



Global Commission for Post-Pandemic Policy

Our Global Condition

**An assessment by the Global Commission for Post-Pandemic Policy
after 18 months of Covid-19**

This report reflects meetings with Commissioners during July and August 2021

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CONTENTS/KEY MESSAGES

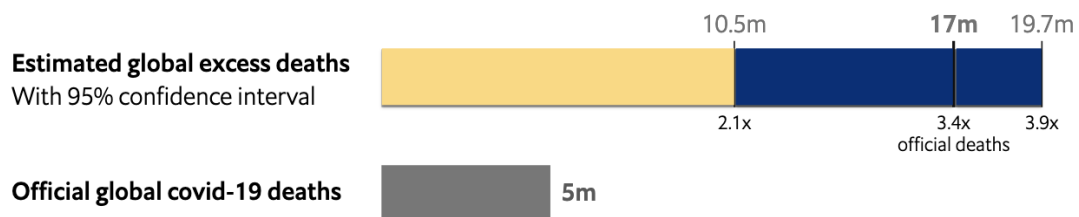
	PAGE
CONTEXT:	1
The pandemic endures and is destined to last, even as the “perpetual pandemic”, prolonged by policy shortcomings, and deepened by the interaction of four mutually reinforcing crises: health/biological; ecological/climate; political/legitimacy; geopolitics/international order.	
MANAGING COVID-19:	2
Vaccinations have proved a necessary but insufficient response, with divergences in global distribution and absence of urgency providing space and time for the emergence of new variants. Policy to confront Covid-19 is still playing catch-up rather than achieving control.	
ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES:	6
Continued uncertainty from this prolonged pandemic and the associated crises, especially the geopolitical, will hang over business decisions and economic policy, even as strong opportunities emerge for sustained productivity growth and transformative public investment. Boards and institutions face the challenges of integrating this uncertainty into their planning and of factoring governmental decisions and restrictions into their risk assessment and scenario planning.	
THE POLITICAL, LEGITIMACY AND TRUST CRISIS:	9
The central roles played by political authority and the state during the emergency have led to salutary fresh thinking, but whether this turns into a fundamental, sustained change, in terms of treating inequality, ecology, and resilience, or improving health and education systems, remains an open issue. It is a platform for change, but not yet change itself. In many countries, most consequentially the United States, the pandemic has further weakened perceived legitimacy and trust in authority, institutions and knowledge in ways that threaten future resilience.	
GLOBALISATION AND GOVERNANCE:	11
Rather than bringing the world together or enabling a reset of global governance, the pandemic has become an element in and theatre for systemic rivalry. This blocks progress in multiple dimensions – vaccination, monitoring and data-sharing, poor-country needs and sovereign debt management, climate.	
IMPLICATIONS FOR CLIMATE:	12
The gathering geopolitical crisis casts a dark shadow over hopes of serious, sustained collaboration to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and avert perilous planetary heating.	
THE GREAT DIVIDE:	13
Systemic rivalry and escalating hostility between the US-led West and China has become the central, and potentially most dangerous, issue of our times. The task of finding means and will for dialogue and collaboration between the superpowers is assuming an importance as critical as during the Cold War, arguably more so.	
COMMISSIONERS	14

CONTEXT

1. Commissioners share an uncomfortable perspective: that as the SARS-COV-2 (Covid-19) pandemic continues to evolve, there is no prospect of the world becoming “Post-Pandemic” on any meaningful planning horizon. Rather than hoping for re-established or renewed normality, policy planners and political leaders would do well to think in terms of an enduring “perpetual pandemic”, one likely to keep recurring and to be followed in train by others. Indeed, the White House is seeking Congressional authorisation to spend US\$65 billion over the next 10 years specifically on pandemic issues, to include a new office of pandemic preparedness at the heart of the US government. Paraphrasing Thomas Jefferson, eternal vigilance is the price of public safety.
2. From its inception an accelerator of fractures and fragilities, the Covid-19 pandemic is being experienced as four intersecting and mutually reinforcing crises: the **public health crisis**; an increasingly emergent **ecological/climate crisis**; a political trust/legitimacy crisis, as the authority of knowledge, indeed the authority of authority itself erodes, especially but not only in the United States; and most critically an **international system/geopolitical crisis**, as the Post World War II international system loses cogency and effectiveness, shaped by and deepening rivalry and hostility between the US and China.
3. Urgent, even radical, action is now increasingly understood at global and national levels to be necessary to respond to the health/biological and climate/environmental crises. However, the trust and geopolitical crises are making **such action harder to discuss, let alone achieve**.
4. The prolonged pandemic, moreover, is likely to generate or accelerate an **array of social and political frictions** as adaptation to pandemic conditions becomes a more permanent feature of life inside rich countries and even more so in highly stressed low-income countries with fragile institutions. Societal resilience has been remarkable. Yet tensions are manifest, and anger building.
5. In retrospect, the ‘transformative’ effects of the pandemic may have been overplayed in relation to the nearer term, including expectations that it would radically reshape how humans work, foster human solidarity, inspire political vision and refashion the social contract. Emergency measures and adaptations have not been coupled with new strategies for change nor with political forces to advance change. Yet the dynamics of the intersecting crises suggest that longer-term impacts in prospect may be greater than are currently imagined, notably the impact on international order. ■

