



**SPECIAL ISSUE: THE IMPACT OF COVID 19 ON OUR LIVES:
Socioeconomic and Political Repercussions**

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Thematic Editor: Professor Andreas Theophanous

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CYPRUS CENTER FOR EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
University of Nicosia

1993-2022 TWENTY NINE YEARS OF POLICY FORMULATION AND ANALYSIS

PERSPECTIVES ON THE ADVENT AND THE IMPACT OF COVID-19



*Andreas Theophanous
Professor of Economics and Public Policy
President, Cyprus Center for European and International
Affairs,
Head, Department of Politics and Governance
University of Nicosia*

When more than two years ago the world witnessed the advent of COVID-19 people were shocked and scared. As the virus was contagious most countries took strict measures to contain it. Inevitably, everyday life was disrupted. In most countries this included lockdowns for several weeks. Undoubtedly, the socioeconomic impact was severe. In addition to the fear of the spread of the virus, economic activity was seriously reduced and many people were faced with the eventuality of unemployment and/or salary reductions.

It is also important to recall that each country had its own policy and philosophy in dealing with the problem. Undoubtedly, there were similarities as well as differences in the various approaches. And certain issues were politicized with universal versus targeted vaccination being one of them.

At the same time we should not forget that COVID-19 and its disastrous impact were systematically making headlines in mass media. And people were overwhelmed. Not surprisingly the process entailed excesses. In several countries, including Cyprus, there was a feeling that some of the measures unnecessarily limited fundamental freedoms in a non-proportional manner. It is interesting to note that following the Russian invasion in Ukraine on February 24, 2022 and the war which ensued, media coverage on COVID-19 and its effects was decreased. In one way or another the pandemic and its effects were perceived as less important.

While the pandemic is still not over there is reserved optimism that it will be eventually decisively addressed. Nevertheless, it is important to keep in mind some useful lessons, ideas and perceptions which may be useful for the future.

When COVID-19 came people were caught by surprise. A mainstream view was that there were no limits to the technological progress and the medical achievements. Consequently, it was thought that COVID-19 or any other virus would not have such devastating effects. This assumption proved to be an illusion.

We should also recall that as soon as the pandemic spread in most countries of the world, leading academics in various countries underlined that the outcome would be “less civil rights and less prosperity”. And indeed the standard of living as well as civil rights and liberties were negatively affected. One of the major questions raised, while the world believes that we are about to overcome the pandemic, is the precise definition of the “return to normalization”.

It is not an exaggeration to say that COVID-19 forced Germany to revisit its philosophy and practices in relation to fiscal discipline. We should remember that during the Euro-debt crisis the policies of the Troika were extremely strict; with an insistence on “having the right statistics and numbers” irrespective of the social cost. During this time though the EU and the Eurozone could not remain unaffected. Although much more was expected, the EU moved ahead with specific programs to address the crisis. At the same time on April 9, 2020 at the meeting of the Eurogroup it was admitted that the policies pursued during the previous crisis were inadequate. The COVID-19 crisis made it clear that the state remained the most important player in the international system and, that, furthermore, it had a major role to play in the socioeconomic affairs of every country.

A critical issue has been the impact on the quality of education. Thanks to technology students at all levels continued to pursue their education via distance learning. On average though, there was a negative impact on the quality of education; this is a major issue. In other words, conventional education has its own uniqueness. This is also revealed by the preferences of students of all levels.

By the same token it is essential to assess the impact on the work ethic and productivity. And for future purposes it may be useful to pursue the optimum mix of working at the office and from home.

We cannot also ignore the multidimensional psychological impact of COVID-19. Thousands of people died alone while many patients had to spend much time isolated while trying to overcome their infection. The lockdowns also had their psychological impact on people. Not surprisingly in those cases where individuals had to stay at homes with very limited space the problems were worse.

Eventually people, at the individual and collective level, will most likely reevaluate their priorities in life. States are also expected to do so accordingly. In this regard, it should be noted that when COVID-19 came, the health infrastructure in most countries proved to be inadequate. This was acknowledged and serious efforts were made to address this shortcoming. These issues inevitably point to the need for a paradigm shift. It remains to be seen whether this would prove to be the case.

THE IMPACT OF COVID 19 IN OUR LIVES: SOCIOECONOMIC AND POLITICAL REPERCUSSIONS

The Human Rights perspective



*Christos Clerides
President of the Cyprus Bar Association*

The immediate reaction to the pandemic of Covid-19 March 2020 entailed derogations from basic Human Rights guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic of Cyprus and the corresponding articles of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights incorporated with increased force of Law, under Article 169 of the Constitution, within the Cyprus legal sphere.

The lock downs and restrictions as a result to movement, the obligation to be equipped with a safe pass introduced in the process, the closing down of the Districts of Limassol and Paphos, which entailed substantial interruptions to business and daily life, the obligation to wear a mask and to disclose sensitive medical personal data, quotas of employees in the service and government sector, the obligation to work from home and many other will normally run contrary to basic Human Rights enshrined in Part II of the Cyprus 1960 Constitution headed "Fundamental rights and liberties".

Indirectly, the government of the Republic of Cyprus, imposed an obligation for vaccination in that it made life more difficult for unvaccinated people by restricting their right of access to certain establishments. For a rather long period of time unvaccinated persons were prohibited from entering restaurants, pubs, cafes etc.

Even at a time, when these restrictions were lifted, unvaccinated persons had to be equipped with a rapid test of 48 hours at their own personal cost again as part of the policy to drive all persons, if possible, to vaccinate.

All the above relate to Article 7 of the Constitution which guarantees corporal integrity, Article 9, the right to decent existence. Article 13 which guarantees the right to move freely throughout the territory of the Republic, Article 14, which guarantees to citizens that they cannot be excluded from the Republic, Article 15 which guarantees the right to respect for a person's private and family life, Article 18 which guarantees the right of freedom of religion, Article

19 which guarantees the right of freedom to speech and expression, Article 20 which guarantees the right to education, Article 21 which guarantees the right to freedom of peaceful assembly, Article 23 which guarantees the rights to property, Article 15 which guarantees the rights to practice any profession or carry on any occupation trade or business, Article 26 which guarantees the right to enter freely into any contract, Article 28 which guarantees equality before the law, Article 30 which guarantees an unrestricted access to the Courts, amongst others.

It is important to note that under Article 35 of the Constitution, all branches of government are bound to secure within the limits of their respective competence the efficient application of guaranteed fundamental rights and liberties.

It was inevitable that the limitations to fundamental rights and liberties would be challenged before the Cyprus Courts. Accused persons of violating the Orders of a legislative nature issued by the Minister of Health and approved by the Council of Ministers under the relevant legislation, challenged the legality of such Orders alleging that under the relevant legislation all such Orders should have been laid before the House of Representatives for approval.

After all, the norm in most democratic countries is that, where issues of fundamental rights and liberties arise, any limitations should be imposed by Law and enacted by the elected representatives and not by Ministerial decisions. It is to be noted that no state of emergency was declared in Cyprus under Article 183 of the Constitution.

That Article applies in case of war or other public dangers threatening the life of the Republic or any part thereof. In such a case the Council of Ministers may issue a proclamation of emergency. It is indeed questionable whether the pandemic could be considered as a public danger “threatening the life of the Republic”.

