

ISSUE BRIEF

## Don't Do It

**Don't assume this crisis will 'end' or that everything will change forever**

**by Nicholas Dungan**

**April 2020**

The Covid19 crisis will go on and on and on, because it is not one crisis, nor even a sequence of crises, but an accumulation of crises: health, societal, economic, financial, political, geopolitical.

Even if every country everywhere manages to master the pandemic, even if the pandemic never re-appears—and both of those are wildly optimistic hypotheses—the effects of this crisis will last years or even decades. It will shape the lives of Generation Z far more than the financial crisis or even 9/11 has shaped those of the Millennials.

It will continue to make a forceful impact upon our daily lives, our social interactions including distancing, but also upon our ambitions, initiatives, projects, perceptions, hopes and fears. That applies to individuals, families, societies, countries, businesses, governments, the 'international community', 'global society'.

The economic effects have barely begun to be appreciated. The economic consequences of the pandemic will obviously translate into significant—and, at this point, unforeseeable—political consequences.

Those political consequences, in turn, will alter the lives of countries and influence international relations, both within regions and among regions, in ways we cannot measure today or perhaps even imagine. There is every chance of major civil unrest, class conflict, military tensions and even new wars, a far cry from the idealistic calls for a global ceasefire heard in some leadership circles.

### ***Don't assume everything will change***

Many individual people, expert commentators and journalists have written, photographed and shared on social media the pronounced evidence during the worldwide lockdowns that humankind harms the planet. Nature has reclaimed its place quickly as humans ceased to overwhelm it.

New habits have formed. Parents have been able to spend more time with their children, and perhaps learned better how to do so, even if, in many places, grand-parents have been denied the enjoyment of their grand-children.

Traffic has virtually disappeared. Public transport, where it is running, is less overcrowded.

For those who are fortunate enough to be able to #WFH work-from-home with adequate space and privacy, the daily commute into the office in urban centres appears an increasingly futile waste of time. It also exposes us to contagion.

People, businesses and governments have adopted technology with an ease and speed that defy predictions.

Our inclination is to hope that these virtuous realisations and new behaviours will last. But the temptation to go back to business as usual will often be equally strong. Most major corporations have no alternative business model in their back pocket which they can deploy; bruised in many cases by the economic and financial fallout from this crisis, they will seek a return to 'normality'. Organisations, both public and private, run by conservative, established people, will want to revert to what they mistakenly consider the safety of the world before the pandemic, whereas if the world before the pandemic had been truly safe, we would not be where we are now.

There will be no going back to before, but there will also not be a gleamingly pure new world either. Those who attempt to recreate the past will fail. So will those who expect a wholly rosy future to emerge from this crisis. Each extreme is equally unrealistic. Any attempt to cling to one extreme or the other is likely to lead to discontent, misunderstanding and conflict.

The post-Covid19 era will exist somewhere along a spectrum of positive and negative. Realistically, what we can do and what we should do, as individuals and as societies, is to try move life after the crisis a bit more in the right direction.