MANAGING COVID-19

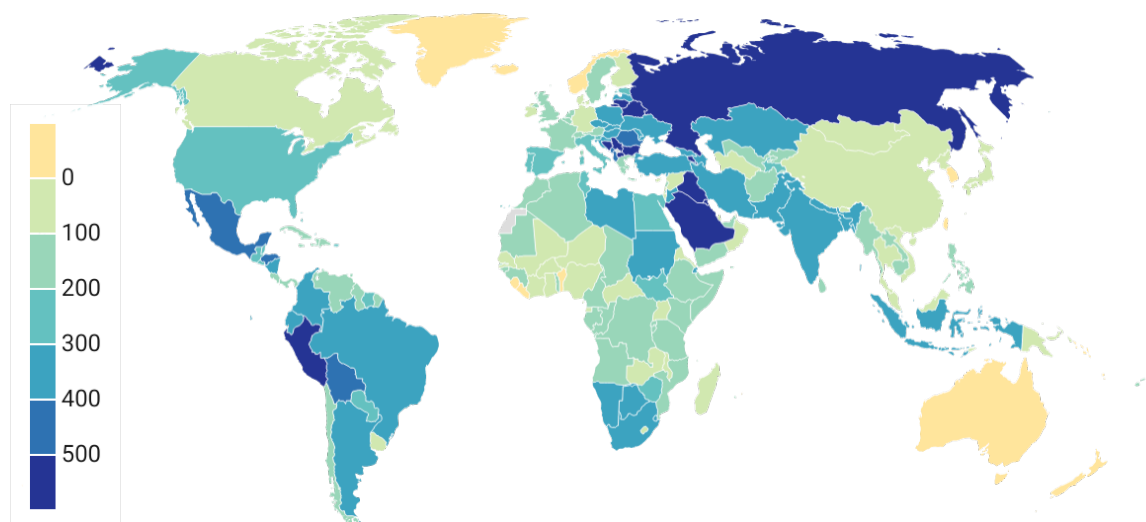
6. As the second anniversary of the outbreak approaches, truer understanding is dawning of the devastation Covid-19 has wrought. A particularly detailed and careful study of total excess deaths was [published](#) by *The Economist* in May 2021 and is now being [updated daily](#). Their central estimate of the global total of excess deaths from January 2020 until November 5th 2021 (reproduced below) was **17 million people, compared with an official death toll from Covid-19 of 5 million.**



7. The analysis by *The Economist* also offers some more granular detail on the geographical distribution of mortality. Illustrated below is a map of the estimated number of excess deaths per capita by country. Worth noting is the especially heavy impact on Latin America, Russia, the Middle East and India, and Southern Africa. Also noteworthy is the fact that – although in the pandemic’s initial phases almost all parts of Asia fared far better than Europe and North America – later phases have narrowed the gap, with Indonesia as well as India suffering heavy losses. Moreover, this does not take in other impacts on mental and physical health of populations, including ‘long Covid’.

The True Deathtoll of COVID-19 (Jan '20–Nov '21)

The estimated number of (cumulative) excess deaths per 100,000 people, by country.



Map: GCPPP • Source: The Economist • Created with Datawrapper

8. Hopes have been variously invested in lockdowns, testing and monitoring, in achieving herd immunity via infection, in mass vaccination. The virus remains unvanquished. Highest hopes were vested in vaccines when they were successfully developed and tested in record time during 2020. Yet Israel, among the most highly vaccinated and data-organized of countries,

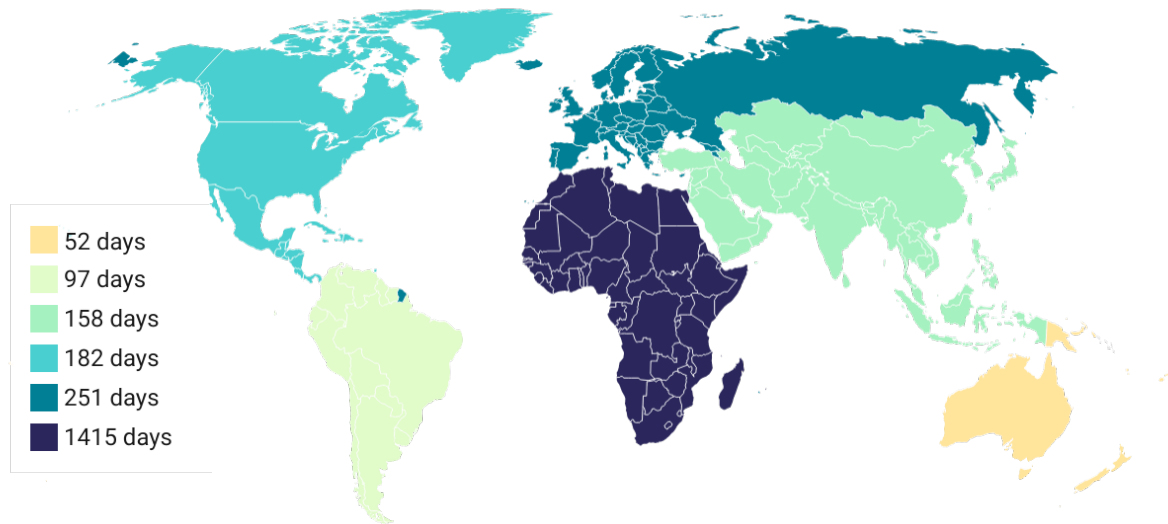
now leads the world on a rolling average of new daily infections per capita, twice the level of daily cases of the US, and recording a death-toll per capita in August at levels last seen in February. This has entailed broad deployment and further development of booster shots to treat waning immunity and new variants, and, critically, to reinforcing the conclusion that vaccines alone, however important, are not a full solution. The United States and United Kingdom, among others, are following similar trajectories, with not just a “pandemic of the unvaccinated” but also emerging evidence that vaccine-induced immunity may not be sufficient to reduce mortality and morbidity risk to levels sustainable in the medium term.