In the circumstances the government opted to regulate the matter through Ministerial orders. The accused also raised issues as to whether the measures violated fundamental rights and liberties as above and asked the Court so to declare. Such Orders that violate the Constitution are inapplicable, something which might have laid to their acquittal.

In civil jurisdiction, litigants attempted to obtain interim injunctions against the application of the measure’s imposed. The Administrative Court made it clear at the outset that the validity and constitutionality of the orders did not fall within the jurisdiction of the administrative court, in that the Orders were of a legislative nature and did not constitute administrative acts over which the court has jurisdiction.

The criminal courts as well as the civil courts, emphasised the need to protect public health in dismissing matters as above put before them. It is true that in the majority of the Articles guaranteeing fundamental rights and liberties, provision is made that interference with the exercise of these rights is subject to any law necessary in the interest of public safety or public health. The lower courts invariably dismissed the propositions put forward that there was a violation of the constitution in that they considered that it was not necessary for the Orders to be put before the House of Representative and more over the public health justification was over riding. In such cases, a fair balance has to be struck between the individual right and the public interest and the Courts leaned in favor of the public interest and public health as they saw it.

It is very unfortunate that justice in Cyprus is extremely slow and as a result nearing the end of the pandemic the Supreme Court did not have the chance to rule upon the constitutionality of the matter unlike other jurisdictions such as the United States, Germany, Greece etc.

There is no right of individual petition to the Supreme Court to test the constitutionality of the measures in Cyprus.

The Pandemic brought into light the weaknesses of judicial review of such matters in Cyprus but also the ease with which fundamental rights and liberties can be curtailed in very substantial and disproportionate manner.

The latest development which sheds light in the field is the decision of the European Court of Human Rights of 15.3.2022 "***Communaute genevoise d'action syndicale (CGAS) v. Switzerland***" in accordance with which freedom of peaceful assembly in a democratic society cannot be overridden by a blanket ban for a significant length of time on public events as this was a substantial interference with the right protected by Article 11 of the Convention guaranteeing freedom of assembly and association. The measure was deemed to be disproportionate in Switzerland.

The latest decision puts the matter on its right perspective and will have the effect on all the above in Cyprus in due course.

THE SOCIAL IMPACT OF THE COVID19 PANDEMIC



Constantinos N. Phellas
Senior Vice Rector, University of Nicosia

The Covid-19 pandemic that has penetrated our daily lives over the past two years has left a deep imprint on our daily lives. The threat of the virus, combined with the economic insecurity and the numerous preventative measures that were imposed on us, have tested the fortitude of citizens who, justifiably, feel that they have been trapped in a prolonged ordeal.

In addition, various scientific research studies have highlighted the short- and long-term effects on mental health stemming from the pandemic. Anger, despair, uncertainty, fear, loneliness, and social exclusion are all negative emotions that have arisen or been exacerbated in our fellow citizens as a result of what we have experienced over the past two years. The social alienation experienced due to the various preventative measures has disrupted one of the basic needs essential to the human experience, which is none other than socialization. Tragically, these past years have mercilessly impacted individuals who contracted the virus, who had to be intubated, as well as individuals who, as relatives and loved ones, spent days or weeks agonizing over their loved ones, not to mention, those who are still mourning over the loss of loved ones who left too soon and, often, without a proper farewell.

The Covid-19 pandemic has also impacted on family life. This unprecedented, often traumatic experience is expected to affect the mental health of children and adolescents, especially the most vulnerable groups of the population. Recent systematic studies show increased incidences of depression and, above all, anxiety in adolescents, during and after isolation, with girls and high school students being the most affected, as well as vulnerable population groups (among others, children with insecurity and over-information concerning coronavirus). In addition, other factors associated with the poor mental health of minors include a lower socio-economic level of the family, the loss of family income or work, the concern for a family member who fell ill, as well as, the physical and mental health of parents.

Perhaps the most vulnerable group, in all respects, could be the elderly. On the one hand, their physical health was the most at risk in case of contracting Coronavirus, and on the other hand, through various scientific research and studies, we see that they were the most vulnerable social group when it came

to issues regarding mental health. Every day, we hear about and read figures and statistics of individuals who fell ill and who have passed away. However, behind these faceless statistics and figures, there are people and families. There is a partner, parent or child who was not given the opportunity to say a proper goodbye to their loved ones, who merely received the corpse of their loved one inside a coffin. This means that an "open" or an "unfinished mourning" remains – a mark on the psychology of those left behind.

The impact of the "silent" mourning is bound to leave a permanent scar on those affected. It is essential to support both those who fall sick, as well as individuals who lost – and continue to lose – loved ones, who on account of the pandemic, were forced to take their last breath alone in a hospital, without being surrounded by their loved ones. The partners, parents, children, siblings and relatives left behind are the ones who did not have the opportunity to say a "healing goodbye" given that even funerals are carried out on the basis of measures and restrictions.

Even more serious is the fact that throughout this pandemic, individuals are faced with the possibility of an unexpected death for which they are not prepared to cope, which is a key feature of today's society. It is about time to start having open conversations about the deaths associated with the pandemic, as well as the health crisis resulting from this and accept the other "silent" pandemic, which will stay with us for many years to come.

The lack of mourning that characterizes today's social reality is underscored intensely by the denial of grief, of feeling pain, and the anguish caused by the pervasive atmosphere of death and loss. Consequently, we unintentionally deprive ourselves of the happiness of the whole experience of our existence. We very often say that life is short - and we make it even shorter.

Concluding, I would ask the following question:

Should we erase these past two years and think of them like a bad dream? The answer is clearly "no". On the contrary, we should keep them in our memory. If we forget them, it will be as if we are denying what we have experienced and all those people who have passed away. Wisdom will characterize us if we keep them in our memory, and remember and honor those lost, no matter whether we knew them or not. The experiences gained need to "awaken" us so that we are not complacent in an imaginary world of fictional luxury and bliss. The past two years shall make us redefine our social coordinates and find the important things in our lives. To develop respect and solidarity with our fellow citizens and to maintain our hope. Hopefully, these past two years will make us better people.

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: SHORT AND LONG TERM REPERCUSSIONS



*Peter Karayiannis
Professor of Microbiology/Molecular Virology, Medical
School, University of Nicosia*

March 9th, 2022, marked the second anniversary since the first two cases of Coronavirus disease-19 (Covid-19) had been reported in Cyprus. The Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus-2 (SARS-CoV-2) is the causative organism responsible for this modern age pandemic which has troubled the world since the first cases were reported in Wuhan province, China, in December 2019. Since then, 478 million cases have been reported worldwide with 6,11 million deaths.¹ The toll is likely to be much higher in view of the under-reporting of cases in the initial stages of the pandemic, in developed and underdeveloped countries alike. During the last two years repeated lockdowns and severe restriction measures were introduced by many governments around the world in an attempt to prevent uncontrolled transmission of the virus and to give time to Science to work on the development of vaccines in the first instance, and antiviral drugs in the second. The speed at which these were developed, tested and rolled out is unprecedented and entailed collaboration between pharmaceutical companies and volunteers from several countries who took part in phase III clinical trials assessing the clinical efficacy of such vaccines.² To-date, more than 10,78 billion doses of vaccines have been administered worldwide. An additional lucrative market was established for the development and rolling out of specific diagnostic tests which have enabled the diagnosis of infection but also offered a means to monitor spread of the virus around the world, as well as infections in the community, hospitals, schools, old people's homes etc.

