

ALC COVID-19 RESEARCH

OP-ED SERIES – VOL.1 ISSUE: 1

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INTRODUCTION

The ALC is launching an Africa-focused op-ed series to track, analyse and reflect on COVID-19 in and for Africa. Occasionally, sometimes over the course of a century, an earth-shaking event redefines the 'normality' of events, systems, ideas and people's lives in ways that are unpredictable. The COVID-19 pandemic is surely one of such moments which are bound to change the world. In fact, it is plausible to expect that many of the aspects of the pre-COVID-19 world order are gone forever. Africa and indeed the World will never be the same after COVID-19!

The transboundary, transregional, and trans-world nature of COVID-19 exposes the unique weaknesses and failures of the post-World War 2 'Order', specifically the limitations of the neoliberal consensus. COVID-19 is laying bare the overt and covert, internal and external, and the small and big weaknesses of different political systems, state structures, and state-society dynamics across rich and poor, developed and developing, and so-called 'strong' and 'fragile' states. The global nature of the pandemic also exposes the marginality of Africa and its circumstances and experiences of COVID-19 in scholarly and even policy debates and discussions thus far.

Truly, a few Africa-centric platforms are emerging to begin the critical, yet necessary reflections on COVID-19 in and for Africa. The ALC op-ed series is an effort to ignite and ramp up scholarly debates and reflections on COVID-19 in and for Africa as the pandemic unfolds.

It is a truism that COVID-19 throws up countless questions and puzzles, with very few answers at this stage for Africa and the world at large. There are genuine fears that COVID-19 will expose, complicate and compound the systemic

weaknesses of states and institutions across Africa. Its havoc-wrecking potential and actual impact on economies, politics and governance processes, delicate security situations, and poorly funded healthcare and education systems are already manifesting. Its known multiplier effect on pre-existing weaknesses and failures put modest gains in achieving the SDGs, AU Vision 2063 and other developmental agendas at greater risk.

The op-ed series seeks to do three things; 1) to track and reflect on the patterns of COVID-19 in Africa or how global patterns impact Africa; 2) begin scholarly reflections on the likely and actual effects and consequences of COVID-19 for Africa over the short, medium and long term; and 3) identify and analyse possible opportunities for transformation that COVID-19 brings to citizens, societies, states and institutions in Africa. Over the course of the coming weeks and months, our Africa-focused COVID-19 op-ed pieces will explore these three areas.

The op-ed series and its focus on COVID-19 in Africa reinforces the salient logic of the ALC 10-year Research Agenda on "[Peace, Society and the State in Africa](#)". The Research Agenda revisits the idea of the state in Africa, including its historical foundations, sources and conceptualisations of (il)legitimacies, (in)capacities, assumed versus real functions, and interconnections with global 'Westphalian' templates, at the centre of the search for sustainable peace, security and development in Africa. The Corona Virus pandemic is an additional platform and opportunity to re-examine the idea of the state, reassess state-society dynamics, and explore new national conversations and state-building projects that are prerequisites for sustainable peace, security and development in Africa.

In addition to the three objectives, the op-ed series will analyse COVID-19 in Africa through the prism of the 6 thematic areas (clusters) of the ALC Research Agenda; namely Future Peace, including the perspectives of young Africans on future meanings and dynamics of peace, security and development in Africa, including why and how COVID-19 is a factor in the evolution of new meanings, norms and approaches to peace and development in Africa. Second is dominant notions of statehood in Africa, including how COVID-19 represents a watershed moment in the nature (model) and changes of statehood in Africa. Third is reflections on the historical trajectories of statehood in Africa and how particular events (such as COVID-19) (re)shape the reality of statehood in Africa. Fourth is state-society dynamics and their impact on peace and development. Here, COVID-19 provides another window to assess and understand the peculiarities of state-society relations in terms of responses broadly defined, and how societies are mobilised

in relation to COVID-19 in Africa. Fifth looks at old and new forms of regionalisms in Africa and how they shape statehood. Here, COVID-19 represents another unique opportunity to rethink the logic of region and regionalism, and transborder relations among citizens and governments. The final theme is Africa and the international political-economic system, and this provides opportunities for analysing why and how COVID-19 could change the 'Global Order', challenge and evolve a new, post-neoliberalism developmental pathway, create new centres of global power and influence, and transform Africa's engagement with the dominant international political-economic system.

We welcome you to read, follow and contribute to the ALC op-ed series on COVID-19 in and for Africa.