9. If not itself sufficient, vaccination does remain a necessary condition for managing the pandemic, nationally and globally. Vaccine development has been truly remarkable, but no less remarkable have been the accompanying shortcomings of public policy, leadership, and international organization in advancing the necessary global distribution of vaccines. The direct cost of developing, producing, procuring and distributing vaccines is far, far smaller than the economic and social costs caused by every month that the pandemic continues. **National and international public policies currently in place are making the pandemic last longer – perhaps far longer – than it needs to.**
10. That policy approach is a combination of half-hearted, belated commitments to global vaccination programmes and too-modest financial support for low-income and distressed countries, commitments that have in turn been undermined or even contradicted by national, my-nation-first, policies. **Virtue is signalled, parochial interest outweighs it.**
11. The deployment of booster shots to treat waning vaccine-induced immunity in jabbed people in advanced countries will further limit the supply available to less favoured countries. The Western-led COVAX global initiative for vaccine distribution to low-income countries has gained funding but not vaccines and is running far behind schedule. China and Western countries are both donating and exporting vaccines, but in quantities and on schedules that fail to stand a chance of matching or outpacing the spread and evolution of the virus. **What could have been a triumph of superpower leadership and/or global collaboration is turning into a symbol of weak commitment and disjunction between domestic and global interests.**
12. Even domestically, in the advanced countries where the most effective vaccines have come available most rapidly, **the approach to vaccinations has been incomplete and at best three-quarter-hearted.** The urgency of achieving even nationwide, let alone global, protection entailed a war-time level of mobilisation. Yet only America’s Operation Warp Speed and, to a lesser extent, the UK, invested sufficiently to support vaccine manufacturing in the early stages. Procurement-led approaches pursued by the EU, Canada and Japan lost their countries several months, and lives, even if catch up has in the end been rapid. Neither the US nor the UK has engaged in further war-time level mobilisation beyond initial successes. And then countries have rushed to declare the resumption of normality before forming any coherent policy or striving for consensus for the protection of children and young adults – seemingly heedless of the potential for new variants to emerge that could be deadlier for the young.
13. The gap between promise and achievement in relation to vaccination can now best be thought of in terms of how rapidly, at the current daily rate of inoculations, each region of the world can expect to have vaccinated 80% of their populations, the level now judged needed for achieving something akin to the now-elusive state of **herd immunity**. The graphic

shows the number of days that it will take for each region, based on the seven-day rolling average of daily vaccination doses reported by *Our World In Data*. **The variance is stark:** barely a few months for Europe, North America and the richer parts of Asia; more than three years for Africa. The link to the full commentary and original graphic on the Global Commission website can be found [here](#).

The Unequal Vaccine Clock

The number of days it will take for each region to vaccinate 80% of adult residents at the current rate of vaccination, as of October 13th 2021.



Map: GCPPT • Source: GCPPT/Our World in Data • Created with Datawrapper

14. The constraint was once vaccine production, but is no longer. From a slow start, worldwide monthly output is now over 1.5 billion doses, of which half is made in China and almost all the remainder in Europe and North America. Total output for the whole of 2021 is likely to exceed 12 billion doses, enough to inoculate over 70% of the world's population, if only they could get hold of them. On present trends and barring consumer resistance, **the two Chinese-made vaccines, from Sinovac and Sinopharm, are likely to take the lion's share of vaccinations in low- and middle-income countries**, despite a lower efficacy and dearth of peer-reviewed data about their performance. The four principal western vaccines – from Pfizer/BioNTech, Moderna, AstraZeneca and J&J – look set to play a secondary role, outside advanced countries. The Global Commission's full data and commentary on monthly vaccine output, by region and manufacturer, can be found [here](#).
15. **The main immediate constraint is now distribution** – thanks to contracts that have over-supplied many Western countries – and the logistics of vaccination programmes. COVAX has adequate funding for purchasing vaccines but cannot obtain sufficient supply. And aid to support vaccination programmes in low-income countries is meagre. **This distributional and logistical challenge requires urgent attention from policy makers in the G7 and G20 countries in the final quarter of 2021. Promises to "donate" vaccines at unspecified times over the next 12 months are not enough.** In the medium-term, capacity constraints will return as an important issue, with patents and other technology transfer barriers requiring attention, especially for production in Africa and other low-income regions.
16. As a result of these policy shortcomings, the opportunity for the virus to mutate into new,