Governments found themselves in uncharted waters and had to rely on committees of experts to give direction as to how to manage effectively the pandemic. The initial lockdowns which were unheard of in recent times, gave way to measures restricting movement, social distancing and personal protection measures such as hand hygiene and the wearing of masks both indoors and outdoors, striving to reach a balance between maintaining essential health and social services, as well as forging policies to keep their economies running, even when wave after wave of infections threatened people's daily lives at every level.

The International Monetary Fund estimates that the COVID-19 pandemic will cost the global economy \$12,5 trillion through 2024.³ Supply chain disruptions, inflation and tighter monetary policy are "throwing cold water on the recovery everywhere," as IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva told an event hosted by the Financial Times. Moreover, sizeable gaps in COVID-19 vaccine rates, the overall widening divergence between rich and poor countries caused by the pandemic, along with inequalities relating to access to healthcare facilities, job opportunities, closure of businesses and economic hardship are likely to lead to social unrest, protests, tensions, rising debt and insecurity. A lot of these concepts rest on the misconception that the measures were unnecessary and are part of a major conspiracy aimed at establishing a different economic order that will control governments around the world. Social media have been instrumental in propagating these conspiracy theories which at the beginning caused a lot of suspicion relating to the vaccines,⁴ diagnostic tests and even the swabs used for sample taking. Policymakers have also been confronted by moral issues, posing the question of whether individual interests/preferences should take precedence over collective interests.

The effects of the pandemic on the world economy are likely to be the topic of discussion by economists around the world for years to come, and are beyond the scope of the current report. There is already a divide between rich and poor countries, with China which escaped the pandemic with only one wave, leading the recovery and having a share of nearly 15 per cent of the global trade in 2020, third only to the EU and the US. The extremely harsh restriction measures imposed by the Chinese government prevented the waves of infection experienced by other countries and allowed its workforce to produce goods required by the rest of the world. In the case of the US however, leading the tables on total number of cases and deaths, the economic toll has been immense. Because of this, a major concern is the direct medical costs and resource use burden imposed on its health care system. A recent study, estimated that there will be \$654 billion in direct medical costs. In the best case scenario, assuming that only 20 percent of the US population were to get infected (this has been surpassed), the median cost would be \$163,4 billion in direct medical costs over the course of the pandemic.⁵ This is in sharp contrast to poor resource countries which are unable to afford or absorb the costs of testing, engaging in vaccination campaigns and providing the required hospital equipment. The impact of the pandemic on their economies and the human cost will not be apparent for a while yet.

In the case of Cyprus, as in other countries, the healthcare systems were caught unaware at the start of the pandemic. In the initial stages, there was limited number of intensive care beds and respirators. Trained intensive care nurses were few in number and intensive care doctors were also in short supply. This necessitated the enlisting of help from outside healthcare professionals, in an attempt to deal with the increase in numbers of hospitalisations, and the manning of intensive care units where patients

required constant attention. All this took place at a transitional period for the Cyprus healthcare system with the establishment of GESY (General Health System) which was called upon to manage the emergency at such an early stage after coming into effect. The original lockdown and the gradual removal of the restriction measures without a concurrent increase in number of cases, gave the required breathing interlude for the health system to become organized as far as the pandemic was concerned. More intensive care nurses were employed and trained accordingly, whilst personal protective equipment which was in short supply during the first wave, arrived on the island from China together with respirators from various other countries (Israel, Germany). Other than the reference hospital in Famagusta and the intensive care unit at Nicosia General Hospital, dedicated entirely to Covid-19 cases, Covid-19 wards were established at all other District Hospitals. These were called upon to deal with hospitalisations which increased in numbers in subsequent waves, particularly that due to the delta variant with 315 patients on the wards soon after its peak and over 50 cases in intensive care units, including that in Limassol.

In the initial stages, problems arose with ward closures following detection of positive cases among patients and staff. This stressed the system even more at a difficult time for all. To reserve beds in intensive care units, all non-Covid-19 surgeries and procedures were postponed as each wave reached its peak. Patients were afraid to visit hospitals and essential anticancer treatments were delayed for some of them. Moreover, patients with chronic diseases such as diabetes and cardiovascular diseases did not receive the attention that they required. It took some time for personal doctors to begin to manage Covid-19 patients in the community in an attempt to alleviate the pressure on hospitals following Ministry of Health direction and protocols.

Concluding, the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic is likely to be felt by individuals and governments for years to come, as the repercussions are identified and dealt with in a timely manner. However, this is unlikely to occur uniformly and will be dependent on the ability of each country to address not only the economic and healthcare shortcomings, but also the psychological burden which became evident as a result of the lockdowns and the uncertainty/insecurity people felt, which did not receive the attention it deserved at the beginning.

1. Johns Hopkins University, Center for Systems Science and Engineering, <https://gisanddata.maps.arcgis.com/apps/dashboards/> (accessed March 24th, 2022, 3.10pm).
2. Interim public health considerations for COVID-19 vaccination of adolescents in the EU/EEA. <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/Interim-public-health-considerations-for-COVID-19-vaccination-of-adolescents.pdf>

3. IMF sees cost of COVID pandemic rising beyond \$12.5 trillion estimate. <https://www.reuters.com/business/imf-sees-cost-covid-pandemic-rising-beyond-125-trillion-estimate-2022-01-20/>
4. Vaccine Misinformation Guide. <https://vaccinemisinformation.guide>
5. Sarah M. Bartsch, Marie C. Ferguson, James A. McKinnell, Kelly J. O'Shea, Patrick T. Wedlock, Sheryl S. Siegmund, and Bruce Y. Lee. The potential health care costs and resource use associated with COVID-19 In the United States. *Health Affairs* 2020;39: 927–935.

PREMATURE MORTALITY DUE TO COVID-19 AS MEASURED USING POTENTIAL YEARS OF LIFE LOST



*John Gabel
University of Nicosia
C-MOR consortium member and project manager*

In the past two years, healthcare systems have been stressed to their limits. Students have dealt with disruption to their education. Families have frequently faced deaths or long-term disabilities. The pandemic has reverberated through our communities to the point that the impact of the virus is difficult to fathom. Can we put numbers behind the abstract burden of COVID-19? The C-MOR Consortium at the University of Nicosia has attempted to do just that.

Our team, spread across 6 continents and 60 countries, has initially focused on measures of mortality from the virus. One of the most cited figures from the pandemic, 'death counts' reflect the tragic number of people killed by the new coronavirus. However, the death toll does not account for the total years of life lost. For example, if a 30-year-old dies from COVID-19, the pandemic would have stolen approximately 50 remaining years of their life (assuming a life expectancy of 80).

C-MOR set out to calculate these 'potential years of life lost' (PYLL), to more concretely describe the heartbreaking repercussions of the pandemic on human life. On-the-ground researchers in the consortium collected data from their respective national sources for January to August 2020. The results represent a global picture of PYLL due to COVID-19 in 17 countries (Ugarte et al, 2022).

