

Reports

Eight Heads of States versus Coronavirus: A Leadership Comparative Question – Part 2

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Giuseppe Corbari hold Sunday Mass in front of photographs sent in by his congregation in Giussani, Italy March 22 [Getty]

While dealing with the Coronavirus growing human fatalities and deepening economic crisis, the defining line between ‘crisis management’ and ‘leadership’ has become blurry. In crisis times like the spread of the pandemic for four months now, individuals follow closely not only the statements and decisions of their leaders, but also their face expressions and the tone of their voices. They expect them to embody their political *raison d’être* and how to sail through rough times. The current moment in 2020 also suggests an implicit comparison of various approaches and strategies; and what we can learn from “how some of history’s iconic leaders acted in the face of great uncertainty, real danger, and collective fear.” (1)

This two-part paper probes into whether there is presumably a ‘textbook’ for leaders at times of crises to learn from and make comparisons. Part 1, which can be accessed through (<https://studies.aljazeera.net/en/reports/eight-heads-states-versus-coronavirus-leadership-comparative-question-%E2%80%93-part-1>), examined the literature and the normative references of leadership in crisis to help distinguish ‘real leaders’, or virtues of leadership in crisis, from crisis managers. Now, part 2 of the paper delves into the practicality, or hands-on approaches, by eight world leaders toward the containment of the pandemic, taking into considering two main factors: a) most hard-hit countries by the spread of Coronavirus, and b) disparity of crisis management strategies adopted by those heads of states. The sampling cases spread across four continents: Italy, France, Germany, Spain, Morocco, Britain, the United States, and China. The paper also aims to assess the categorization of those leaders as ‘de facto leaders’, as they struggle with the pandemic nightmare, *vis-à-vis* ‘real leaders’ when they turn a crisis or any other chaotic situation into an opportunity of wisdom, innovation, and inspiration. The methodology applies a five-point criterion in the study of those leaders’ Coronavirus strategies.

Controlling, or Being Controlled, by the Pandemic Crisis

The ‘dos’ and ‘do nots’ steps in managing a crisis have emerged over the first four months of the Coronavirus crisis. So far, a number of leaders in the United States, Europe, Africa, and Asia have exhibited an array of decisions and measures; some on target, and others have been a game of electioneering if we consider some odd statements of Donald Trump. The applied protocols of safety have failed to curb the radius of infections and death toll worldwide. On April 11, the Coronavirus cases rose to 1,771,459, and the number of deaths reached 180,330, while 401,452 lucky ones recovered, according to Worldometer.info. For some leaders, it has been a moment of political grandiose performance. For others, it has turned into a strategic failure in a public health crisis and ultimately a political letdown. The World Health Organization (WHO) chief has pleaded with a short message: “please quarantine politicizing COVID. We should work across party lines, across religious lines. We shouldn’t waste time pointing fingers.”

In the Vatican, Pope Francis addressed a prayer to an empty St. Peter’s Square echoing a sentiment of sympathy, “We have realized that we are on the same boat, all of us fragile and disoriented, but at the same time important and needed, all of us called to row together, each of us in need of comforting the other.” (2) Still, the growing number of infection cases and deaths worldwide and the bewilderment of most governments evoke several questions about governance and moral responsibility. Nic Cheeseman, professor of democracy at the University of Birmingham cautions against the tendency of some leaders with authoritarian instincts “to claim to only be doing what some established democracies are doing. But while robust democracies are expected to eventually roll back such measures, citizens in weak democracies might get saddled with them at the behest of the leader.” (3)

In Europe, the most unified political and strategic ‘supranational’ alliance in the world, there have been no common European containment, quarantine or testing policy. The clear message is, as one European politics observer put, “whenever Europe as a whole is tested, it fails. And then everything — solidarity, allegiance, decision-making — reverts back to nations.” Europhiles have felt disappointed with the turn of events regarding the negligence of Italy’s requested assistance. Ursula von der Leyen, the relatively-new president of the European Commission (EC) had rejoiced the dream of bringing “Europe” closer to its citizens and make it more united and stronger in the context of the geopolitical clashes with China, Russia and the United States. (4) In the United States, the struggle has been worse. Senator and former presidential election candidate, Elizabeth Warren, is one of many critical voices contesting the Trump administration’s actions. She wrote, “Congress has passed three coronavirus packages

aimed at providing immediate relief to families, workers, hospitals and small businesses, but with more than 12,000 dead and 10 million out of work, the scale of this tragedy demands we do much more — much faster. Early data shows people of color are infected and dying at disproportionate rates. Unemployment is approaching Depression-era levels. No clear end is in sight for social distancing.” (5)