vaccine-evading variants remains a major concern, one not diminishing as it could and should be. Mutations to make the virus more dangerous for children in coming months and years cannot be ruled out. **Measures to manage the pandemic – vaccinations and treatments – are still in catch-up rather than control mode.** This is happening while divisions over social and mobility restrictions are growing.

Location of Vaccine Production (Oct '21)

Total worldwide monthly production was 1.43 billion doses in October. Total worldwide production since vaccine rollout began was 8.57 billion by the end of the month.

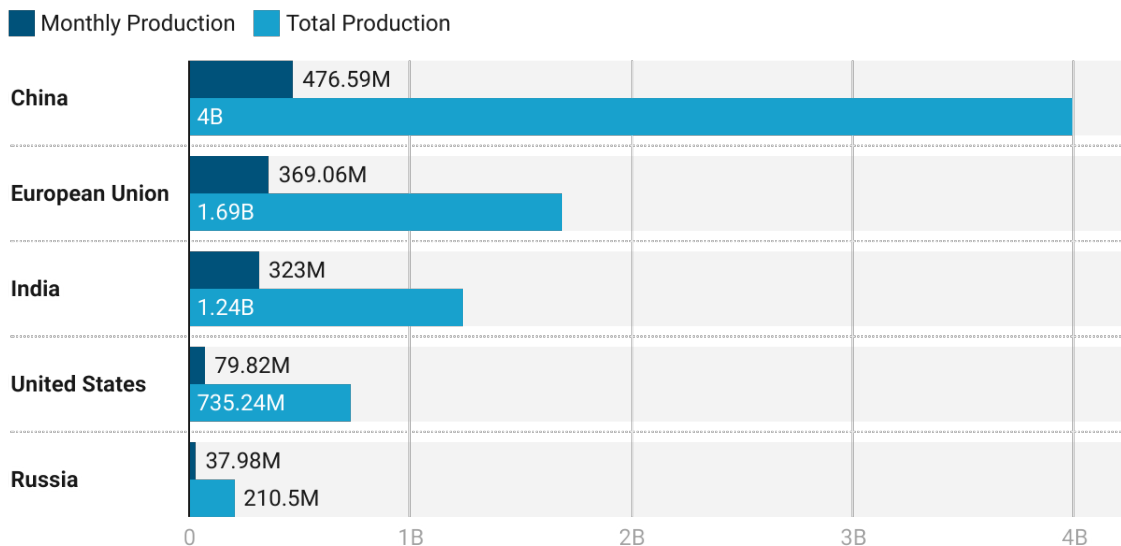


Chart: GCPPT • Source: Airfinity • Created with Datawrapper

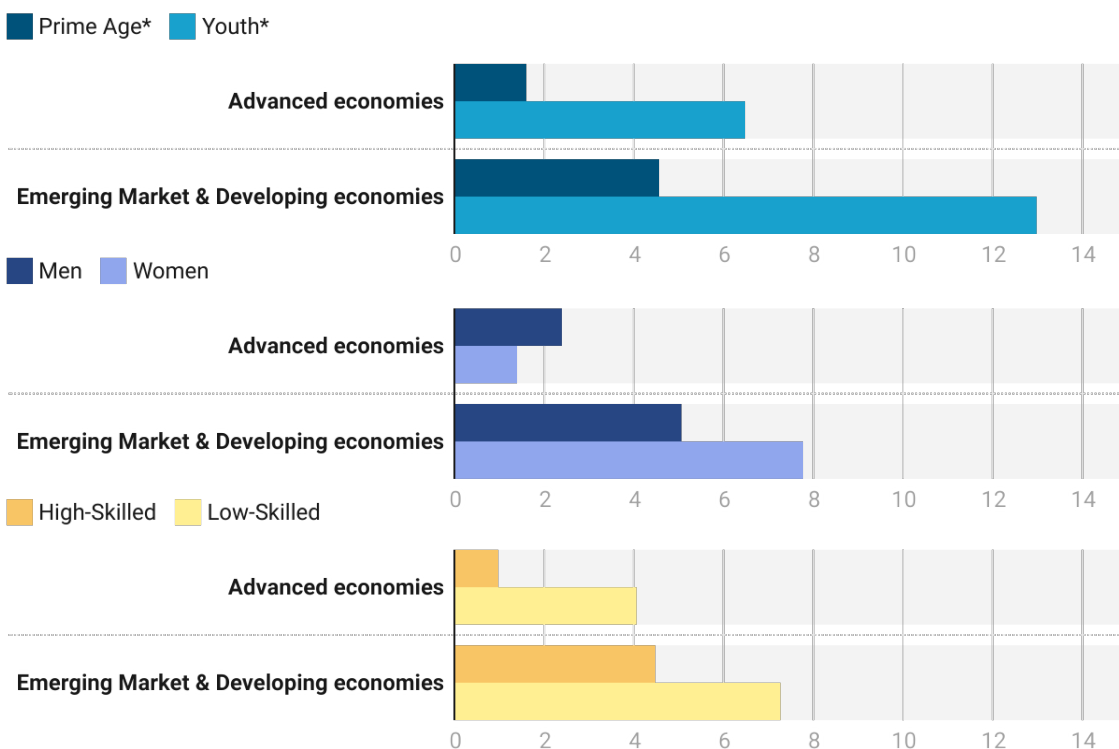
17. This implies that working on the assumption or hope that the pandemic will fade away or become a minor nuisance is not a responsible option. Adjustment and adaptation need to be thought of as permanent. We can judge the pandemic crisis as being managed or “post” only when **all levels – social, governmental, corporate – have taken on board the permanence of pandemic threat and absorbed this into behaviour, policy, and action.** Few societies have yet achieved this state.
18. The intersection of biological and ecological crises manifest in Covid-19 as a zoonotic disease transferred from species to species is further confirmation of the evidence of the past two decades that such transfers risk becoming more frequent as economic development spreads, population expands, and habitats become even more intertwined. The **safest assumption is that there will be new viruses emerging** with the potential to generate global pandemics, and that this could happen at any time. This suggests high importance should be attached to enabling advanced monitoring capacities in regions of the world where risks are highest. The cost of such monitoring capacities is far smaller than the cost imposed by the current and possible future pandemics.
19. Advances in the understanding of biological science and of the technologies enabling manipulation of biological materials and processes, powerful engines of progress, also carry **the potential for malevolent use.** National and global policy must address such biosecurity risk. ■

ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES

20. In the advanced countries and at a global level, the economic impact of the pandemic has been less severe or long-lasting than seemed likely one year ago, when large areas of economic activity were being shut down. By the end of 2021, the advanced economies and China will all be back at, or in some cases above, their pre-pandemic levels of output. However, this apparent statistical success masks two enormous realities: a **huge distributional divergence** in the impact of the pandemic on living standards and employment levels; and a vast increase in sovereign indebtedness in those countries that could afford the emergency welfare measures required to absorb the economic shutdown, alongside an increase in indebtedness in many poorer countries that suffered big reductions in public revenues. Such highly indebted poor countries are now also vulnerable to rising borrowing costs, even as their economic output remains well below pre-pandemic levels.
21. There are many measures of this economic divergence, the true long-term impact of which remains unknowable. The most telling, however – for its implications for poverty, living standards and social stability – may be the following visualisation of data collated by the International Labour Organisation and International Monetary Fund, of the **differential impact of the pandemic on employment**. In advanced and emerging/developing economies alike, the young suffered bigger employment losses. But the impact on emerging market and developing economies has been huge in all categories, many being reliant on informal labour markets and non-existent or meagre public welfare provision.