Across these nations, the analysis found 442.677 deaths from COVID-19 or a striking 4.210.654 PYLL in total. Per-death average PYLL were 8,7 years. Brazil experienced 12,8 PYLL per death on average, France 4,8, and Kazakhstan 14,8 years. The study also investigated small countries, which are often excluded in publications. For example, Cape Verde was found to have experienced 14,7 PYLL per death. In the University of Nicosia's home country, Cyprus, per death PYLL were found to be 10,5.

Between these countries, there was immense variance in years of life lost. On the lowest end, Australia (with 2,7 years) was relatively spared in terms of premature mortality during the pandemic. Ukraine, however, was found to have experienced a whopping 19,3 PYLL per death. The study also showed that Peru, Colombia, and Brazil, “were the sole to experience both the highest PYLL per death and PYLL rates (crude rates ranging from ~ 595 to 1.381 PYLL per 100.000 population).”

Along with these South American countries, the United States, England & Wales, Scotland, and Sweden faced high rates of PYLL by population (all above ~198 years per 100.000). For Australia, Cyprus, Kazakhstan, Georgia, Norway, and Slovenia, these crude rates were below 100 years per 100.000 population. The lowest was Georgia with a PYLL rate of just 2 years per 100.000 people.

Most COVID-19 mortality in the 17 countries occurred in older populations (60+ or 65+). However, the middle age groups (40–59 or 45–64 years) in the study had the majority of PYLL for Brazil, Peru, Ukraine, Cape Verde, Colombia, Israel, Scotland, and the USA. In addition to assessing age, we also accounted for sex.

The analysis found 64,3% of total PYLL was attributed to males, while 35,7% was attributed to females. Males experienced more PYLL per 100,000 deaths than females in all 17 countries, aside from Georgia. In total, likely due to complex biological or social factors, males lost an average 9,5 PYLL per death while females lost 7,4 years.

Finally, we also compared the overall rate of PYLL with the rate of excess mortality in the past five years (i.e. deaths beyond what is normally expected). We found, “countries that showed high PYLL rates (England & Wales, Scotland, the USA, Brazil, Colombia, and Israel), also experienced (except for Colombia and Israel) excess mortality per 100,000 population during the study period in 2020 compared to the mortality of the previous five years (2015–2019).”

With geographically diverse countries, analysis of specific demographic groups, and comparison to excess mortality, this study of PYLL sheds light on the multidimensional toll of the virus. The total years of life lost calculated in this study are sobering and they only reflect the toll during the first few months of the pandemic. Consider all one does in a year— perhaps raising children, supporting friends, and working a job. For the past two years we have become so accustomed to hearing of COVID deaths that we often lose sight of the value of life. When someone dies, the socioeconomic ramifications ripple through entire communities, in some cases for decades. Coronavirus has cut years of dreams short for millions of people and their families. With the availability of vaccines and more effective treatments, even if the new

coronavirus is expected to soon become endemic, its socioeconomic impact will unfortunately live on in the lives it has cut short.

The full publication including all study results can be found at:

Ugarte, M.P., Achilleos, S., Quattrocchi, A. et al. Premature mortality attributable to COVID-19: potential years of life lost in 17 countries around the world, January–August 2020. BMC Public Health 22, 54 (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-021-12377-1>

REPERCUSSIONS OF THE PANDEMIC ON THE HEALTHCARE PROVISION: WHAT HAS BEEN LEARNT FROM ONGOING PANDEMIC



Christos C. Petrou
Associate Professor, Department of Life and Health
Sciences, University of Nicosia

The COVID-19 pandemic changed life as we knew it before March 2020 and has affected our lives physically, mentally, financially and socially. Consequently, the pandemic has highlighted gaps and shortcomings, not only in the health system, but also in the whole spectrum of society and politics.

The COVID-19 pandemic is primarily a health crisis which puts enormous pressure on health systems and affects the quality of life. Health systems need to continue adapting and coping with the COVID-19 pandemic.

This article does not explore the public health response to the pandemic, which will certainly be the subject of deeper and systematic analysis in the future, but discusses some general repercussions on the healthcare provision and some lessons learnt.

As a consequence of the pandemic the life expectancy in Europe and the US has been dramatically decreased. This reduction was the largest in our longevity after World War II and exceeded the reductions observed around the dissolution of the Eastern Bloc in central and Eastern European countries. Losses in life expectancy were largely attributable to increased mortality above age 60 years and linked to official COVID-19 deaths.¹

Of course, life expectancy was not only negatively affected from the increased mortality due to the SARS-Cov-2 infections as such, but also due to the increase of other social and economic inequalities, the restricted access to health care services and the problematic access to medicines.

¹ José Manuel Aburto, Jonas Schöley, Ilya Kashnitsky, Luyin Zhang, Charles Rahal, Trifon I Missov, Melinda C Mills, Jennifer B Dowd, Ridhi Kashyap, Quantifying impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic through life-expectancy losses: a population-level study of 29 countries, *International Journal of Epidemiology*, Volume 51, Issue 1, February 2022, Pages 63–74, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ije/dyab207>

Much focus has been placed on increasing the number of hospital beds to treat COVID-19 patients, but according to the OECD² chronic patients face multiple threats as they are also affected by disruptions to their regular care routines. The COVID-19 crisis demonstrates the importance of placing primary care at the core of health systems, both to manage an unexpected increase in demand and to maintain continuity of care for all.

Increased volume of patients at the public hospitals or workforce shortages lead to:

- Reduced Visits to the primary care
- Cancellation of routine outpatient appointments
- Postponement of, elective surgeries
- Transfer of non COVID patients to private (less affected) hospitals.
- Reassignment of staff

Health care systems must be resilient against future public health emergencies like pandemics, but also to address the challenges of aging societies and the growing burden of chronic diseases. Strong primary health care can reduce the pressure on the entire health system.

A comprehensive strategy is needed to address all the physical, mental and social health needs of populations directly or indirectly affected by COVID-19.

As for the health care system, some lessons learnt are the following:

- Extension home-based/community programs improve access to care for all patients during a health care crisis, reducing pressure on hospitals.
- Reassignment of duties and responsibilities in primary health care, primarily to allow community pharmacists to extend their services and provide pharmaceutical care for chronic diseases. Pharmacist is a central pillar of the system (Pharmacies were the only points of health care provision which remained open during the lockdowns)³
- Defining new models of care delivery and move from hospital centered care to patient centered care
- Increasing investments in primary care, disease prevention and health services⁴

² OECD Policy Responses to Coronavirus (COVID-19) Strengthening the frontline: How primary health care helps health systems adapt during the COVID 19 pandemic.

<https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/strengthening-the-frontline-how-primary-health-care-helps-health-systems-adapt-during-the-covid-19-pandemic-9a5ae6da/> (Accessed on 27/03/2022)

³ PGEU: Position Paper on the Role of Community Pharmacists in COVID-19 - Lessons Learned from the Pandemic <https://www.pgeu.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/PGEU-Position-Paper-on-on-the-Lessons-Learned-from-COVID-19-ONLINE.pdf> (Accessed on 20/03/2022)

⁴ Etienne CF, Fitzgerald J, Almeida G, et al. COVID-19: transformative actions for more equitable, resilient, sustainable societies and health systems in the Americas. *BMJ Glob Health* 2020; 5:e003509.doi:10.1136/bmjgh-2020-003509pmid: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/32792411>

The pandemic will end, that's for sure, the question is how much we have learned, how individual and collective attitudes will change, and how the State and politicians will be able to be ready not only for a conventional war, spending on arms, but on another pandemic or health crisis, to protect their citizens by taking advantage of all available scientific resources and developments.

