



**Center for Global & Strategic Studies
Islamabad**

Challenges, Strategies and Responses to Tackle the Covid-19

By Dr. Ashfaq Ahmed, Member Board of Experts, Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS), Islamabad & Assistant Professor, Department of International Relations, University of Sargodha, Pakistan



Published on 21st April 2020

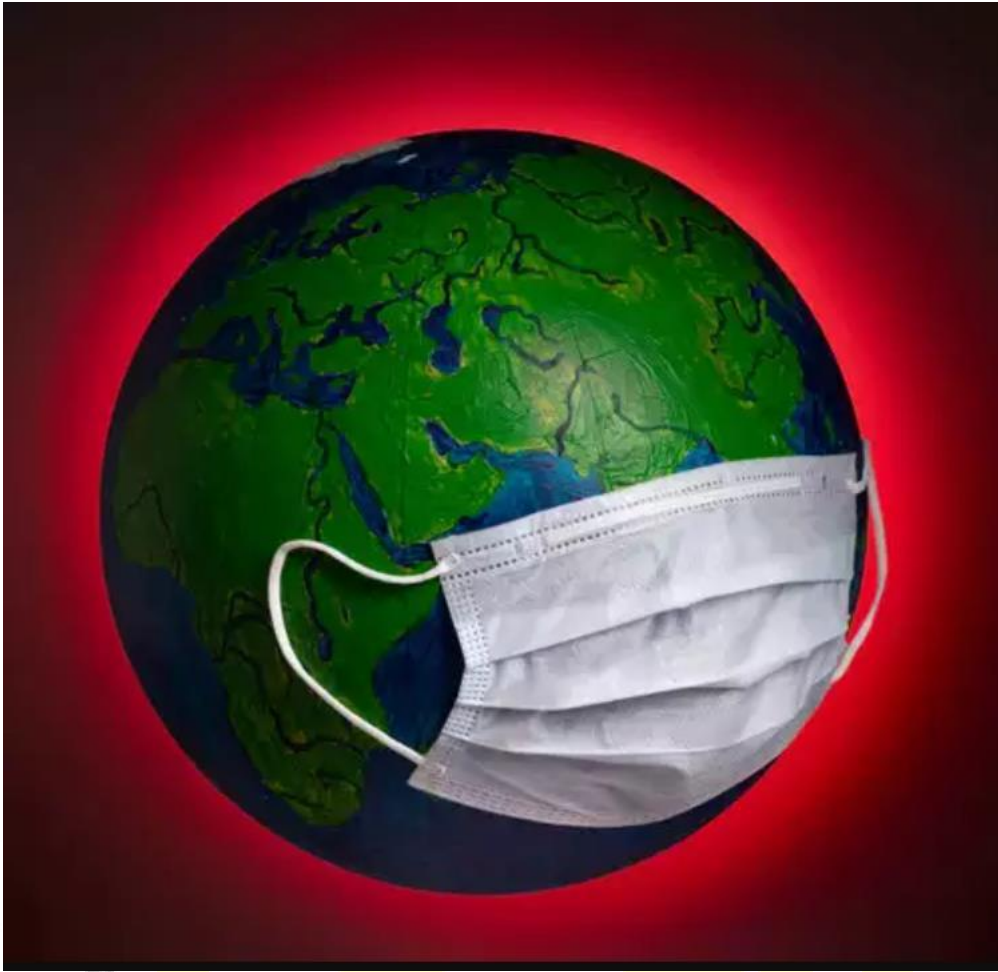
The current scenario of COVID 19 is causing different challenges globally. Countries are busy in controlling the pandemic. Policies and strategies are being devised and in continuation with the updates. China as a epicentre of the virus has formulated a workable model to control the threats.

China had to impose restrictions on 11 million residents of Wuhan metropolis because of 50,000 confirmed cases of infections and 2,500 deaths. The strict lockdown was lifted after 76 days. Zeng Guang, chief epidemiologist with the Chinese Centre for Disease Control and Prevention feared new cases of infections cannot be ruled out. Chinese health experts have urged the masses to take precautionary measures to prevent the second wave of the pandemic.