The Unequal Economic Impact of Covid-19

The percentage point decline in the employment rate (Q4, 2019–Q1, 2021), by demographic.



*Youth=15-24 years old, Prime Age=25-54 years old.

Chart: GCPPP • Source: ILO/IMF • Created with Datawrapper

22. The pandemic has **made inequality all the more salient**, both **within advanced societies and between advanced and less advanced countries**. Talk of “resets” and of “new social contracts” beg the question of whether there exists the political will, public support, and system capacity to enact such transformations, or significant adjustment, even if there is growing tolerance for higher wages for lower paid workers in many economies.
23. The single largest impact of the pandemic, and the one likely to have a long-term legacy socially as well as economically, is the **damage done to the education and development of children**. The legacy of the severe disruption of so far two school years of formal education will also reflect inequalities of wealth, family circumstance and broadband access.
24. In business and in economic performance, the consequence of a “perpetual pandemic” **and of continued uncertainty** over variants and their impact on social behaviour and governmental controls stands to include **continued supply bottlenecks**, investment retarded by uncertainty, and slowed readjustment. That uncertainty and those bottlenecks look to be the principal lasting wounds caused by the pandemic. Whether or not higher inflation turns out to be transitory, as central banks are thinking, will largely depend on whether those supply bottlenecks persist and for how long investment is delayed; and on whether, in advanced economies, political dynamics and labour shortages aggravated by the pandemic cause wages to rise faster than productivity.
25. **The massive infusion of public funding necessitated by the economic effects of the pandemic provides the promise and possibility of productive public investment** in infrastructure, education, health and technological development, notably in the EU and North America. Funding directed as transformative investment rather than as short-term economic stimulus has at least a half-decade’s chance to make a major impact on productivity, energy transition and healthcare. Financial and political planning so as to turn that half-decade into a full decade needs to be a priority. **This opportunity for a major reordering of priorities must not be missed**, both for the long-term social and economic betterment of societies and, especially, for confronting the climate challenge in a serious and concerted way.
26. Central banks should not be used as perpetual money creators to finance this, for doing so reduces accountability and harms the ability of capital markets to allocate credit efficiently. The prolonged period of Quantitative Easing since 2008, redoubled during the pandemic, risks damaging incentives, preserving ‘zombie’ unproductive companies and thereby helping to reduce productivity growth. **Credible plans by central banks for the ending of QE and phased return of more market-led interest rates are essential for long-term, sustainable growth.**
27. There is a **clear opportunity for accelerating productivity growth through** the sustained exploitation of digitalisation. If capital investment in digitalisation can be motivated to continue, the pandemic-induced move online of private and public sector organisations can be turned into established, long-term gains and the damaging gap between the most productive firms on the technological frontier and the less-productive majority can be narrowed. Particularly significant opportunities lie in education and healthcare, bioscience and energy innovation.
28. The impact of digitalisation manifested during the pandemic raises issues of how **digitalisation broadband access treated as a public good** and even as a right

