

# THE POST-COVID WORLD NEEDS A NEW MODEL OF DIPLOMACY

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India's Foreign Policy evolution and changes

The worst global crisis of our times recognises no national borders. Historic enmities between nations have never seemed as irrelevant as they do now. Fighting the [coronavirus](#) needs a global response. Some nations will need assistance more than others, some will have more resources to summon than others. Iran is a country that needs help urgently — it has reported more than 20,000 confirmed coronavirus cases; at least 1,600 people have died. The Iranian Health Ministry said last week that one person dies every 10 minutes of the infection rampaging through the country. This deadly crisis in Iran has coincided with an economic paralysis due to US sanctions, which have, since last year, crippled the country's health system along with its economy. Lancet has said that despite efforts by the WHO and international health organisations, the speed of the outbreak in Iran and the effects of the sanctions have combined to create a shortage of vital medical equipment and drugs. The situation in Iran has forced even the Trump administration, whose track record in dealing with the outbreak at home in the US has been found wanting, to offer medical assistance to a country it describes as "evil". It may have been forced to make this offer to salve its own conscience. However, for Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei to invoke conspiracy theories about the spread of the virus in order to refuse US assistance, is as reckless and as endangering of Iranian lives as the US sanctions themselves.

Khamenei's rejection is a warning that while [COVID-19](#) is changing the world, it may not necessarily turn out to be for the better. A new Cold War is brewing between the US and China, with President Donald Trump's racist "Chinese virus" slurs, and restrictions on Chinese journalists in the US, and with China responding in the same coin. Trump's bid to allegedly poach German scientists working on a vaccine against the coronavirus has evoked outrage. The squabbles are many, and they distract attention from the problem at hand and the ones that will ensue.

The post-COVID world needs a new model of diplomacy, one that is more compassionate and humane, and that will tailor itself to deal with the economic hardships all nations will face. India took an important first step in trying to forge a regional approach to the [pandemic](#) by getting all South Asian countries on the SAARC platform, and the G-7 followed with its own COVID video conference. But the world, India included, will need to do much more than indulge in tokenisms to deal with the economic illness that is set to follow the coronavirus. It will need to open borders, not shut them. It will need to bring down walls, not build new ones.

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