The European Parliament was nearly empty during a shortened session in Brussels [Getty]

The public debate around the world has implied a neorawlsian refection under the Coronavirus thick cloud. Harvard philosopher John Rawls was interested in the study of how individuals would construct their society if the choice had to be made behind what he called a “veil of ignorance”, as a method of determining the morality of issues, about whether they will be rich, poor or somewhere in-between. (6) The notion of the veil of ignorance is part of a long tradition of thinking, which can be traced back to the writings of Immanuel Kant, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Jean Jacques Rousseau, and Thomas Jefferson. In early 1970s, Rawls wrote "no one knows his place in society, his class position or social status; nor does he know his fortune in the distribution of natural assets and abilities, his intelligence and strength, and the like.” (7) With the nightmarish Coronavirus self-isolation and social distancing, there is now a ticker veil of ignorance among governments and international organizations about how to end the pandemic; while individuals are navigating between infection, death, and the hope of being safe. Lydia Dugdale, director of the Center for Clinical Medical Ethics at Columbia University, points out “if we give scarce treatments to those who don’t stand to benefit (and have a high

chance of dying anyway), then not only will they die, but those with higher likelihood of survival (but require ventilator support) will also die.” (8)

In late October 2019, the Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI), the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security, and the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) collaborated in producing a “Global Health Security Index” (GHSI), a first comprehensive assessment and benchmarking of health security and related capabilities across 195 countries. This index was the outcome of a two-and-a-half-year collective work reviewed by an International panel of experts that included 21 experts from 13 countries. Ernest J. Moniz, a co-chair and CEO of NTI, explained “the results are alarming: All countries—at all income levels—have major gaps in their capabilities, and they aren’t sufficiently investing in biological preparedness. The bottom line is that global biological risks are growing—in many cases faster than health systems, security, science, and governments can keep up. We need to ensure that all countries are prepared to respond to these risks.” (9) Furthermore, most countries, possibly as high as 70 percent, were “not compliant with the WHO’s 2005 International Health Regulations, a legally binding instrument that seeks to, among other things, strengthen country capacities and detail a public health response to the spread of disease.” (10) One of the main findings was disturbing, “no country is fully prepared for epidemics and pandemics”. The GHS Index also indicated:

- Countries are not prepared for a globally catastrophic biological event, including those that could be caused by the international spread of a new or emerging pathogen or by the deliberate or accidental release of a dangerous or engineered agent or organism.
- 92 percent do not show evidence of requiring security checks for personnel with access to dangerous biological materials or toxins.
- The available evidence suggests that most countries have not tested important health security capacities or shown that they would be functional in a crisis.
- Fewer than 5 percent show a requirement to test their emergency operations centers at least annually.
- Most countries have not allocated funding from national budgets to fill preparedness gaps.
- Only 10 percent show evidence of senior leaders’ commitment to improve local or global health capacity.
- More than half of countries face major political and security risks that could undermine national capability to counter biological threats. (11)



A cake shop employee in Athens Greece prepares chocolate Easter bunnies with face masks April 8 [Getty]

The following sampling cases of managing COVID-19 in eight countries in four continents: Italy, France, Germany, Spain, Morocco, Britain, the United States, and China, entail those weaknesses and the lack of a public health safety net. For decades, world leaders have competed in armament and nuclear deterrence with no particular interest in pandemics deterrence.

