

PROJECT SYNDICATE

Globalising the Covid Vaccine



THE development and approval of safe and effective Covid-19 vaccines less than a year after the start of the pandemic is a truly remarkable achievement...

be equally remarkable: Covid-19 vaccines will be made available to people around the world—not just in the wealthiest countries—at roughly the same time.

Vaccines will reach the majority of rich-country citizens in the first quarter of this year, and citizens of low- and lower-middle-income countries will also begin to access them.

COVAX will facilitate the rollout of two billion vaccine doses over the next year, reaching people in 190 participating countries and economies...

Now that we have reached this critical juncture, speculation about whether COVAX will fail must stop. It is time to start providing the support needed to ensure that it succeeds in doing what



File photo of a man wearing a mask passing by the Coliseum in Rome, on March 7, 2020.

it was designed to do. The development and approval of vaccines is merely the first step. As long as the coronavirus can be transmitted between people, many will continue to be infected...

To end the cycle, we cannot vaccinate only some people in some countries; we must protect all people everywhere. Yet as vaccines have been rolled out, demand has predictably outpaced the still-limited supply.

Vaccine nationalism is precisely the problem that COVAX was created to solve.

In tackling Covid-19, we must avoid a repeat of 2009, when a small number of rich countries bought up most of the global supply of H1N1 flu vaccine, leaving the rest of the world with none.

These arrangements are not ideal when it comes to the global vaccination effort. Although COVAX is flexible enough to work around this particular problem, it can do so only as long as

manufacturers provide it with the same access to vaccines as national governments receive. Unfortunately, we are already seeing some governments buy far more doses than they need, adding to the pressure on global supply during this critical initial phase.

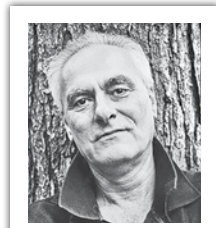
Some of these countries have indicated that they will donate their surplus orders, in which case these additional doses will need to be redirected as quickly and as equitably as possible.

So far, COVAX has secured around one billion doses for people in these countries, by striking deals with manufacturers of several of the most-promising vaccine candidates.

Back in February, few imagined that by year's end we would have more than one approved vaccine and be in a position to deliver doses to high- and lower-income countries simultaneously.

Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala is a former board chair of Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, and a former African Union special envoy on Covid-19. Copyright: Project Syndicate, 2021. www.project-syndicate.org (Exclusive to The Daily Star)

Erdogan positions powerful Turkish military as backbone of regional strategy



JAMES M DORSEY

RESIDENT Recep Tayyip Erdogan ushered in the new year pledging to employ his country's military to secure Turkey's place in a

rebalanced new world order. Mr. Erdogan spelled out his vision when he inserted himself on December 30 into an address by his defence minister, Hulusi Akar, to several hundred masked Turkish and Azeri military officers in the Azerbaijani capital of Baku.

Speaking on the loudspeaker of Mr. Akar's handpiece that the defence minister held up to the microphone, Mr. Erdogan compared Turkish military interventions, foreign bases and/or participation in United Nations peacekeeping missions in lands of the former Soviet Union, Kosovo, Syria, Libya, Somalia, and Qatar to the creation during World War I of the Islamic Army of the Caucasus by Enver Pasha, the Ottoman war minister.

The Islamic Army captured Baku in the last days of World War I but failed to cement a basis for military support in the century since for pan-Turkist or Turanist ideologies that seek to unite peoples of Turkic origin.

Mr. Erdogan, however, appears to define Turkey's place in a new world order as Turkish leadership of a broader Muslim world of which lands populated by Turkic ethnicities are part.

"The Turkish military, with a past full of glory and honour, will continue to fulfil... the task assigned to them in our country and all over the world..."

I wish our soldiers success, who fight to preserve peace, calm and stability in many places from Syria to Libya, from Somalia to Kosovo, from Afghanistan to Qatar," Mr. Erdogan said.

Mr. Erdogan's broader focus has not stopped his defence minister from stepping up meetings with representatives of Turkic minorities, until recently the preserve of a separate government department.

"Ankara's interest in its ethnic kin abroad has markedly perked since the flare-up of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia in late September," said Turkish military analyst Metin Gurcan, referring to the disputed Armenian enclave that is legally part of Azerbaijan.

Mr. Erdogan made his Baku remarks against the backdrop of heightened strains with Iran, efforts by Turkey's Mediterranean detractors backed by the United Arab Emirates to stymie Turkish efforts to expand its access to regional gas deposits, and domestic criticism of his massive expenditure on religious soft power at a time of economic hardship.

Mr. Erdogan's emphasis on military power was likely to complicate his overtures to Israel with which he has had tense relations in past years in a bid to ease potentially difficult dealings with the incoming administration of President-elect Joe Biden.

Mr. Biden has criticised Turkey's abysmal record on human rights and the rule of law, and is unlikely to look kindly at NATO-member Turkey's acquisition of an advanced Russian anti-missile defence system.