There is now not only an imperative to restore service provision while being prepared for possible future waves of the virus, but to build on this learning to bring about positive change and renewal so that the health and care system can support the greatest possible improvements in health and wellbeing for everyone, well beyond this crisis.

THE IMPACT OF COVID19 ON OUR LIVES



Alexia Sakadaki
Sociologist, Member of the Central Committee of the
Movement of Ecologists - Citizens' Cooperation

It has been already two years after the outbreak of the pandemic of COVID19 in Cyprus and the unprecedented conditions that came along. For the first time in recent years, the whole society faced a compulsory resident restraint accompanied with fear, uncertainty, but also a call to protect each other. In the name of public health, states took – sometimes - excessive measures to defeat a virus that scientists had little information about, being criticized by groups of people for violating the principles of human rights. The health crisis has led to socio-economic consequences, widening the social class gap, and leading many small and medium-sized enterprises into bankruptcy. Societies realized the threat of the virus with a variety of responses; with a full trust and engagement to their governments' decision making, or with a total mistrust and denial and some other with conspiracy theories.

The main ethical question is whether the states had the right to impose measures banning free movement and protesting or even enforcing compulsory vaccination. A question that if would be raised before 2019, would perhaps have a different response. Yet, after the outbreak of the pandemic, the humanity has been confronted with the realization that in some cases strict measures are needed to protect the public. Some states may have taken advantage of this opportunity to achieve other goals. In countries where citizens had limited confidence to their governments, reactions to the imposition of measures have been much stronger. The concept of trust is crucial in risk management and on the social response to measures that basically affect everyday life of people. Many governments failed to convince their citizens on the rightness of their decision making.

The world is facing a new way of governing with the risk of more authoritarian states. Managing the crisis was mostly relied on governments, which were called to balance the medical challenge with the financial and political crisis, with respect to human rights. International relations reshaped with the focus on cooperation but at the same time on self-surviving. Enforcement is not a method easily accepted in the 21st century. People expect to be well informed about any kind of situation, having all scientific and other data in mind, and have the freedom to decide themselves.

At a European Union level, the need for coordinated action and policies in relation to both measures and the purchase of vaccines has become apparent. Nevertheless, the principles of the European Union concerning the free movement of European citizens had to be sidelined for a long time. In some cases, the autonomy of the Member States has prevailed over the Union, as in the case of compulsory vaccinations, a practice which was not in line with decisions taken at a European level. Borders were closed while member states prioritized the needs of their citizens, being concerned for the provision of supplies and medical treatment within their countries. Yet, it was apparent that a global and immediate reaction to the virus was crucial to defeat the common threat.

Social distancing and lockdowns have led to an unprecedented psychological state. Unfortunately, seniors were completely excluded from society. In addition to health uncertainty, elders have become even more burdened, as efforts had focused mainly on their protection, resulting in their further exclusion. It has become apparent that our government has great weaknesses in dealing with the elderly. Solutions such as creating support centers, providing psychological support, and creating such a network that would enrich their emotional and material state could be offered, but unfortunately little has been done. Young children and adolescents were also greatly affected, at ages where they had previously learned to share and socialize. The Ministry of Education of Cyprus has been highly criticized for not taking measures to ensure the smooth attendance of students, under the new circumstances and for failing to use new technologies.

Inequalities in terms of class, gender and race that preexisted in social structures were revealed and expanded. Domestic violence in Cyprus and many other European and non-European countries had an immediate increase from the first lockdown in April 2020. According to the latest survey ran by the European Parliament (Eurobarometer 2022, Ref. 2712), women were severely affected by coronavirus emotionally, physically and financially. Moreover, 68% of Cypriot women stated that the balance of work life with family life was negatively affected, while 21% of the European women are seriously thinking of reducing their work hours. The evidence shows the need for stronger policies in relation to gender equality worldwide. A setback in this sector is harmful for the whole society. It is evident that the Cypriot government did not prioritize equality in its political agenda. Looking at the representation of women in political life of the island, the House of Representatives, and the composition of the Ministerial Council, one would expect the above results. The pandemic was a wake-up call to all governments that much more should be done to tackle social inequalities and gender violence.

Concluding, the pandemic is not only a health crisis, but also a social, political, environmental and financial crisis. It is the moment when governments, politicians, organizations and institutions are being evaluated for their response to risk. COVID19 has paved the way for a new era in human history in all terms. The experience of more than two years of pandemic, may have taught that the essence of life is in quality. The value of meeting each other has now a different meaning than before. The pandemic led to a realization that all human beings are equally vulnerable to the threat of death. A common threat often strengthens social ties and bonds and creates a stronger social response. New digital technologies replaced the traditional ways of communication, maintaining social relations at a time when social distancing was mandatory. Political decisions and the response to crisis will be evaluated in the long run and by their effectiveness.

COVID AND ITS POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES FOR DEMOCRACY



Matthieu Grandpierron
Assistant Professor, Faculty of Political Sciences and
History, Catholic University of Vendée

Covid has had a profound effect on our societies and no country has been spared. While much attention has been given to the health effects of Covid, it is not so much in medical terms that Covid will leave its mark, but more on politics and societies. If we had to summarize its political impacts, we could say that it has exposed the extreme fragility of our societies and political systems, especially in the West.

The strength of liberal democracy is based on two major principles: freedom and transparency. The management of the epidemic has undermined these two principles. Freedom was sacrificed in the name of public health and "life": limitation of freedom of movement, of accessing certain places, and worse: imposition of vaccination under penalty of being ostracized from social life. Yet life implies movement and movement generates risk. In physics, the absence of movement leads to the "death" of the object. A bicycle can only stand upright thanks to movement. When it stops, it falls, unless it is fixed to a structure. The panic of the Occident in front of a pandemic, which is after all not that deadly if compared to previous epidemics, seems to indicate a constant fear of the risk (whether political risk attached to reform the political and social system) and of the death (the permanent quest to appear younger and to technologically expend human capacities – the augmented human project of Elon Musk or the augmented soldier projects are examples of that).

This biopoliticization of a crisis is not new and is part of a punitive and discriminatory interpretation of ecology: banning certain fuels, over-taxing certain vehicles, banning certain heating systems, under the guise of saving the planet, while these measures hit the underprivileged classes and those living in the countryside (who, are less likely to vote liberal) the hardest. Some would say that Covid's arrival is well-timed. Since 1974 we have been told that we would burn out because of global warming, but since it takes time, the virus is a "divine surprise", this is the punishment that good Gaia is inflicting on us and will certainly force us to repent and change our ways living.

More worryingly, in France, democracy has been put on hold in the name of public health. Firstly, demonstrations (such as the “yellow jackets” movement) have been banned for fear of increasing the rate of contamination, thus putting an end to a political and social movement that had weakened the government. The health crisis also put the election campaign on hold. The presentation of programs by the various opposition candidates was rendered inaudible by Emmanuel Macron's martial speech: “we are at war”. Yet the deadline is important for France: 12% unemployment (8% officially, but this number doesn't include certain categories), national debt exceeding 130% of GDP, energy dependence (since the nuclear industry suffered from ecological and EU dogmatism), dilapidated state of the armed forces (ammunition stocks for 3 days), justice and police notably.