1. Italy

An ironic twist of destiny for Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte was the death of one of his security guards, Giorgio Guastamacchia, a fifty-two-year-old policeman after he contracted Coronavirus late March. By his death April 11, the scope of the infections in the country rose to 152,271 persons, 19,468 deaths and 4,694 new infection cases in the previous twenty-four hours. Italian authorities have imposed a lockdown, which was originally scheduled to end April 3, has now been extended to beyond Easter. Conte decided the total blockade would go on, and the measures taken, both the closure of public activities and the ones concerning schools, can only be extended. The Italian Civil Protection agency announced the most hit areas are northern provinces with more than 75 percent of overall cases and deaths north of Tuscany, in the center of the country. On April 9, Conte said Italy could look to ease some of its stringent lockdown restrictions at the end of April; “We need to pick sectors that can restart their activity. If scientists confirm it, we might begin to relax some measures already by the end of this month,” he told the BBC.

Conte gave realistic evaluation of his government's management of the pandemic. He told Washington-hosted NBC's Meet the Press talk show, "Our response has not been perfect, maybe, but we have been acting [to] the best of our knowledge today, I see that our model is implemented by other countries and its validity has been acknowledged by the WHO, and the results so far indicate that we are on the right path." (12) He also renewed his call for joint euro-area debt issuance "As the Italian government, I invite all its European partners to approve a European recovery and reinvestment plan. It's an ambitious common plan to rebuild the European economy to be financed through European recovery bonds."



Piazza del Duomo in Milan March 10 [AFP-Getty]

After an argumentative six-hour video conference among the 27 EU leaders March 26, Italian officials were frustrated with the failure in reaching an EU agreement about the possible scope of assistance to be provided for Italy and Spain. EU finance ministers were given two more weeks to design a reasonable and acceptable package for both governments in Rome and Madrid. Italian and Spanish leaders expected from EU counterparts to issue "corona bonds", a form of common debt that governments sell on markets to raise money and address individual economic needs. More spendthrift nations such as Germany and the Netherlands are balking at the idea of joint debt. Conte explained he and German Chancellor Angela Merkel had "not just a disagreement but a hard a frank confrontation" about how to proceed. He asserted, "If Europe does not rise to this unprecedented challenge, the whole European structure loses its *raison d'être* (reason for existing) to the people." (13)

More than any other EU nation, Italy has been embattled with the severity of the Coronavirus spread. Conte stated, "I represent a country that is suffering a lot and I cannot afford to procrastinate." He also warned that EU leaders were in danger of making "tragic mistakes" that "leave our children the immense burden of a devastated economy." (14) The head of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, apologized to Italy for a lack of solidarity from Europe in tackling its coronavirus crisis. She wrote in a letter published in the Italian daily *La Repubblica* "they (EU countries) did not realize that we can only defeat this pandemic together, as a Union. This was harmful and could have been avoided... "Today Europe is rallying to Italy's side." (15)

In 2019, Carlo Calenda, a 46-year-old former minister and Italian permanent representative to the EU, ran in European parliamentary elections in Italy under the slogan "We are Europeans", apposite the growing wave of nationalism in the continent. Now, he faces a crisis of faith in an idea he has championed in his lifetime. He says, "This is an existential threat, I am not sure if we are going to make it. You have to consider my party is one of the most pro-European parties in Italy and I now have members writing to me saying: 'Why do we want to stay in the EU? It is useless.'" (16) In late March, Calenda and a number of leftwing mayors and governors from the regions worst-hit by the outbreak published a full-page op-ed in the German daily "*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*". They characterized the German position about Italy's need for Coronabonds as "an example of a lack of ethics and solidarity." They also compared German reluctance to support joint European debt with the partial cancellation of Nazi war debts by European countries including Italy after the second world war. "Germany could never have paid it. Your place is with the Europe of institutions, of values of freedom and solidarity. Not following small national egoisms," the op-ed letter said. (17)



Ursula von der Leyen, the European Commission president, initially appeared dismissive of the proposed Coronabonds [AP]

Earlier in February, Italy's permanent representative to the European Union, Maurizio Massari, had pleaded for help via the Emergency Response Coordination Centre. "We asked for supplies of medical equipment, and the European Commission forwarded the appeal to the member states. But, it didn't work." (18) The European negligence of Italy's catastrophe, at the heart of the continent, has echoed a sentiment of resentment among Italians, who felt they had been let down by other EU member states several times; now and at the peak of the 2015 refugee crisis. Massari summarized the political mood between Rome and Brussels, "This is a battle in which we are facing two terrible enemies: panic and selfishness." (19) A Monitor Italia poll conducted mid-March showed 88 percent of Italians believe "the EU has not done enough to help their country." French president Macron stated, "It would be devastating if by the end of this crisis, countries like Italy conclude they've been let down by Europe."