France could not prevent the spread of infection resulting in 14876 deaths. President Emmanuel Macron announced to extend the pre-existent lockdown till May 11. Macron also announced that social gatherings and leisure activities will remain banned until mid-July. Italian government combating COVID-19 but even then 651 people died in a single day. Later, it decided to extend the national lockdown till May 3. On May 14, the Guardian reported that the death toll from COVID-19 passes 20,000 while over 1,86,000 cases of infections were registered it means the death toll in Italy will, unfortunately, will increase in the near future. Overall 4,777 Iranians have lost their lives owing to COVID-19. 76,389 active cases of patients infected with COVID-19 are reported from Iran. It is one of the worst affected countries. Hence, in the next few days' additional reports of recovery and loss of lives will be received from Tehran and other parts of the world.

People, politicians, and government officials are anxious to know when this situation will be normalized. Discussions are being held on social media, webinars, during talk shows and various articles are published in print media over when lockdown will come to an end? However, the worrisome aspects of these discussions are nobody knows the answer as there is no simple answer to it. People therefore

should be mentally prepared by the governments that lockdown can remain imposed for at least four to six months. Governments around the world are discussing various strategies to prevent further spread of infection and lift the ban. Scott Gottlieb proposed four-phase “road map to re-opening,” the lockdown in Australia in the American Enterprise Institute. President of Iran Hassan Rowhani announced Iranian national strategy to relax the lockdown in three phases. Rowhani appeared on state television and tried to take Iranian masses into confidence. World Health Officials (WHO) also recommended lifting the lockdown in phases or stepwise approach should be adopted. W.H.O. recommends quarantine to deal with pandemic? It was prescribed by Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) Abd al-Rahm?n ibn ‘Awf said: “I heard the Messenger of All?h (PBUH) say: “If you hear that (the plague) is in a land, do not go there, and if it breaks out in a land where you are, do not leave, fleeing from it.”



An important aspect of the Coronavirus pandemic is we are struggling for our survival. Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison rightly stated that it is twofold crises. First, it is a health crisis and secondly, a global economic crisis. We cannot lift it at once as it would result in the second wave. Substantial evidence confirms this claim e.g. Singapore effectively managed the pandemic at initial stages as soon as it eased restrictions infections jumped by 60 percent. In the second instance Japanese authorities kept the infection low for two months. Shinzo Abe had to impose one month state of emergency till May 6, in Tokyo and six other urban centres after easing restrictions. Abe in his televised address urged masses to reduce their contacts with others by 70 to 80%. The second aspect COVIDid-19 is it can result in global/national

economic crisis. Economic crisis if mismanaged can result in overthrow of the governments. Let us not forget 1997, economic crisis of Thailand. Mismanagement of economic crisis resulted in joblessness, inflation, prices of basic commodities were sky-high. Consequentially, people started protesting against the government and overthrow it. In 2010, Kirghizstan government failed to skilfully handle economic crisis resulting in unemployment, bankruptcy, and later civil war like situation. It resulted in loss of 46 lives, 637 people were injured and public property was damaged. Government of Pakistan cannot afford to mismanage the economic situation. Prime Minister Imran Khan appeared on national media to announce government decision to partially lift ban on several sectors. Khan endeavoured to avoid economic strangulation leading to bankruptcy and economic collapse.

West has realized the acute situation and Easter was celebrated under lockdown with empty Churches. Muslims in Middle East are avoiding religious gatherings and offering prayers at home. It is therefore stated that easing restrictions too early is dangerous opening the gates of second wave of pandemic in the country lifting/easing restrictions and international community. The pain suffered by the nation, the hardships, economic problems faced all will go in vain. In Pakistan prior to lifting the restrictions or complete lockdown we will have to ask ourselves do we fulfil the prerequisites. Or we are opening the gates of second wave of plague. In my view we have moved from first phase to second phase. During first phase the proliferation of pandemic was contained by social distancing, banning travelling, social gatherings, religious congregations, closing public places and marriage ceremonies. Second phase started on April 14. However, it is crucial stage and requires testing system to

remain functional. It will subsequently followed by third phase. Strict restrictions will have to be imposed in areas with continued cases of infections. Mismanagement certainly will result in widespread pandemic, collapse of health system. It would become a protracted struggle with psychological problems to be followed and longer road to recovery. The crux of the matter is we are at decisive point. Second phase with continued testing will determine either to re-impose restrictions or lift lockdown.