“We are at war”. The President, as head of the armed forces, has the possibility of convening the Defense Council. As this Council normally discusses military operations, defense secrecy applies: neither Parliament nor the press can know the content of deliberations. However, in order to fight the pandemic, a “health defense council” was set up, and as the word “defense” appears in it, neither the press nor Parliament has the means to control the government's action. This is extremely problematic because it is within this health defense council that measures restricting public freedoms have been taken. This introduces a serious constitutional risk: shifting politics to non-political bodies, creating de facto a rival to parliament, without the agreement of either the original constituent power (the People) or the derived constituent power (Parliament).

The outsourcing of politics in France was also visible in the revelation of what should have been a political scandal: the Mackinsey affair. The health defense council subcontracted the plan to fight the epidemic to Mackinsey and it was thus Mackinsey that imposed the vaccination pass, the ban on certain treatments. Mackinsey is American (thus posing a sovereignty issue) and is a shareholder of Moderna and Pfizer, which is more than problematic.

The political use of the vaccine pass could be dangerous for public freedoms. Indeed, the validity of the pass is conditioned (number of doses, time between doses, etc.). Not only those who do not have it are “disconnected” from public life (forbidden to take transport, to go to restaurants, to have a social life), but those who have it must, in order to keep it, continue to fulfil the criteria, at the cost of being “disconnected” from society too. It is quite striking to see that France, a country setting itself up as the guardian of human rights and freedoms, has chosen the Chinese method of social control.

Covid has also shown (and the war in Ukraine has reinforced it) that liberalism has totalitarian tendencies, or at least that it does not tolerate well divergent opinions. Facts have become political: there are right-wing facts and left-wing facts, “real” facts and “fake news” facts, for example for the virus, we could

have a debate to agree on its real danger, as soon as we put the health impact of Covid into perspective the debate becomes impossible. Those who dispute the veracity of the figures, or the effectiveness of the vaccine, are ostracized by being labelled "propagators of fake news". There is only one sound of the bell passing in a loop: if the vaccine is not effective enough, it is because we have not received enough doses, we need a third or even a fourth. It is the same argument about the European Union: common policies don't work? It is because we need more common policies, more integration, more EU in the end.

Basically, this brings us back to the warnings of the Copenhagen School scholars. Once the securitization process has been carried out, it is quite difficult, if not impossible, to get out of it. Time will tell, but it seems unlikely in France that vaccine control will stop completely. It is more likely that it will just be suspended or implemented differently. Following the 2015 attacks, France had put in place the "state of emergency", a regime of exception diminishing freedoms to give more leverage to police forces. Although the state of emergency has ended, its provisions continue to apply because they have been transposed into ordinary law.

CONCERNS ON COVID-19 POLICIES AND MEASURES



George Chailos
Associate professor of Mathematics, Department of
Computer Science, University of Nicosia

"Emergencies' have always been the pretext on which the safeguards of individual liberty have been eroded -- and once they are suspended it is not difficult for anyone who has assumed such emergency powers to see to it that the emergency persists."
(Hayek, *Law, Legislation and Liberty*, Vol. 3, 1979, 124).

The Covid-19 pandemic evolved in a public health crisis that has tremendous effects in economy, workers and work inequalities, in politics and political behavior, as well as psychological effects and major effects on the social fabric. The pandemic forced a rapid shutdown of the regular patterns of social interaction that fueled economic and social activities. Most of the population has experienced disruptions in the normal rhythms of everyday life due to mandated lockdowns and social distancing, with continuing disruptions in work, school, social, and family relationships.

In response, the infrastructures of education, health, social services and faith-based organizations, government, criminal justice, the law, and many others that depend on interpersonal contact were forced to transform their practices rapidly moving some online, delaying or postponing others, and shutting some down altogether. The consequences of these decisions have not yet been fully understood, but are likely to be long lasting. The pandemic presented significant threats to physical safety, economic security and trust in institutions. These threats can influence cognitive, affective and behavioral outcomes relevant to financial decision-making, political behavior and treatment of others. Furthermore, the occurrence and outbreak has risen political, legal and, above all, constitutional concerns. These concerns lie in the constitutional legitimacy of the restrictive measures imposed to address the effects of the pandemic and their place in a democratic and liberal state governed by the rule of law. Experts in law are still arguing about the observance of the legal guarantees (such as the precautionary principle, the principle of proportionality and the prohibition of violation of the core of the right) regarding a constitutionally justified and a constitutionally unjustified restriction on the exercise of fundamental rights. In this direction, we have a

recent extremely important decision of ECHR 15.3.2022 (21881/20): The complete ban on demonstrations by the Swiss authorities for two and a half months at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic and the threat of criminal sanctions violated the principle of proportionality and was not necessary in a democratic society. Furthermore, the inability of the judicial system to proceed with a direct review of the substance of the constitutionality of the measure was inadmissible.

I do not have the knowledge for an expert opinion on this, but I would like to point out the irrationality of a plethora of measures, that in fact do not address the essence of the problem. In contrary, they reinforce the mystical view that governments with the aid of institutions that they have under their direct or indirect influence, but also political leaderships in general, are stepping up their influence and authoritarianism in an attempt to exercise further control in our lives and shape the direction of our behaviors. Some leaders have even gone a step further. They have seen pandemic as an opportunity to consolidate their own strength. Instead of supporting and protecting people, they simply used the pandemic to undermine civil and individual liberties, human rights and inflict unjustified and disproportional fear.

In regard to the above, one of the most devastating, from any aspect, measure was the highly popular, among the governments, measure of lockdowns. A new study by researchers at Johns Hopkins University reveals that lockdowns prevented only a small number of deaths caused by the virus. The numbers suggest that lockdowns in Europe and the United States reduced the Covid-19 mortality rate by only an average of 0,2%, with the majority of dead people having underlying medical conditions, or well exceeding life expectancy.

The question now is the following. Did the price that we are and will paying for this 0,2% worth it? The answer is definitely negative. Various scientific studies showed that lockdowns affected household finances with stronger implications for families with children living in poverty and/or crowded housing conditions. This led to an increase in poverty that leads to poor nutrition, poor health, increase of domestic violence and crime, and eventually to high mortality rates.

Additionally, lockdown measures led to social isolation that affected severely the mental health of the general population all over the world, causing an increase in mental distress, depression and anxiety through the lockdown periods and beyond, sometimes associated with changes in feelings and lifestyle that include reduced physical activity, unhealthy eating habits, inadequate sleep quality, feeling of loneliness, as well as, child obesity and intra-family violence. In this spirit, a recent report by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions

(Eurofound) on the effects of the pandemic on young people states, among other things, that the pandemic has a devastating effect on the mental well-being of young people. The reduced level of the quality of life and mental well-being identified by the research is apparently related to the restrictions imposed and the closure of schools. Furthermore, the almost obligatory overexposure to distance learning methods of these age groups on the internet makes them more vulnerable and greatly reduces their sociability, putting barriers in their interpersonal relationships and in their physical communication with others and especially with their peers.