2. *France*

Unlike other European leaders, French president Emmanuel Macron implied the most alarmist discourse in handling the Coronavirus crisis. He stated "We are at war," multiple times during a 20-minute televised speech March 16. He declared a nation-wide campaign "*Operation Resilience*", while imposing a fifteen-day confinement across the French territory; and called on his nation to "keep calm," while ordering extraordinary measures never before taken during peacetime. He ordered the deployment of French troops throughout the country in support of

public services, and the surveillance of France's coasts by helicopter carriers. Adopting a rather warrior-like rhetoric, he said "we fight neither against an army nor against another nation, but the enemy is there, invisible, elusive and advancing". Such a metaphor echoed the language of Georges Clemenceau, France's prime minister (1917-1920) during World War I and one of the principal architects of the Treaty of Versailles of 1919. Clemenceau once said, "The enemy is at the gates of the city. The day is perhaps not far off when our breasts will be the last defence for our country. We are the children of the Revolution. Let us take inspiration from our fathers of 1792, and, like them, we will conquer." Still, the political battlefield has shifted towards public health policy, crisis management, and executive leadership. Peacetime politics have been replaced by angry debate on how to conduct the war against the pandemic. (20)

Macron decided to narrow the radius of his citizens' movement; "only necessary outings like buying groceries, while respecting guidelines ... necessary outings to seek medical care, necessary outings to go to work when working remotely is not possible and necessary outings to do a little bit of physical activity but without meeting up with friends or family". He also had a reflective suggestion for his 63-million French citizens to face "life in slow-motion," and consider "reading, reflecting on what is essential" and said the nation would "prevail." He also beefed up production of face masks and ventilators to address shortfalls, while his government would disburse around €300 million to businesses affected by the virus. It also warned it "won't tolerate" such companies rewarding shareholders with dividends this year.



Watching President Emmanuel Macron's address to the nation [Getty]

The management of the pandemic can be considered a political asset for Macron who had been challenged by the open-ended the Yellow Vest protests and pensions strikes since 2018. Now, he rejoices a significant jump in his popularity. Opinion polls have indicated 51 percent vote of “confidence” in Macron in March, a 13-point increase on the previous month. For the first time since January 2018, Macron could gain a majority approval rating. Paul Smith, a professor of French politics at Nottingham University, notices this strategic approach has bolstered Macron’s credentials as an efficient manager. Macron is getting an “astonishing popularity surge” because “this sort of crisis allows the technocrat to step in and take tough decisions – the French state is, after all, built for just such a situation and most people understand the need for massive intervention.” (21)

3. *Germany*

From the onset of the pandemic spread, Chancellor Angela Merkel showed a rather transparent and pragmatic approach in her management of the crisis. She cautioned that up to 70 percent of Germany's population, about 83 million, could eventually be infected. She was described as a leader who “maintaining an open democracy in times of crisis”. In her address to the nation March 18, the first unscheduled speech in her 15 years as chancellor, Merkel captured the enormity of the crisis facing Germany and the world with an untypically personal note and promised transparency. She started with a simple explanation: "I am addressing you today in this unusual manner, because I want to tell you what is guiding me as chancellor and all of my colleagues in the government at this time. That is part of an open democracy — that we explain our political decisions and make them transparent." She also called for considering the situation “serious” and highlighted “since German unification, no, since the Second World War, there has been no challenge to our nation that has demanded such a degree of common and united action.” Sylvie Kauffmann, editorial director of *Le Monde*, points out “this crisis is a study in contrasts as the countries of the European Union take different lines of approach. In Germany, Chancellor Angela Merkel also addressed her fellow citizens. Instead of declaring war, she listed every commercial and social activity about to be suspended, including “brothels, places of prostitution and similar facilities.” (22)

