



The Power of Viruses

The COVID-19-Pandemic: A Harbinger of a Disastrous Geopolitics

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Editorial

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Editorial

Pandemics are probably as old as our earth filled with life and have been reported as early as AD 165 to 180: the Antonian plague caused by either smallpox or measles. The deadliest pandemics related to today's world population would have an estimated number of deaths of 2.68 million (black death 1331-1353), 2.25 million (Justinian black death 541-542) or 194 million (Spanish flu 1918-1920), if calculated as equivalent to today's population.

The Spanish flu, which originated in the USA and has been brought to Europe during World War I, clearly demonstrates the power of viruses. Following the peace treaty between Russia and Germany in Brest-Litovsk on February 18, 1918, Germany transferred more than 1 million soldiers from the East to the West front where they have been struck by the Spanish flu. The pathogen-induced destruction was so profound, and the German physicians and nurses so overwhelmed by the dead and dying, that they were unable to keep track of the mortality as the first wave of the pandemic overwhelmed their armies. 340'000 soldiers from the US forces have been infected, 30'000 soldiers died before they arrived in France; England complained 313'000 infected soldiers, but Germany suffered from 750'000 to 1 million soldiers which have already been exhausted from the war at the Eastern front – one of the decisive factors determining the outcome of the World War I at the Western front.

In modern times, pandemics have been almost forgotten in the Western World. The last newspaper report about

infectious diseases in Switzerland dates back to 1994.

With regard to geopolitics, the COVID-19 pre-pandemic time saw Trump's “America first” politics; increasing geopolitical rivalry between USA and China, respectively USA and Russia; increasing resistance and rejection of the Europeans toward China, which is becoming an economic powerhouse; growing nationalism and populism with increasing differences with what the Western world calls autocratic regimes; differences between the European Union and Great Britain (Brexit) and demonstrations in many countries regardless of the political system. Hence, the situation resembled the time before World War I.

A pandemic never arrives in a good moment.

The timely management of the up-coming COVID-19 pandemic suffered from the fact, that the USA saw the pandemic only in the light of their rivalry with China and missed that COVID-19 was a global health care problem. The Western countries demonstrated their usual colonial arrogance mixed with malicious joy about China's troubles with COVID-19. Trump was afraid about his re-election and did not want to destroy his economic achievements. Other countries had individual solutions in the fight with COVID-19 (e.g., Australia, Japan) and European Union countries proved their inability to be to fight COVID-19 in a European-wide coordinated action. In summary, because of geopolitical fighting, February 2022 was a lost months and at end of March 2020, almost all wealthy nations were in lockdown.

COVID-19 is an infectious disease with severe pulmonary and extrapulmonary manifestations involving all organs of the human body. The virus attacks the endothelial cells of all organs, causes coagulation disorders in arteries and veins and even in small pulmonary veins. The viral defense phase is followed by a systemic inflammatory answer that can 1) heal; 2) cause multiorgan failure and death; or 3) lead to a chronic disease caused long-COVID which can also affect multiple organs. There is no causative but only supportive treatment necessitating extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO) to temporarily “replace” the lung, hemofiltration/dialysis to “replace” the kidneys and/or mechanical circulatory support systems to replace the function of the heart. I personally experienced the first COVID-19 patient while working in Tashkent, Uzbekistan in February 2022: a middle-aged South Korean man who died from bilateral pneumonia.

Fortunately, the COVID-19 virus adapted to the human being and lost his aggressivity. Hence, the 30-day mortality of up to 6% (in certain countries) during the 1st and 2nd wave came down to <0.1%. Nevertheless, the long-term damage of the COVID-19 is not yet clear and this is particularly true with regard to late brain damage or damage to the reproductive system, which can affect our next generations.

Is COVID-19 a fake? An organized “nothing”? An organized world-wide fraud as some claim? I don't think so. At the University Hospital Zurich, Switzerland, during the 1st and 2nd waves, there were up to 41 out of 72 beds of the intensive care units occupied by COVID-19-patients and up to 100 patients had to be treated on the regular ward. Up to 18 ECMO's were running in parallel. The University of Vienna, Austria reported 38 ECMO's running simultaneously. I have never seen so many patients suffering from the same disease, presenting the same symptoms and chest-x-rays or CT-scans overwhelming our intensive care stations and regular wards and the same is true for my colleagues with whom I worked for almost four decades.

