**Covid-19 and the foreign strategies of Pakistan**

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June 14, 2021

Voltaire on one occasion said, “The danger which is least expected soonest comes to us,” Indeed, illness and infections have afflicted mankind since the earliest days. Nonetheless, it was not until agricultural societies evolved that the transmission of these viruses increased noticeably. Malaria, tuberculosis, leprosy, influenza, smallpox, and other diseases first developed during these early years. The more cultured humans turned out to be—with loftier cities, more glamorous trade courses, and improved exchange with diverse ecosystems—the more likely infections spread in human history.

In this context, if we examine the current situation, the world is changing its attitude from a security-oriented post 9/11 position to a growth concentrated post Covid-19 epoch. The virus has smashed South Asia with full force and its second and third upsurge may influence the region more intensely. Being a key state, both internationally and locally, Pakistan’s approach influences the region tremendously. In respect to the country itself, Pakistan has maintained a practical position when formulating its foreign affairs opinions and having it understood internationally while dealing with the turmoil of COVID-19. A maintainable concord with Afghanistan and a respectable relationship with it was one of Pakistan’s top priorities. Our position in the Afghan Peace Process will help bring about peace in the region. According to the most recent developments, a contract between the two nations to renew business has also been made under the Afghan Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA) of 2010.

[NIH study finds evidence COVID-19 was circulating in five US States in December 2019](https://nation.com.pk/16-Jun-2021/nih-study-finds-evidence-covid-19-was-circulating-in-five-us-states-in-december-2019)

In other news, Islamabad donated medical materials to India, which is in the midst of an uncontrollable and devastating Covid-19 wave. Ventilators, personal protective equipment, digital X-ray machines and other linked apparatus along with fifty ambulances from the Edhi Center have been sent across the border. If both nations can work together for the quick transfer of this aid then it is not beyond doubt that further collaboration is possible between the two. In fact, Pakistan has embarked upon missions to collaborate with India. Recently, for example, the Foreign Minister of Pakistan spoke to the UN about Palestine and highlighted our priorities to be peace and negotiation, admiringly so. As Shah Mahmood Qureshi stated, “It is time to say enough, the voice of the Palestinian people cannot be silenced, what we do today or cannot do would be recorded in history, driven by arrogance and encouraged by license.”

It is quite interesting to note that it was Pakistan that proposed holding an online conference for South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) meetings. This is noteworthy because it shows that regional teamwork has been reinvigorated, something that was previously lacking. While the pandemic brought all the states together, Pakistan took the moment to highlight concern about Kashmir as well.

[Fitch revises up 2021 global GDP growth to 6.3%](https://nation.com.pk/15-Jun-2021/fitch-revises-up-2021-global-gdp-growth-to-6-3-percent)

It goes without saying that the world is heading more towards regionalism. Peace in Kabul cannot be denied at any cost. Neither Pakistan nor other South Asian states can allow a civil war in Kabul. The government of Pakistan should maintain its stance, specifically in light of the ruthless guerilla attacks that have taken place in Afghanistan lately. Another challenge ahead of our government the provision of visas for external Pakistanis, especially from the Gulf. Furthermore, according to the World Bank, ‘Pakistan, India and Sri Lanka would be the most disturbed states during this pandemic.’ Thus, handling debt is another important challenge ahead of the government. This would be the time for authorities to focus on aiding the market through empowering industries and enacting guards against inexpensive imports. This would reduce our independence on external states and improve domestic developments.

Pakistan should continue to promote mutual cooperation within regional mediums like the OIC and SAARC. Such degree of diplomacy should also be used in dealing with the pandemic. We have had far too many disastrous encounters with Covid-19, now the focus should be on eliminating the effects of the pandemic entirely. On the other hand, we must devise a strategy against the US’ continuous apprehensions over CPEC and the economic advances China is making world-over. It is understandable that all efforts as of right now are directed towards controlling the pandemic but some thought must also be given to external affairs and the stance we want to assume. The point is to act responsibly within the constraints of the pandemic.