Merkel maintained her frequent informative speeches even while in home 14-day confinement after she was diagnosed with the infection. Her transparent style of briefing her nation falls in line with what most strategists recommend in times of crises. Transparency is “job one for leaders in a crisis. Be clear what you know, what you don’t know, and what you are doing to

learn more.” (23) Merkel’s speech also implied a tone of government-citizen participatory handling of the pandemic. She stated, "I truly believe that we will succeed in the task before us, so long as all the citizens of this country understand that it is also THEIR task. I also want to tell you why we also need YOUR contribution and what each and every person can do to help." She also asserted Germany "will do whatever it takes" to help get the German economy and business back on their feet.

Video: Markel delivering her Coronavirus speech to the nation

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F9ei40nxKDC&feature=youtu.be>

Merkel’s speech was well-received and brought her more admiration. The influential Sueddeutsche Zeitung newspaper wrote, “Merkel painted a picture of the greatest challenge since World War II, but she did not speak of war... She did not rely on martial words or gestures, but on people’s reason. ... Nobody knows if that will be enough, but her tone will at least not lead the people to sink into uncertainty and fear.” An ARD-Deutschlandtrend poll conducted after the speech showed a 72 percent of the surveyed participants said they were satisfied with the government's handling of the crisis. Only three out of ten had critical assessment. 93 percent of Germans found the strict social distancing rules “appropriate”. Observers made striking comparisons between Merkel’s and Macron’s styles. Reinhard Bütikofer, a European Parliament member for the German Greens, commented, “I do prefer Chancellor Merkel’s language. She talks to us as citizens, not as soldiers. Fighting a virus is not a war.” Others favored defending Macron’s strategy. François Godement, a French scholar on China, explained his position, “Please bear in mind war has less of a bad name here. What President Macron meant “is mobilization and social discipline — something we are not good at.” (24)

At the EU level, Merkel reaffirmed her opposition to pooling its debt with other countries in the euro system. However, she expressed support for using EU’s bailout fund to help badly affected countries, like Italy and Spain, face the crisis. She stated in early April “the European Union is facing the biggest test since its foundation. We have a big health challenge that is impacting all member states, however differently. It is a symmetrical shock”. She also clarified Germany would support a post-crisis stimulus programme for the euro zone and the broader EU; “Here too, Germany is ready to make a contribution”, she said. German officials feel optimistic about the potential positive impact of the European Stability Mechanism, the eurozone’s bailout fund, with some 400 billion euros budget, to reverse the economic situation in European hard-hit countries.



Designer Friedderike Jorzing adjusts a mannequin wearing a wedding dress with a face mask in her store in Berlin March 30 [Getty]

4. *Spain*

Spain has been the second most hit nation by the scope of infections and deaths in Europe, after Italy. On April 11, health professionals diagnosed 161,852 individuals with the pandemic and discovered 3,579 new cases in the previous twenty-four hours, the death toll reached 16,480; whereas 48,021 have recovered. Madrid has been the epicenter of the outbreak, accounting for 40 per percent of Spain's coronavirus deaths. Many Madrilenos decided to flee the capital, perhaps anticipating stricter measures. Certain roads were jumped after Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez declared a "state of alarm" would be introduced on March 13. Two days earlier, his health minister, Salvador Illa, called for "reinforced containment", including the closure of schools and universities in Madrid. Later in her news conference April 2, María José Sierra, an official at the Spanish health ministry's emergency co-ordination unit, explained "we continue with an increase of around 8 percent", and this rate indicated a "stabilization in the data that we're registering". However, updated figured released by the Ministry showed that 743 people had died in the past 24 hours, a 5.7 percent increase in total deaths on April 7.

Spain became a hotspot for Coronavirus and retired doctors under 70 were called to serve in the new front lines. The government also positioned medical students to do administrative work in the crowded hospitals and health centers across the country. For example, a massive conference center in Madrid has become the country's largest hospital and an ice rink has been repurposed as a morgue. (25) Still, Rajoy's successor as party leader, Pablo Casado, roundly

denied his party had slashed health care spending and maintained the Spanish system “is the best in Europe.” (26) However, unions representing Spain’s medical staff are taking action, “Unions have filed lawsuits in at least 10 of Spain’s 17 regions asking judges to compel the authorities to provide equipment within 24 hours in line with health and safety law”, as Reuters reported.