can and ought to serve to narrow inequalities both within countries and between them.

29. The most stressed economies are in the **low- and middle-income countries** where public finances have lacked the scope to respond to the pandemic emergency. The election in Peru of a far-left radical speaks to the stresses that have built up. This is especially so in countries with high mortality and weak health systems, such as Peru, but not only. Countries with a high dependence on tourism have suffered severe economic losses that are likely to endure. Strains, troubles and crises such as internal war in Ethiopia, unrest in the Maghreb, political instability in Malaysia, tension over water between Sudan and Egypt, and the like, render stressed states even less capable of coping.
30. A big question is whether such stresses and tensions may manifest themselves **in a sovereign-debt crisis**, for which Brazil is the largest and most concerning candidate. Such a crisis will be made likelier if US\$ interest rates rise sharply and unexpectedly, on fears of sustained inflation. Preparations need to be made for a collective, co-ordinated response to such debt default, including increases in the IMF's resources. Liaison with world's largest creditor, China, will be essential regarding terms and conditions for any debt restructuring. Absent co-ordination with China, any resolution risks being unstable and inadequate.
31. An opportunity presents itself immediately to support the public finances of the most-stressed nations: the IMF's **US\$650 billion issue of Special Drawing Rights this coming autumn**. Under IMF rules, this provision of funds is allocated according to share-holdings in the IMF, which means that almost all will go to richer nations. However, those rich nations can reallocate their SDRs, converting them to grants rather than loans and using them to supplement aid and contributions to global programmes such as COVAX. But while many have called for this, few countries have made commitments to turn promise into reality. ■

THE POLITICAL, LEGITIMACY AND TRUST CRISIS

32. The pandemic brought the state to the forefront of responsibility and response. **Most governments had preparedness plans, few were actually prepared.** Political dynamics and calculations, in effect diffusing accountability and priorities, rendered hollow such pre-pandemic preparedness as formally existed. Nevertheless, emergency mobilisation to protect citizens' welfare occurred widely and was broadly accepted by populations, with significant exceptions limiting what governments in democracies could mandate at important junctures, impeding decision-making. Centralised powers proved formidable for welfare, while for monitoring and responding to public health issues local knowledge and powers proved more effective: small and local became beautiful. In planning for future outbreaks and building resilience, attention needs to be paid to these critical roles played by community-based action, knowledge, legitimacy, and reactivity.
33. The currently planned half-decade (and hoped-for decade) of renewed public investment in advanced economies provides **the chance for a reshaping of the role of the State in pluralist market democracies, for accelerating the transition from fossil fuels and for reducing the inequality of incomes and security that erodes solidarity, trust and legitimacy.** The determination and success with which this task is conducted will in turn shape whether social disorder, anger, polarisation and alienation again become dominant features, as they did after 2008, or whether this time lessons will prove to have been learned.
34. In many countries, notably but not solely democracies, incoherent, slow-moving responses to high Covid-19 mortality rates **called into question the legitimacy of governing institutions as well as trust in the authority of the scientific advice they were or were purporting to be relying on.** As the crisis and associated mistakes have been shared across borders amid great scientific and social-scientific uncertainties, these poor responses to the pandemic have not produced clear or consistent political consequences. But in those countries where expectations were unmet and doubts engendered, damage has been done to long-term popular support for or belief in political processes and institutions, national and international, making them more vulnerable to future shocks, disorder and alienation. Institutions, already weak, have been further weakened.
35. The long-term impact of this is unpredictable; but it is clear that major efforts to rebuild the conditions for societal trust and public faith in political processes and institutions is essential to make them and democracy itself more resilient to future shocks and to reduce the danger of an institutional collapse itself generating new, broader crises with wide ramifications. This danger exists in many countries, but **it is evident that an institutional crisis in the United States would be especially consequential globally, in all dimensions.** Deep polarisation; the unprecedented assaults on institutions and the rule of constitutional law surrounding the 2020 presidential election and the January 6 2021 assault on the Capitol; the erosion of trust and faith in knowledge and truth as such that has surrounded both Covid-19 and the vaccination programme: all these raise red flags that must not be ignored.
36. **Trust is an essential condition for legitimacy and resilience.** Trust in state authority is advanced or degraded by performance in managing crises, in protecting lives, livelihoods,

and stability. Performance legitimacy arising out of management of the pandemic and climate crises has become an important element in both the internal affairs of states and increasingly in the international arena.