Israel backed last month's admission of the UAE as an observer to the Cairo-based Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum that groups Egypt, Greece, Cyprus, Italy, Jordan, and Palestine alongside the Jewish state. Turkey has

denounced the forum as an effort to deprive it of its economic rights in the Eastern Mediterranean, and last year it dispatched an exploration vessel to disputed waters.

The move by the UAE—one of Turkey's foremost rivals in a struggle for dominant political and religious influence in a swath of land stretching from the Atlantic coast of Africa into Central Asia—potentially constitutes a change in Emirati strategy.

Middle East scholar Samuel Ramani



File photo of a Turkish soldier walking next to a Turkish military vehicle during a joint US-Turkey patrol near Tel Abyad, Syria, on September 8, 2019.

PHOTO: REUTERS/RODI SAID

argued recently that the UAE's hard power and coercive efforts to block Turkish advances had failed. Those efforts included military backing of Libyan rebel leader Khalifa Haftar and threats to sanction Algeria for its stepped-up cooperation with Turkey.

"In recent months, the UAE's efforts to forge an Arab consensus against Erdogan's ambitions have unravelled. Despite Iraq's periodic frustrations with Turkish cross-border strikes on

the PKK, Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi has courted Turkey as a regional partner. In an even greater blow to the UAE's anti-Turkey agenda, Saudi Arabia's King Salman struck a conciliatory tone with Erdogan after their November 20 discussion," Mr. Ramani said.

Mr. Ramani was referring to recent Saudi overtures to Turkey with which it has been on a collision course since the 2018 killing of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi, as well as the outlawed

Mediterranean and Sub-Saharan Africa," Mr. Ramani said, suggesting that the Emirates may pivot to a soft power approach.

That would likely entail stepped-up competition with Turkey in the provision of emergency and development aid to third countries as well as increased rivalry for religious soft power in the Muslim world.

The UAE has cast itself as a paragon of a moderate and tolerant, albeit statist, strand of Islam, as opposed to Turkey's more strident advocacy of a heavily nationalist tinted political interpretation of the faith.

The UAE has been on the warpath against political Islam for more than a decade. It has designated the Turkish-backed Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist organisation and backed French President Emmanuel Macron and Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz in their crackdown on Islamist and Turkish nationalist groups.

Mr. Erdogan has for more than a decade rejected notions of more moderate and more radical strands of Islam. "Islam cannot be classified as moderate or not... Animosity (towards Islam), unfortunately, strengthens the scenarios that there is a so-called clash of civilisations in the world. Those who defend such speculations may go further to identify terrorism with Islam, which is based on peace," he asserts.

Taken by his word, Mr. Erdogan was suggesting with his year-end remarks in Baku that as far as he is concerned, his strategy of hard and soft power, in contrast to the UAE, is working and is likely to continue to shape Turkish policy in the coming year.

Dr. James M. Dorsey is an award-winning journalist and a senior fellow at Nanyang Technological University's S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore, and the National University of Singapore's Middle East Institute.

ON THIS DAY IN HISTORY



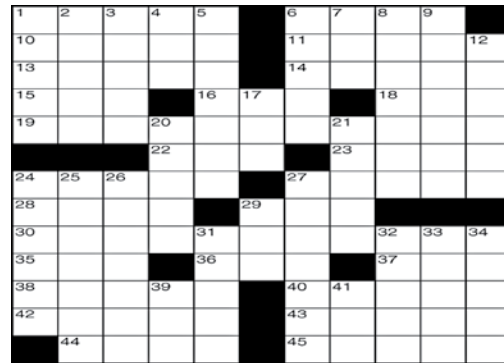
JANUARY 6 EPIPHANY

Celebrated annually this day, Epiphany is a major feast that commemorates, for Western Christians, the coming of the Magi and, for Eastern Orthodox Christians, Jesus' birth, baptism by John, and first miracle.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS: 1 Misbehave, 6 Garden tools, 10 Classic 1953 western, 11 Bowling site, 13 Cheapskate, 14 Designer Geoffrey, 15 Rink surface, 16 Long-running CBS drama, 18 Battery size, 19 Game show group, 22 Low digit, 23 Tree part, 24 Morocco city, 27 Friend of George and Elaine, 28 Goes astray, 29 Signing need, 30 Some Christians, 35 Objectives, 36 Small drink, 37 Mine yield, 38 Brown and Cornell, for two, 40 Spring month, 42 Kitchen cooker, 43 Social category, 44 Writer Uris, 45 Leg joints, 9 Capitol worker, 12 Like some breads, 17 Compass dir., 20 Breakfast bread, 21 Fight site, 24 Fix, 25 Airport announcement, 26 Volatile liquid element, 27 Flying aid with straps, 29 Letter before omega, 31 German steel city, 32 Like Loki, 33 Hackneyed, 34 Tennis star, 39 Sense of self, 41 Skillet

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YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS



BEETLE BAILEY

BY MORT WALKER



BABY BLUES

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