Mortuary employees and relatives at a burial of a patient at La Almudena cemetery, Spain [Getty]

The spread of the Coronavirus has deepened the socio-economic struggle of most Spaniards under years-long austerity policies, which have caused a number of shortages, specifically a decline in the number of hospital beds and a rise in temporary contracts for doctors and nurses. nearly 900,000 jobs were lost since the spread of the new pandemic. The official unemployment figure rose to 3.5 million, the highest level since April 2017, in the country. Former conservative prime minister Mariano Rajoy had introduced a program of heavy spending cuts, and slashed a combined €10 billion from the health and education budgets and kept up an austerity program for much of his tenure, which ended in 2018. Spain has endured a significant decrease in public health investment from 6.8 percent of its GDP in 2009 to 5.9 percent in the government’s most recent draft budget. Spain’s current health allocations remain below the EU average spending of 7.5 percent of GDP. José Félix Hoyo, an ER doctor in Móstoles, near Madrid, and the president of the Spanish branch of “Médecins du Monde”, previously warned the policy of privatizations of the health sector under Rajoy’s government undermined Spain’s ability to handle a pandemic on the scale of the current crisis. He explains, “What happened in Spain was that this trend [of privatization], which was very small, grew in our health care sector in the wake of the economic crisis. And when it comes to coordinating in a uniform way the management of an epidemic, that creates an obstacle.” (27)

The public debate has escalated to political attacks on the Sánchez government's official slogan "United, we will stop this virus". A critical editorial published by Contexto online warned, "It makes no sense to take refuge in familiar claims, such as that the health care system is exemplary, as Sánchez insists." It's a sad reminder of the comments by [Socialist Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez] Zapatero at the start of the economic crisis, when he said the Spanish financial system was 'one of the most solid in the world.'" One official of the leftwing party Podemos stated, "The era of neoliberal solutions, of austerity and putting the emphasis on bank bailouts is over. It is more important to save lives than to save businesses."

There are other salient political issues between the central government in Madrid and certain insubordinate regions namely Catalonia. The psychological and political repercussions of the Franco era and his iron rule from Madrid still linger in several parts of the country. The overall response seemed fragmented, as Prime Minister Sanchez himself admitted, "We can understand that right now every measure seems insufficient, but just a week ago it might have seemed exaggerated. He also told a session of parliament, "Limiting freedoms is something a democratic government can do only when it is absolutely necessary." (28) In contrast, the pro-independence administration of Catalonia has scolded the government for its alleged 'incompetence and parsimony'. The far-right Vox, the third-biggest force in the Spanish Parliament, has called for Sánchez's resignation and replacement by a government of national unity. Astrid Barrio, a politics professor at the University of Valencia notices, "Here, instead of closing ranks and looking for the maximum possible consensus, the politicians are opting for a bitter fight — *lucha dura*. I am not sure citizens are going to appreciate that when the obvious priority is the health emergency."



Spanish PM Sanchez addressing his nation [Getty]

The Sánchez government has countered the arguments of critics by reinstating a 16th century formula of granting a universal basic income (UBI). Spain's Economy Minister Nadia Calvino announced on April 5 her government was planning on bringing UBI, in the form of monthly stipends with no strings attached, "as soon as possible" to help families during the pandemic. She also mentioned Sánchez's coalition government had a broader ambition for the economic model to "stay forever" and become a "permanent instrument." The London-based SOAS professor, Guy Standing, has studied the impact of UBI for over 30 years, and says a basic income in Spain has moved from being "desirable" to "essential" to rescue economies in the wake of coronavirus. A similar UBI model was tested for two years in Finland in 2017. Some studies have concluded this approach improved happiness, but did not boost employment.

