June 9, 2020

Conflicts

Hafta’s eastern forces quit Libyan capital after year-long assault. Libya’s internationally recognised government has regained control of Tripoli, driving eastern forces out of the capital after a 14-month battle, in which foreign powers poured in arms and fighters. Both sides have agreed to resume UN-brokered ceasefire talks.

Afghans condemn Iranian police after refugees killed in car blaze. Afghans have taken to social media to denounce Iranian police after a video of a car carrying refugees being set ablaze in Iran went viral, arousing new anger weeks after Afghan officials accused Iranian border guards of drowning migrants.

President Trump orders big US troop cut in Germany. US President Donald Trump has ordered the military to remove 9,500 troops from Germany, a senior US official said, a move likely to raise concerns in Europe about the US’ commitment to the continent.
Thousands gathered in Hong Kong to mark the 1989 Tiananmen Square. Thirty-one years later, the people of Hong Kong continue to engage in anti-government protests. As China tightens its control over Hong Kong, people fear this might be their last opportunity to mark the anniversary.

**Development**

Donors promise Yemen $1.35 billion, falling short of UN target of $2.4 billion needed for aid operations. The conflict has left 80% of Yemen’s population reliant on aid. The country now faces the spread of the novel coronavirus among an acutely malnourished people. The Saudi government pledged $500 million to the world’s biggest humanitarian crisis.

A new outbreak of Ebola has been detected in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The 11th Ebola outbreak in the DRC was declared on June 1 with four deaths and two ongoing cases. At the moment, the DRC is facing the final phase of a 2018 Ebola outbreak, COVID-19 cases and the world’s largest measles outbreak.

Coronavirus pollution: Plastic masks and gloves are already littering the seabed, campaigners warn. If waste is not properly thrown into a rubbish bin, rather on the road or the pavement, it will typically fall into a gutter, mix with rainwater and be washed out into a river or the sea.

**Economics**

Most countries are expected to face recessions in 2020. The World Bank baseline forecast envisions a 5.2 percent contraction in global GDP in 2020—the deepest global recession since 1945. The crisis highlights the need for urgent action to cushion the pandemic’s health and economic consequences, protect vulnerable populations, and set the stage for a lasting recovery.

Governments continued to spend their way out of the coronavirus hole. Beijing is handing out $1.7 billion worth of shopping vouchers to boost retail sales. In Frankfurt, the European
Central Bank expanded its program of **government debt purchases by 600 billion euros** and in German chancellor Angela Merkel announced 130 billion euros in new stimulus funding. **Pakistan’s Prime Minister, Imran Khan, said the country may have to learn “to live with the coronavirus”**, as he announced the ending of COVID-19-related restrictions, even as the country’s case-load accelerates. Mr Khan said Pakistan could no longer **bear the economic pain of lockdown**, with its businesses shuttered, the tax-take plummeting and millions of its poor relying on handouts. **Profound economic, health and judicial disparities help explain the fury over George Floyd’s death.** The judicial disparities at the heart of the protests over George Floyd’s death reinforce income and job inequalities in the United States. These immense disparities are mirrored in the workforce: **35% of young black men are unemployed** or out of the workforce altogether, twice the share of whites.

**Social**

**EU lawmaker reveals more than expected in video call.** A European Union lawmaker was reminded of the **perils of videoconferencing**. Ireland’s Luke Ming Flanagan wearing a shirt, no pants and sitting on the edge of an unmade bed with his legs crossed, rubbing his thighs as he addressed an agriculture committee for two minutes.

**3 Million Hong Kong Residents offered Haven in U.K.** Prime Minister Boris Johnson said he will give some Hong Kong residents the chance to **seek refuge and a new life** in the UK. The premier’s intervention marks an escalation in London’s pressure on Beijing.

**Madagascar minister fired over $2m lollipop order for schoolchildren.** Pupils were to be given lollipops to mask the aftertaste of an **untested herbal remedy for coronavirus** promoted by the President. However, after objections, the President backtracked and fired the Education Minister.

'Do not travel to Australia': China issues racism warning to citizens. China increases its diplomatic pressure on Australia by warning Chinese citizens that it’s **unsafe to travel to Australia**. The Australian Government strongly refutes the allegations.

**Google takes down app that removes Chinese software.** ‘Remove China Apps' had been downloaded more than **a million times in the first ten days** after its launch. It had been particularly popular in India. Google said it violated its app store policies but gave no further details.

**Politics**

**The Minneapolis city council has pledged to disband the city’s police department.** A new system of public safety will be implemented, a historic move that comes as calls to **defund law enforcement** are sweeping the US. Minneapolis is the city where George Floyd was murdered.
WHO recordings show frustration with China over coronavirus information delays. China stalled on providing critical coronavirus information to the WHO for two weeks, WHO expressed frustration in private even as it praised the country in public, according to a recent report from the Associated Press. WHO refused to comment.

Brexit trade talks make 'no significant progress' as deadline nears. If the negotiation period is not extended this month, then there will not be enough time for ratification. The EU and Britain remained far apart on the issues of fair competition guarantees and the governance of their new relationship, as well as fishing rights.


**Peacebuilding**

In facing the triple crises of racial injustice, COVID-19, and economic distress, peacebuilders in the US and around the world have supported those protesting the police killing of George Floyd. They are working to mobilize against oppression, undo institutionalized racism, advance criminal justice reform across political divides, and call for comprehensive policy responses. Some have backed the protestors’ demands to “defund the police,” interpreting this as a call to shift police department resources to social programs. Nine of thirteen members of the Minneapolis City Council have said they plan to disband the city’s police department and are “taking intermediate steps” to implement their decision, but they have not yet provided further details.

Some peacebuilders are using art and music – even at the protests -- to inspire community and help people deal with injustice and grief. At a demonstration in Washington DC, +Peace activists “took up space for peace and healing” with a large banner saying “Black Lives Matter” and a mural for passersby to color in and add their own words and drawings while music played nearby.

Peacebuilding organizations have been highlighting efforts to bolster organizational and individual resilience in response to COVID-19. Some, such as Partners Global, provide tools and roadmaps for civil society organizations. Others, such as GPPAC and Minnesota Peacebuilding Leadership Institute, offer trauma healing and resilience to communities in need. The Mary Hoch Center for Reconciliation at George Mason’s School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution has published online psychosocial self-care guides and is set to pilot a Peer Support Program for peacebuilders coping with Covid-19.