Another controversial policy that undermines human rights concerns the governmental practices (being similar or analogous in most of the western world) for vaccination. In spite of the fact that governments and constitutional organizations typically proclaimed that vaccine, as an irreversible medical procedure on human body, is not mandatory, they took measures and applied policies that essentially constitute vaccination mandatory. To name a few with regard to the unvaccinated citizens: prohibition of health treatment (Germany and elsewhere), fines for unvaccinated elderly (Greece-Austria et al.), entry restriction to cultural and recreational areas irrespective of providing a valid rapid or PCR test, threats, bullying, even dismissals in workplaces, prohibition of athletes from participating in competitions and hence indirect career disaster (Djokovic case) etc.

Scientists and experts questioning the methods and measures or raising serious concerns or opposition to vaccination were marginalized, dismissed as corporate shells, or even fired. Social media companies took down legitimate discussion about public health measures. Researchers, accustomed to carrying out their debates in journals and conferences, found their ideas and their reputations battered about on social media. In a different era, all ideas to confront the mysterious, constantly changing virus might have been on the table.

I have raised my concerns and expressed my point of view, however it needs special and especially careful analysis before we reach unsubstantiated and irrational conclusions. Maybe the world as we know it changes and it will further change dramatically. Maybe the system-not necessarily something mystical, malicious, with ruling elites and the like-, the world and the environment that we all exist, participate and interact is trying to rearrange itself economically, socially, environmentally, culturally and establish new realities and norms. What is clear though is that we live in a world that is at a really critical turning point. Nothing is given. We need to be aware of and vigilant at each moment. Freedoms and rights gained with struggles and sacrifices through the ages are in jeopardy at all times.

Everything changes, nothing is permanent and steady. «Τὰ πάντα ρεῖ, οὐδὲν μένει”.

THOUGHTS AND PERSPECTIVES ON COVID-19



Elias Pantelides
BSc Economics, Charter Accountant, Writer

“Two things are infinite: the universe and human stupidity; and I'm not sure about the universe.” — Albert Einstein

The capacity of the human mind to accumulate knowledge is indeed unbelievable. The average adult human brain has the ability to store the equivalent of 2,5 million gigabytes digital memory. Billions and billions of neurons store the data people see, hear, smell, taste, and touch. These five senses are enhanced by the vestibular sense, the balance sense and the seventh sense proprioception. Proprioception is the awareness of one's posture, movement, balance, and location based on sensations.

The humans managed to creep out of the caves and following sweet water rivers they reached the shores. Using knowledge offered to them by Hephaistos, the Greek mythology god of fire and blacksmiths, they managed to forge arms, knives and swords. Initially to make their life easier. At the same time killing animals and the murder of fellow humans was made much easier.

Asclepius the ancient Greek god of medicine, developed the healing aspect of the medical arts. He was also the personification of the ideal doctor; he was the god of medicine and healing. Around eighty billion humans have been borne on planet earth since time immemorial. About eight are alive today. Many have died from old age, or famine or diseases. Many have died from the evil hand of fellow humans. Firstly, using stones, then many other man-made tools and many years later something more deadly, as Hiroshima and Nagasaki would find out in August 1945.

On August 2, 1939, Einstein signed a letter addressed to U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, which led to the Manhattan project, which led to a question to God. *"As the bomb fell over Hiroshima and exploded, we saw an entire city disappear. I wrote in my log the words: "My God, what have we done?" - Captain Robert Lewis, co-pilot of the U.S. Air Force bomber Enola Gay that dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan, on Aug 6, 1945. At least 117.000 people were killed.*

God never answered his question. However, many years later a pandemic spread all over the world. It was probably the first known pandemic which affected the whole planet earth.

A pandemic (from Greek πᾶν, pan, "all" and δῆμος, demos, "local people" the 'crowd') is an epidemic of an infectious disease that has spread across a large region, for instance multiple continents or worldwide, affecting a substantial number of individuals. What begun in the 21st century anno Domini as endemic, transformed as epidemic and conquered the planet earth as pandemic.

“THE IMPACT OF COVID 19 ON OUR LIVES: About half a billion persons have been affected by covid-19 coronavirus pandemic, by the end of March 2022. Most have recovered but 6,2 million have met their Creator, who still have not answered to the question "My God, what have we done?", or maybe the answer is loud and clear but humans are not willing to hear and understand.

Socioeconomic side effects will be global. The way societies progress, stagnate, or regress will never be the same again. Globalisation has advanced, especially in the field of communications. Children have a 'clever' phone in their pocket and are able to watch live music concerts, athletic events and wars, as many wars as they want.

Political Repercussions of covid 19 are very dangerous. Democratically elected politicians are faced with demagogues. Clever persons who seek political power by appealing to the desires and prejudices of ordinary people, rather than by using rational argument. Democracy should never be taken as granted by God. Only kings, despots, and stalino-fascists believe they rule by the grace of their God.

The strengthening of economic inequalities on planet earth is a very serious negative side effect of COVID 19. According to Forbes, in March 2022 five Russian persons called 'oligarchs' have accumulated about 130 billion dollars. Five persons in the U.S.A., not called 'plutocrats', own over 750 billion dollars. Imagine, dream if you like, that a small fraction of this wealth could be directed in enhancing health, and developing cures for every known disease or health condition. Well, keep dreaming and imagining. Imagine that humans on planet earth gave peace a chance. Imagine the following were simply an uncomfortable nightmare: Second Congo War, Syrian Civil War, Darfur Conflict, Iraq War, Afghanistan War, The War Against Boko Haram, Yemeni Civil War, Russian invasion in Ukraine. Imagine Cyprus was not the victim of a brutal Turkish invasion, illegal occupation and barbaric displacement of people and the transportation of illegal settlers to the beautiful island of Cyprus. Dream and imagine...

THE PANDEMIC FURTHER WEAKENED PARTY-SOCIETY TIES AND FOSTERED PARTY DIGITALIZATION



Yiannos Katsourides
Assistant Professor of Political Science
Department of Politics and Governance
University of Nicosia

The COVID-19 pandemic has had mixed effects all over the world and in various aspects of politics and society. For example, in the early stages most people were ready to accept increased government control and limits to their personal freedoms in order to deal effectively with the unknown enemy. As time went by, frustration with restrictions grew and many people started questioning the effectiveness of the measures taken. Perceptions about authoritarianism blended with conspiracy theories and legitimated concerns, and resulted in an increased polarization between parts of the population in all countries. The most prominent divide was that between those in favour of vaccination and those against.

Probably, one the most notable effects of the pandemic in terms of social impact is the deteriorating effect it has inflicted on key aspects of social relationships (for example, social networks, social support, social interaction, social mobilization). As people became isolated and absorbed in a virtual reality, it seemed, for a moment, to have vindicated Thatcher and Reagan's opinion that there is no such a thing as society. Bantering aside, social relationships of all kinds, were in a large part disrupted by the COVID-19. People were forced to change the ways of their social interaction drastically. They started living their lives in a virtual world which is largely anti-social in nature, a situation that further stimulated their individualistic attitudes and perceptions.

The harsh measures of periodic lockdowns and social distancing enforced by all governments across the globe had drastic impacts on the institutions and processes of political participation and representation. An institution highly affected in its overall workings but especially in its linkages with society is the **political parties**. The measures taken to deal with the pandemic rendered the physical proximity and social interaction on which political parties usually rely in order to engage with citizens almost impossible. The COVID-19 essentially aggravated the many problems political parties already face to their functioning and relationships with society and added to their misery. For many years now, levels of trust in political parties have been steadily declining

across Europe and beyond; partisanship is constantly on the fall; membership is waning; the ability to mobilize has declined considerably; and the overall legitimacy of parties is constantly challenged. The pandemic has provided a further context for individualization and against collective action, mobilization and organization that constitute the crux of what political parties are and do.