5. *Morocco*

The COVID-19 saga started in Morocco with two cases when the country's main airports did not have any medical team in place to check incoming travelers. A first case was an infected Moroccan expatriate travelling from Italy to Casablanca February 27, and was not diagnosed until March 2. A second case was an 89-year-old Moroccan woman residing in Bologna, Italy and headed to Morocco February 25. By March 14, ten new cases were confirmed, including the Moroccan minister Abdelkader Aamara, four weeks before the total of infected cases escalated to 1545 with 97 new cases in the previous twenty-four hours and a death toll of 111 on April 11. Morocco's health minister, Khalid Ait Taleb, stated "we also found locally

transmitted cases... in hotbeds that require more vigilance against the virus outbreak.” Health officials in Rabat sought to double their efforts to increase the nation’s hospital bed capacity as a precaution of further infections. Still, seven doctors working in the public health field contracted the virus. Three of them died: Dr. Nouredine Benyahia, a retired doctor in Meknes, Dr. Meriem Astad and Dr. Omrane Rouimi in Casablanca. The U.S. Ambassador to Morocco, David Fischer, wrote a solidarity message on Facebook, “Things I’m thankful for today: The heroic work of Morocco’s medical professionals and first responders, everyday heroes supporting neighbors and strangers in need.”

Morocco declared a nation-wide state of emergency to take effect on March 20 and to remain in effect until April 20 with a possible extension for a longer period. The country came to a standstill as all public venues were closed “until further notice”, with the exception of supermarkets and grocery stores, by order of the Ministry of Interior. Moroccan authorities took pride in being among the first countries to impose a mass confinement on the public, to close their air space as well as the border with the two Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla in the north of the country. King Mohamed ordered the establishment of an emergency fund, raising more than 32.7 billion Moroccan Dirhams (\$3.2 billion), to help ease up the economic burden. By the first week of April, the Royal Armed Forces (FAR) completed the construction of a 160-bed field hospital, in six days in Benslimane, 45 km from Casablanca, the epicenter of infections. King Mohamed decided to pardon 5,600 prisoners and ordered their release in stages out of the country's overcrowded jails.



King Mohamed meeting with Abdelatif Hammouchi director of the national security force, [DSGN], General Mohamed Harmou head of Gendarmerie, General Abdelfattah Louarak general inspector of the Royal Armed Forces, interior minister Abdelouafi Laftit, PM Saadeddine El Otmani and health minister Khaled Ait Taleb at the Royal Palace, March 18 [MAP]

As a tentative protocol of avoiding an extended home confinement, the authorities issued a decree on April 7 to impose the use of locally-manufactured face masks by Moroccans who would leave their homes. Any individual who does not conform to this legal step would be spalled with prison sentences of up to three months and a fine of up to \$126. Industry ministry spokesman Taofiq Moucharrarf explained Morocco has plans to produce nearly six million face masks per day, which is almost double its current amount of 3.3 million. Some reports have indicated “more than 8,600 people have been arrested and prosecuted for breaking the law by failing to produce a permit, illegally transporting people or selling counterfeit goods amid the coronavirus epidemic.” (29)

In a sole address to the nation by a major political figure in Morocco, Prime Minister Saadeddine El Otmani left doubts about the country’s hospital capacity during his primetime TV interview March 15. The three journalists asked him questions about various aspects of distance learning for students and other logistical details. One question was not raised: what would be the actual bed capacity in Morocco’s hospitals, as one insider of Moroccan politics would say. What would be the maximum level of alert in pragmatic terms, not rhetoric in front cameras, should the infections status exacerbate in the socially-well-kitted nation. El Otmani had previously belittled the risk of the virus and tried to calm the public anxiety saying a “heat wave would ultimately kill the virus”. He was seen as giving “patently false statements, contradicting scientists worldwide about how the virus is transmitted—presumably made to avoid “public panic”. (30) Most Moroccans remain skeptical about the government’s tactic of keeping the numbers falsely low to prevent “panicking the public,” in line with the Prime Minister’s statement. However, Moroccans need to be “told the truth in order for the country to combat the pandemic effectively,” as one American visitor summarized the public mood in the country. (31)



Security forces order to stay home to people after state of emergency declaration as a precaution against the pandemic in Rabat, Morocco 20 March 2020 [Anadolu Agency]

