

GLOBAL STRATEGY FORUM

CHAIRMAN'S LETTER - APRIL 2020

Dear GSF Friend,

I hope that you are all managing to fare well in the face of this wretched pandemic which is presenting us all with such existential and medical challenges and which has forced us all to alter the way we live. This has been the case not least for Global Strategy Forum which for the last six weeks has unavoidably been silenced and remains silent.

A silent Forum is a contradiction in terms and so during this volatile period we in GSF have been setting our minds as to whether and how we can adjust and adapt our format to this current situation, in particular how to remain connected to and engaged with all those who attend the Forum. Given the nature of what we do and how we do it, I have to say there is no easy answer in the short term. Also we now know that the lockdown has been extended at least until early May. Whenever it ends it will take some time to get a new programme up and running.

So for the moment while we are unable to host our regular events programme, we will instead be producing a regular newsletter, containing a series of invited expert comment and analysis. It will draw on the unparalleled knowledge base of the influential network of international affairs and security and defence experts who form GSF's Advisory Board, and beyond. Each newsletter will be emailed out to all in the usual way.

All our content will also be available on our website, which itself will become more interactive. Please do share your ideas, comments and questions freely, just as you would do during our usual sessions. We hope that this will allow us to generate open debate and discussion on the key foreign affairs, defence and international security issues raised by the coronavirus crisis and its handling, and to look to what the future might hold. In this way, we hope to continue the GSF conversation on the critical issues of day virtually, until we are able to return to doing so actually.

We should not lack for material. Whatever happens when the current global crisis is over, things will not be the same as they were before. International relations will have changed, some temporarily and some more permanently. The shape of international threats and the security needed to meet them will have altered dramatically. The world economy and its prospects - and our place within it - will be very different than it was before this crisis hit. Indeed the prioritisation and analysis of global risks of all kinds will need urgent revisiting.

It will also be a chance to reflect on how the heady post-World War optimism which led to the founding of the United Nations had morphed into a sort of bullies' world where the power of money and might in very few hands had become the dominant forces of our international world, too often blind to injustices and deaf to the cries of human suffering. We should urgently consider whether in the post-Covid19 world this could be replaced by a system which, with the will of the world behind it, would put greater store by fairness, justice and peace and more importantly, the ability to deliver them. The challenge will be to do this without at the same time recreating the soul-sapping monster of overweening bureaucracy which has done so much damage in the past.

The first of these newsletters will reach you next week when the Rt Hon Sir Malcolm Rifkind QC launches this series with his views on China's place in the world today.

In the meantime I send you all my best wishes, urging you to stay safe and well in preparation for the challenges of our changing world ahead. I much look forward to welcoming you back to GSF events as soon as we are able to resume them.

Michael Lothian
Chairman, Global Strategy Forum
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