37. Governments' trust in people is important as well, in both internal and global dimensions, an argument for **broader deployment of digital public infrastructure and the broad deployment of consultative and Town Hall applications of internet technology**. The dangerous effects of 'fake news', the currency of misinformation and conspiracy, of truth decay, make effective communication essential for effective governance, and call for serious thought and action regarding education.
38. The pandemic crises make salient the need for serious and sustained study, thought, and action on the phenomenon and causes of 'truth decay'. In more immediate and policy terms, this indicates the pressing need for **strengthened regulation and other adaptive measures to treat extreme levels of concentration of ownership of media and social media platforms and to give those platforms greater legal responsibility for the content they distribute**. Such concentration amid limited responsibility presents severe problems for building trust, exacerbates power imbalances and erodes the basis – an informed citizenry – on which democratic or broad public-interest values are fostered. ■

GLOBALISATION AND GOVERNANCE

39. Compared with the period during and following the 2008 financial crisis, the role of international institutions – the World Health Organisation, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank – has been **weak and marginal**; and the role of international bodies for collective policy formation, such as the G7 advanced countries or the wider G20, has been minimal, and the UN largely absent. This reflects the state of geopolitics rather than inherent failings in the institutions themselves.
40. Closures of **borders to international travel** occurred swiftly in some countries but took longer to agree upon for others, yet now promise to be an enduring feature of global affairs. Awareness of the vulnerability of societies to international connectivity has increased sharply. The trend to vaccine passports and related requirements as conditions of travel are harbingers of changes to come.
41. Beyond precautionary border closures, the pandemic has not led to the wider retreat from globalisation that some initially feared might occur. In terms of trade barriers and financial controls, fewer restrictions have been imposed than after 2008. World trade volumes have rebounded to above pre-pandemic levels. But the pandemic has exposed how far we are from **the meaningful global governance the pandemic and related crises show is needed**.
42. Dysfunctional or at best limited global governance is not new. But at a moment when the emergence of a global health threat, and that of climate change affecting humankind everywhere might have been expected to foster global collaboration, the opposite has happened. **Rather than bringing the world together, the pandemic has become an element and theatre for systemic rivalry, driving the major powers further apart**, deepening competition between the great powers, a dynamic that has enabled advance of the pandemic.
43. This geopolitical setting blocks progress on multiple dimensions. It continues to hamper the emergence of a co-ordinated **global vaccination programme**. It makes the development of any enhanced **global monitoring and reporting system** against future pandemics highly improbable, its reliability suspect. It obstructs or considerably weakens efforts to support low-income countries through **debt relief and the distribution of IMF Special Drawing Rights**. It makes it unfeasible to **strengthen, recapitalise or otherwise revive** international institutions, such as the IMF, World Bank or WHO. It bodes ill for any agreed or co-ordinated response to international sovereign debt crises that are likely to emerge during 2022.
44. **The geopolitical crisis makes the gap between rapidly advancing global problems and the credible implementation of what are well-known, desired solutions wider than ever: a gulf, not a gap**. For states taking responsibility for protecting their interests and citizenry, the prospect is less one of reliance on a trusted, consensual rules-based international order, but rather one centred on the statecraft of past epochs, of operating in a tangled web of bodies, balances, coalitions, accommodations, and wits. ■

IMPLICATIONS FOR CLIMATE

45. The gathering geopolitical crisis **casts a dark shadow** over hopes of serious, sustained global collaboration to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and avert perilous planetary heating.
46. While the locus of the primary and most effective response to the pandemic has been local and national, with surveillance, information exchange and vaccine-sharing the chief public health shortfalls, for **climate the most effective action will need to be at a global level**. Without global agreement between the largest polluters it will not be possible to persuade smaller countries – whose individual influence on greenhouse-gas emissions is marginal but whose collective influence is essential – to take adequate and timely action. Equally, the trade implications of any climate measures require global agreement if carbon border taxes and other tools are not to foster a new protectionism.
47. The increasing prevalence and expectation of **extreme weather events in many parts of the world is becoming an economic headwind**, influencing materials prices, and insurance, construction, real estate, and other costs. While of its nature unpredictable, this represents a downside risk to future economic growth. Swiss Re, the world's largest reinsurer ¹, judges the changing climate to be the **number one risk** facing the global economy, and predicts that climate-related risks will amount to over one-fifth of the rise in property insurance premiums over the coming two decades.
48. In the advanced countries, a central issue is whether governments will prove willing to take on their fossil fuel producers and introduce measures powerful enough to accelerate the energy transition by both consumers and producers. With the trade-offs over welfare costs, the withdrawal of fiscal support and uneven economic recoveries already challenging, **the auguries do not look promising**. Major industrialising countries take exception to being asked to forgo access to and exploitation of the energy sources that fuelled the growth of the advanced countries, absent agreed practical and just alternatives.
49. The **marginal role played by international institutions** – the IMF, World Bank, WHO and other United Nations agencies – during the pandemic is not encouraging for the prospects of dealing effectively with global warming. Without political agreement among the major powers, these agencies cannot be effective.
50. In the end, **if the United States and China** cannot agree upon major measures, with near-term actions, to confront planetary heating, then progress will become truly difficult, requiring actions by groups of countries working together. Commissioners nevertheless believe there is potential for such a major agreement between the US and China, which may be advanced by agreement on shared biological/health threats. ■

