recession in 80 years. In

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1. Jay Hilotin, "Solidarity: We're One with Wuhan, Says UAE," *Gulf News*, Feb 2, 2020, <https://gulfnews.com/uae/solidarity-were-one-with-wuhan-says-uae-1.1580667973341>.

2. "I.M.F. Predicts Deeper Global Downturn Even as Economies Reopen," *The New York Times*, Jun 24, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/24/business/imf-world-economic-outlook.html>.

3. Anneken Tappe, "World Bank Says the Global Economy Will Shrink by 5.2%

the post-epidemic era, revitalizing the economy is not only a priority for developing countries, but also a major test for the governments of developed countries.

China is a promoter of peace in the Middle East and a participant in the development of the Middle East. As the Middle East security forum entitled “Security in the middle east under the new situation challenges and prospects” held in Beijing in November 2019 announced, participants from Middle Eastern countries and China agreed on the role of China in MENA with long-time complex security problems such as regional political turmoil and security dilemmas.<sup>1</sup> Basing on the experience of solving security issues in the Middle East, raising the economic level, eliminating poverty, and promoting security through development are the fundamental prescriptions for eradicating shackles of traditional and untraditional security problems, like terrorism.

The rising global economic recession crisis and turbulent financial markets make the top priority of the international community should be to restore world’s economy by ensuring and maintaining the openness, stability, security of the global industrial and supply chain. Propagating political stereotypes, advocating populism, building trade barriers, and advocating "de-globalization" are not helpful for economic development. The consequences of stigmatization of fighting the pandemic and politicization of the virus will impact on low-income countries’ fight against the epidemic, thereby harming the overall situation of world economic development in the end.

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This Year,” CNN, Jun 8, 2020,  
<https://edition.cnn.com/2020/06/08/economy/world-bank-coronavirus-global-recession/index.html>.

1. 《王毅阐释中东安全问题的中国方案》，中华人民共和国外交部 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China) , Nov 27, 2019, <http://new.fmprc.gov.cn/web/wjbzhd/t1719429.shtml>.

After the spread of the epidemic is controlled, the recovery process of the world economy will be long. The future goal of the Belt and Road Initiative is to build a healthy road, a road to recovery and a road to development. Continuing to promote the construction of the BRI will help all countries in the world to work together to restore economy. BRI is China's manifestation of a responsible member, and a manifestation of the humanitarian spirit of working together in the international community.

**New international order should not compete for supremacy**

Finally, it is also extremely important that the world order should be dedicated to satisfying the common wellbeing of prosperous and stable, rather than taking advantage of the strategic opportunities created by the epidemic to be a predator of world hegemony.

China's record in fighting the COVID-19 pneumonia cannot be achieved without the support and help of the whole world. The State Council Information Office's (SCIO) newest white paper 'Fighting COVID-19: China in Action' provides a series of touching numbers : the international community provided valuable support and assistance when the coronavirus situation in China was at its most difficult. Leaders of more than 170 countries, heads of 50 international and regional organizations, and more than 300 foreign political parties and organizations expressed solidarity and support for China. 77 countries and 12 international organizations donated emergency medical supplies. Local governments, enterprises, non-governmental organizations and people from 84 countries donated materials. The BRICS New Development Bank and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank provided emergency loans of RMB7 billion and RMB2.485 billion, while the World Bank and the Asian

Development Bank offered loans for the building of China's public health emergency management system.<sup>1</sup>

While under the tremendous pressure of coronavirus control, China has moved quickly to provide as much assistance to the international community as it can. As of May 31, China had sent 29 medical expert teams to 27 countries, and offered assistance to 150 countries and 4 international organizations.<sup>2</sup>

The Covid-19 global pandemic is a serious crisis and a daunting challenge for the entire world. It poses a grave threat to all countries and their government. Governments' response measures do not inherently have policy advantages from any transcendental ideology or political position. Francis Fukuyama, a well-known supporter of democracy, also admitted that in countries that are unwilling to offend voters, the response to coronavirus pneumonia has resulted in a high number of deaths.<sup>3</sup> Neither the United States nor Western countries that historically have economic advantages over China should let go of their arrogance and prejudice towards China. The participating goals repeatedly emphasized by China are peace, prosperity and stability all over the world. China advocates cooperation, not competition, not conflict.

It has to admit that there are still political differences and ideological disputes in the world. There are still countries trying to compete for hegemony on the world's or regional political stage. Many realist observers argue that confrontation between big powers is inevitable. Others hope

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1. "Full Text: Fighting COVID-19: China in Action," *The State Council Information Office the People's Republic of China*, June 2020, <http://www.scio.gov.cn/zfbps/32832/Document/1681809/1681809.htm>.

2. Ibid.

3. Francis Fukuyama, "The Pandemic and Political Order," *Foreign Affairs*, July/August, 2020, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/world/2020-06-09/pandemic-and-political-order>.

to use multilateralism to offset the confrontation.<sup>1</sup> However, any country or international organization that puts people's well-being at the forefront of their common efforts inevitably build a Global Community of Health for All, for a common prosperity and a better tomorrow, rather than the politicization of economy. As China and the Middle East countries have demonstrated in their cooperation in epidemic prevention, in the presence of a common health security crisis, pragmatic cooperation will be used to lay a solid foundation for mutual trust and solid mutual trust to create a more stable and prosperous community of shared future.

The world order is already in the process of gradually change. The pandemic accelerated the changing of new world order. Unreasonable unilateralism will only erode the already crumbling soft power appeal. The post-hegemonic order in the post-epidemic era should be an international order without absolute hegemony. This new international order is not an international anarchy, but a multi-polar, jointly consultative international order full of confidence in cooperation.

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1. Kemal Dervis, "Less Globalization, More Multilateralism," *Project Syndicate*, Jun 10, 2020, <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/minimizing-deglobalization-risk-of-covid19-backlash-by-kemal-dervis-2020-06>.