This infection was real. But the pandemic was misused politically, economically, financially and the misuse was heated by our sensationalized media. Self-proclaimed COVID-19 task forces prevented research projects which tried to treat this infection with a combination of cheap medications. They only paved the way for various vaccines which they called to be the only option without alternative. The fight of the FCCC-(Front-line-COVID-critical-care) alliance against the administration is well known as are the results of their treatment.

Various COVID-19 vaccines have been introduced with great enthusiasm and the vaccine-related mortality has been said to be as low as 0.000013%. However, the vaccines did not fulfil the WHO-criteria of an effective vaccine which are:

1) after vaccination, one cannot get the infection; 2) after vaccination, one cannot pass on the infection to others. The vaccines only decrease the probability to suffer from severe symptoms. Despite three vaccines, the author of this manuscript suffered three times from COVID-19 infection, each time with clear and significant clinical symptoms. In my opinion, it is a shame, that governments suppressed clinical trials with a multi-drug treatment even during the time when vaccines have not yet been available. A “natural” scientific behavior would have been to establish a double-blind randomized trial using a combination of existing medications as proposed from - as proposed by a lot of prestigious universities - considering the pathophysiology of this virus until an effective vaccine was available - which would have been easy to organize given the enormous flood of patients. In Switzerland, the first COVID-positive patients were identified end of February 2020 while the first vaccine was injected on December 2020. This therapeutic nihilism costed 9300 lives in 2020 alone.

During and after the COVID-19 pandemic, the pre-pandemic geopolitical crises intensified: transnational crisis have been confronted with rising nationalism creating increasing geopolitical tensions; individual strategies and solutions created problems in an already interconnected world with supply chain dependencies, particularly with regard to medications and medical equipment; US-China rivalry and tensions as well as mutual accusations intensified; the isolation of Russia increased; political rights and freedom have been restricted; opposition solely based on the COVID-19 pandemic has been suppressed; political and financial manipulation of medical facts with regard to diagnosis and treatment occurred in a way never seen before; radicalization on the left and right side, fanaticism and conspiracy theories increased; the fatal distribution of wealth including destruction of the middle class increased; there was a global fight for oil prices; and, colonial behavior of rich countries, e.g., with regard to patent rights, vaccine production and distribution became evident. There was a multitude of significant multinational crisis without leadership and due to the pre-existing inequalities, the vulnerables suffered most. Regardless of the type of governmental leadership, demonstrations on the road occurred: in 39% of so-called democracies; in 60% of partial democracies; and, in 41% of autocracies, respectively how the Western countries call them, demonstrating that the people lost faith in their country's handling of COVID-19 and this was especially true in “modern” democracies which had no experience of pandemics and in the same time dreamed of their invulnerability.

At the individual level, societies fragmented; very basic human relations suffered; physical exhaustion and a feeling of dishonesty for their work have shown; feeling to fail for

systemic and nor individual reasons spread out; loss of trust into decision makers intensified; a sense, that political requests don't fit into the moral compass intensified, and egoism, destruction of the individual moral compass, depolitization of citizens and an overwhelming feeling that it does not matter anyway spread out.

There have also been some positive effects such as the huge increase of knowledge and experience in a short period of time. However overall, it became abundantly evident that great-power-politics is NO solution nor for transnational nor for individual problems.

In summary, the COVID-19 pandemic could and should have been a lesson for mankind: 1) that fight between science, politics and economy is counterproductive; 2) that science will end a pandemic, not the politicians and not a liberal-capitalistic economic system; 3) that the economy may only

help to ameliorate the negative consequences of a pandemic if there is good governance with a high responsibility toward its citizens.

There are other lessons mankind should have learned: 1) that the nature keeps priority; 2) that the nature is able to use modern-day technology to expand its reach; 3) that the nature is not a digitalized product which can be managed; and, 4) that connections do not kill us, but connections without cooperation.

The rest is modern history. A large part of world-wide decision-makers has been unable to incorporate the lessons offered by the COVID-19-pandemic. By contrast, they intensified national, transnational and international tension in an irresponsible way which brings our societies towards global Armageddon.