¹Swiss Re also provided seed funding for the Global Commission; its honorary chairman, Walter Kielholz, is a Commissioner.

THE GREAT DIVIDE

51. For reasons driven by clashing interests, history, ideology, and by domestic politics in both countries, **hostility between the US and China has intensified during the past 18 months.**
52. Increasingly, China and the US-led West are pursuing separate paths, launching and sustaining separate international initiatives and conducting separate dialogues with other countries, around the world. Such a “**coalitions of the willing**” approach by these or other blocs can be viable and possibly achieve economic, welfare, and security benefits, providing necessary global public goods. But it entails contradictions and conflicts, and reduced effectiveness.
53. There are also direct dangers of an **escalation of geopolitical tensions** between the United States and China. Even as globalized commerce is maintained, interdependence between the US and Chinese financial systems is in retreat, a policy choice of both Beijing and Washington. The use of sanctions and the extraterritorial application of laws is being increased by both sides. Communication and collaboration between the US and China are at the lowest ebb since Tiananmen in 1989. Considerable technological inter-dependency remains, notwithstanding private sector efforts to diversify supply chains of critical products. But further weaponization of supply chains and technology, such as in semiconductors, carries serious risk of deepening hostility, retaliatory measures, even, potentially, of recourse to military means.
54. The task of finding modalities and political space for dialogue and collaboration between the rival superpowers is assuming an importance at least as critical as during the Cold War, arguably even more so.
55. During the Cold War between the USSR and the US-led western bloc, space was eventually found for dialogue and understandings between the two sides over issues of mutual concern, such as the devastating potential of nuclear weapons. Principles of crisis management and ‘peaceful co-existence’ were fashioned. **A like process of identifying critical areas of dialogue and collaboration between the US and China is urgently needed.**
56. After the 1985 summit between President Ronald Reagan and Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev, Premier Gorbachev reported that during the summit Reagan had raised the point that despite the two sides’ differences, in the event of an invasion by aliens from outer space the USSR and USA would stand alongside one another to confront this common threat. **Today’s global pandemic threat presents such a challenge, but the problematic trajectory of US-China relations during the pandemic suggests such planetary solidarity is absent.** Building connection, understanding and trust is perhaps the most critical task of this century. ■

COMMISSIONERS

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John Allen

President, the Brookings Institution, Washington DC, former US Marine Corps 4-Star General

Pedro Aspe

Former Finance Minister of Mexico

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Emma Bonino

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Steven Chu

Nobel Prize in Physics, former US Secretary of Energy, Stanford

André Hoffmann

Vice-Chair, Roche Holding

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Margaret (Peggy) Hamburg

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Evolutionary biologist, Imperial College London and Free University of Berlin

Daniel Kahneman

Nobel Prize in Economics 2002, for work on decision-making under uncertainty

Walter Kielholz

Honorary Chairman, Swiss Re

Kiyoshi Kurokawa

Professor of Medicine and Chair, Health and Global Policy Institute, Tokyo

Eric X Li

Chinese entrepreneur and influential commentator

Beverley McLachlin

Chief Justice of Supreme Court of Canada, 2000-17

Trevor Manuel

Former finance minister of South Africa

Federica Mogherini

Rector of College of Europe, former EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

Siddhartha Mukherjee

Medical authority, writer, author of "The Emperor of all Maladies"

Tolullah Oni

Nigerian public health physician and urban epidemiologist, at Cambridge University & Next Einstein fellow

Jim Rogers

Noted investor, co-founder (with George Soros) of the Quantum Fund

Norbert Röttgen

Chairman of the German Bundestag's Committee on Foreign Affairs

Pardis Sabeti

Biologist and geneticist, Harvard/MIT Broad Institute

Simon Schama

Professor of History and Art History, Columbia University

Masaaki Shirakawa

Former Governor, Bank of Japan

Timothy Snyder

Yale professor of history, specialist on central and Eastern Europe

Michael Spence

Nobel Prize in Economics 2001, Professor Emeritus in Management, Stanford

Audrey Tang

Taiwan Cabinet Minister for Digital, Innovation and Youth Affairs

Alvaro Vargas-Llosa

Peruvian-Spanish author and public intellectual

Amos Yadlin

Former head of Israel's Institute for National Security Studies

Michael Zantovsky

Ambassador, Executive Director of Vaclav Havel Library