

Is It Too Early To Speculate On A Post-Corona New World Order ? - Mehmet Ögütçü



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The new world order has not come into existence in a timely manner as one would have expected in the wake of the Soviet collapse 30 years ago. In fact, it is still in the making, with no signs of settling down. The current [Corona Pandemic](#), ravaging every corner of the world, could perhaps bring this distant prospect closer to us than imagined.

Today there is no scarcity of [debate](#) on how the new economic and geopolitical order would be re-calibrated in the post-corona world. We know that creating a

novel order requires dramatic turns in human life and is a fairly slow-moving process that unfolds through predictable ways. However, in times of unexpected crises as we are now bedeviling with, a wild card could enter the system from the outside to effect unpredictable yet significant changes.

At the moment, it is difficult to tell if the new coronavirus is such an event or not. We shall see as it is progressing, but we should also contemplate alternative futures to inspire government and business leaders.

Pandemic to disrupt the established order

Globalization is of course not the cause of the disease we face, but it makes the consequences of disease outbreaks much more far-reaching. In doing so, it creates a geopolitical and economic dimension that will help shape the global system in ways not foreseen.

The comparative advantage of global trade and cost-effective international supply chains is in part offset by the comparative disadvantage that new diseases can create around the globe and the consequences on both health and international trade.

Remember that the social fabric of ancient Greece was demolished by an epidemic that [killed one third of Athenians](#), including their leader Pericles. The 14th century "[Black Death](#)" occurred at a time when the Mongol conquest of Central Asia made trade along the Silk Road between Asia and Europe more prevalent. [The 1918 flu pandemic](#) (so-called "Spanish Flu") accelerated the end of the First World War and interfered with the peace process as it struck down many of the delegates to the Paris Peace Conference. It stalled the global economy and caused a wave of post-viral depression.

This time we do not yet know what the long-term consequences of this corona

calamity will bring. If we are to believe Harvard epidemiologist [Marc Lipsitch](#), between 40 percent and 70 percent of the world's population could become infected, [costing the lives of 30 to 50 million](#), a death toll comparable to that of the 1918 Pandemic.

Priorities are different

As of now, given that the world is preoccupied with containing the spread of the virus and thus unable to think of anything else, no one has seriously applied their minds to the enormous consequences of the pandemic for the day after. The stock market has plunged further and faster than it did in the [Great Wall Street Crash of 1929](#). Trillions of dollars in wealth have vanished. There are far fewer millionaires and billionaires and many poorer people locked at their homes today than there were a few months ago.

Tourism, air travel, vacation cruises, international gatherings and festivals have already shut down. Travel bans between countries and continents are being imposed. Conventions, concerts and sporting events, including the Tokyo Olympics, are being canceled or postponed. Supply chains have been disrupted globally, though it is not clear how much this is due to the disease itself and how much to counterproductive containment measures.

Whether we will have enough food, water, energy and medical supplies are of greater urgency than us speculating on the possible new order to be engineered.

Key concerns to address

Yet, the questions arise, whether we like them or not: Will Europe lose its status as a global power if this epidemic is not contained soon given that European countries have ageing populations and are not demographically and financially equipped to fight the coronavirus? Will it end Beijing's hegemonic dreams or, to

the contrary, put China back on its “peaceful rise” trajectory towards the 2049 aspirations?

There are also other questions on why Trump’s “first America” approach will result in its shrinking of global supremacy in many ways and how it will affect Russia, which has never given up hopes of staging a dramatic return to the global high table. India will likely be the most severely impacted populous democracy in the world, alongside Iran. The socially [vulnerable Gulf monarchies](#) will look for ways of surviving in the current [low oil price environment](#). More broadly, leaders will not stop questioning the effects of this crisis on [globalization](#) whilst countries and communities retreat into their shells as a form of self-preservation.

Less democracy?

In this coronavirus pandemic, people now seem to be looking for authoritative leaders, who care their own people first. Medical historians have long noted that democracy is unhelpful in epidemics, when swift, decisive action is needed, and concerns abound about this outbreak putting an alternative, more repressive governance model to the test.

Liberals are unsure whether it has been a historic mistake to outsource our economic independence and excessively rely for vital necessities upon other nations that have never had our best interests at heart. It may one day be said that the coronavirus delivered the deathblow to a half-century of globalization, and to the era of interdependence of the world’s great nations.

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The coronavirus may be a virus but it is also a stern warning to us all that things have gone from bad to worse in many areas, despite significant progress in other domains. It is time to redress what has not worked and take steps to cure the

systemic diseases on poverty, redistribution of power, climate change, energy-water-food nexus and geopolitical conflicts.

Maybe this is a good time to reflect on the state of our civilization and contemplate alternative, better, equitable approaches.



Mehmet Ögütçü, Eski diplomat, başbakan danışmanı, Uluslararası Enerji Ajansı'nın Asya-Pasifik Başkanı, OECD Uluslararası Yatırım Başkanı, British Gas Hükümet İşleri Direktörü, Genel Energy, Invensys, Yaşar Holding, Şişecam Bağımsız yönetim kurulu üyesi. Halen merkezi Londra'daki *Global Resources Partnership* şirketi ve *The London Energy Club*'ın icra başkanı, *International Energy Charter*'ın özel elçisi ve *Trinus Capital* şirketi yönetim kurulu üyesi. *Geleceğimiz Asya'da mı?* (Milliyet), *2023 Türkiye Rüyası* (Etkileşim), *Yeni Büyük Oyun* (Doğan Kitap), *Yaşam Bir Seyahattir* (Destek), *The New Geopolitical and Economic Journey: Turkey's Next 10 Years* (Bilgesam) kitaplarının yazarı.