By their very nature political parties are social entities that operate between citizens and those holding power. This naturally requires them to maintain close engagement and interaction with, as well as physical proximity to, their members and supporters, and citizens more generally. The pandemic has put traditional party functions under severe strain: rallies and social events, big party conventions, assemblies and gatherings of the parties, door-to-door canvassing to seek support and distribute party documents were all put on hold. One must take into account that through these various exchanges, political parties shape their policies, recruit new members and convey the party's ideology and programmatic intentions. Being unable to perform them added to their previous misery and aggravated the party/representation crisis.

Having in mind that 'party crisis' is not something new, many now wonder whether the pandemic has inflicted a decisive blow on the way political parties organize, mobilize and operate. Relatedly, a similar question asks whether the lifting of the restrictions will find the parties in a position to restore their already very vulnerable position in society.

Political parties themselves have been pondering how to adapt to the new 'normality' and how to address some of the risks associated with their organizing and mobilizing functions. Many analysts and party strategists argue for further **digitalization**. In several countries, political parties are stepping up their digital presence in the online world for some time now and the pandemic seems to have accelerated this process. Digitalization creates opportunities for political parties to reach a wider potential audience, even a larger membership base. Digitalization in political parties involves a number of things: the creation of online platforms; online voting for intra-party processes; online outreach of membership and voters; digital political activism; online crowdfunding, to name but a few.

The argument is that online tools can help political parties conduct some of their functions more efficiently and effectively. Some political parties are using technology to improve their functioning, making them more transparent and efficient both internally and externally, and for outreach and engagement with citizens, especially youth who prefer their political activity online. However, this comes with inherent risks as other analysts point. Risks for the parties, the voters and for the quality of democracy. For example, some argue that we are faced with the 'tyranny of people with time' – as the voices and positions of those who have the most time to spend might be the most visible

and prominent. Others point to the risks of disinformation, the control that private companies might exercise over the entire process of digitalization and many more. What is certain, is that political parties' ties with society have weakened further and that they have to change to cope with this.

COVID 2019 PANDEMIC



Georgios Katsonis
Doctor of Homeopathic Medicine

When the so-called pandemic started, in March 2020, my patients called me and asked me for my opinion, about how things would develop. The answer I gave then was: "Turn off your TV and turn it on again at the end of May and it will all be over." My view that, logically, everything would end at the end of Spring, was solemnly confirmed by Dr. Sucharit Bhakdi, I think in June 2020. Starting his speech at an international teleconference on the subject of the pandemic, he said the phrase: "I have you good news. The pandemic is over."

The view of a simple physician, based on common sense and experience, coincided with the view of a behemoth of science such as Dr. Bhakdi. But the plans of those who wanted to lead things differently, globally, were different. They continued to cultivate fear and panic, shock and awe, in order to break the resistance of the masses and lead us to accept vaccination with their experimental mRNA vaccines.

As an active medical doctor practicing Homeopathy, I have been successfully dealing with viruses, flu and simple colds in my office for 37 years. During all these years, outbreaks of flu and other viruses, appear to be exacerbated during January and February. And in 2020 these were the months when the viruses appeared and not after March, when we were, as we were told, in a pandemic. The same in 2021, but with reduced incidents due to lock down.

Throughout the so-called pandemic so far, my own experience from my office is that, I noticed increased cases of viruses in January 2022, but without being more than we had every January, all the years before the pandemic.

Therefore, as a combative homeopathic doctor, I mention that I did NOT see the pandemic in my office. I do not doubt that we were affected by a virus. I do not dispute that this virus in some people caused more serious symptoms. It is a well-known fact that 98% of people who are infected with the virus either have no symptoms or mild symptoms. This is obviously not called a pandemic.

I clearly state that, of all my patients, who trusted me and came to my office or called me because they had the flu and some said they had a positive coronavirus test, no one needed to be hospitalized and no one died. Those who trusted the Homeopathic treatment approach and took the appropriate homeopathic remedies each time and supplemented the treatment with vitamins, went well, they successfully treated the virus and had no symptoms after the disease.

I believe that the suffering of people sick with coronavirus, as well as the creation of a group of patients suffering after the disease (the so-called post COVID patients), is primarily due to the absence of any primary care, and mainly due to the treatment protocols followed within and outside hospitals, which weakened instead of boosting the immune system.

Deaths "from COVID", "with COVID", "because of COVID", "due to COVID" or "with COVID as the ultimate cause of death", will be the subject of discussion for many years and much will be written and much will be heard and find out about them in the future. Questioning of the number of these deaths is now a given. At first it was reported in the news that the dead were all elderly and all had underlying diseases. Of course, this did not help to create shock and awe, and that is why they stopped stating it. The fact is that the final registration of deaths as COVID deaths, was and is done by software installed in a foreign country. In this software the data was sent and the answer came. Evidence suggests, for example, that a patient with severe complications of diabetes or a heart attack was admitted to hospital and tested positive for coronavirus initially upon admission or later in hospital. The patient died after a few days or the same day. Based on this information the software response came and said that this death should be considered death with / from / because of the coronavirus. A typical example is from England, where a victim of a car accident with serious injuries, was transported to the hospital, was found to have a positive coronavirus test, finally died from his injuries and was included in the list of dead with / from / due to COVID.

Unfortunately, only with large numbers of deaths could the foreign centers that feed the pandemic theory keep the fear of people at a high level and force them to be driven to experimental vaccines.

This whole course of the so-called pandemic serves many purposes and many interests. Let us stick to the goals and interests of the pharmaceutical companies of the so-called Big Pharma. In recent years, pharmaceutical companies have found that their own narrative for treating diseases with chemical drugs was receding and the gradual dominance of Natural Therapies was emerging. These natural treatments cure diseases, in contrast to chemical drugs that simply suppress the symptoms and create lifelong clients. The creation of "deadly pandemics", the shock and awe, the appearance of slogans in the mouths of politicians and "experts", such as: "the only solution

is the vaccine", are the effort of Big Pharma to remain in the forefront and continue to receive one trillion a year economically sucking the peoples and states. With the complete control of the media, which even Varoufakis himself in the Greek Parliament calls them Means of Mass Deception, it seems, so far, that the pharmaceutical companies are winning the battle. I am sure they will lose the war.

Natural therapies, which can deal with even real pandemics, exist, are low cost and are readily available. All that remains is for humanity to escape the strangulation it suffers from pharmaceutical financial interests and to walk the avenue of Health for All, with the help of Scientifically Proven Natural Therapies.

Editorial Team: Andreas Theophanous (Editor)
 Michalis Kontos
 Yiannos Katsourides
 Christoforos Christoforou
 Styliana Petrou



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Cyprus Center for European and International Affairs (CCEIA)
University of Nicosia

Makedonitissis 46, CY-2417, Engomi, Cyprus

P.O. Box 2405, CY-1700 Nicosia, Cyprus

T: +357 22841600 F: +357 22357964

E: cceia@unic.ac.cy

W: <http://cceia.unic.ac.cy> www.emgr.unic.ac.cy

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