The COVID-19 episode, so far, has revealed four shortcomings, or negative particularities, of Moroccan politics in crisis times: a) a depiction of a decision-implementation disarticulation between the King and the government. Prime Minister El Otmani highlighted the need for unity to protect the homeland. Some local observers have pointed to “promising signs” and the likelihood of “a short-term burst in unity and institutional trust”. However, as a recent Chatham House study concluded, “the institutional weaknesses in governance and the healthcare system have not disappeared, which is why this increase in institutional trust should be taken with a grain of salt.” (32) Moreover, the El Otmani government was characterized to be too feeble to address the COVID-19 crisis without the will of the Royal Court in Rabat. The King’s image has been reinforced as the savior of the nation. Some unofficial interlocutors of the Royal Court have said, “This country of proud traditions, color, and light—lacking adequate healthcare or economic resources even in the best of times—could be hit harder by mass contagion by orders of magnitude than many Western states. King Mohammed VI understood this early enough to take aggressive measures to slow the virus’s spread.” (33) Other views from outside have argued, “With Morocco as a constitutional monarchy, King Mohammed VI has spoken. It is up to the government to exercise its duty to serve and protect the public and carry out the King’s directives honestly, transparently, and quickly.” (34) On April 10, a new petition call “مليون توقيع شكر للملك محمد السادس (A Million Signatures for King Mohamed VI) circulated through Facebook to stir praise for the monarch’s decision during the Coronavirus crisis.

The purpose of a health state of emergency is to prevent further spread of any virus. The World Health Organization defines a global emergency — formally, a Public Health Emergency of International Concern — as “an extraordinary event which is determined to constitute a public health risk to other States through the international spread of disease and to potentially require a coordinated international response.” The current Coronavirus is the sixth declared in the past decade. In Morocco, the implementation of the state of emergency took a rather security dimension, or what can be termed as an over-securitization of the process. The Interior Ministry gave orders to their local subordinates to adopt a firm stance against individuals leaving their homes. There were incidents of verbal and physical violence on both sides: ordinary citizens, mainly in poor neighborhoods, and Quids (interior ministry local commanders) and members of the auxiliary forces trying to enforce the health curfew.



Moroccan Security forces order to stay home to people after state of emergency declaration in Rabat [March 21 2020 – Anadolu]

A third reflection evokes the Moroccan authorities’ struggling communication approach and lack of a coherent strategy to inform the public and help ease common fear and anxiety. Medias, an online news website, published an article with a critical headline “Covid-19: Au Ministère de la Santé, Une Communication Inadaptée à la Crise” (Covid-19: The Health Ministry’s Communication unsuitable for the crisis). It describes how the figures and information presented to the media and the public have been “erratic”. The writer also highlights “If we managed to ask a question, we did not get an answer, because our interlocutors had the gift of answering alongside.” Apart from the Health Ministry’s news conferences and dissemination

of daily statistics and other technical information about the protection from the new pandemic, there has been no major address to the nation, and the King has not spoken yet. The El Otmani government seems to be wagging with its public discourse about the COVID-19 health and economic challenges after more than one month of the first two infection cases. Some crisis watchers in the world have asserted that the management of a public health crisis “relies so heavily on changing behavior in order to control the spread of the outbreak, communication is not an optional extra: it is a critical tool in the fight to save lives.” (35)

The fourth and last observation is about undue discrimination against a sizable number of Moroccan expatriates residing in Europe, particularly in Belgium and Netherlands. With the cancelation of air traffic in/out of the country, thousands of tourists and Moroccan expatriates visiting Morocco felt frustrated by the reaction of the local authorities about alternative plans for their travel. On March 14, President Emmanuel Macron said on Twitter, “To our compatriots stranded in Morocco: new flights are being organized to allow you to return to France. I am asking the Moroccan authorities to ensure that everything necessary is done as soon as possible.” France’s ambassador to Morocco, Helene Le Gal, stated that her embassy had received some 5,000 calls in the last 24 hours. France allocated 40 flights from several Moroccan cities to carry French expatriates back home.

After the government’s decision to suspend all flights between Morocco and Belgium, at least 1,500 Belgians, who have registered on an online platform, were stuck in Morocco; whereas the actual number of stranded fellow countrymen is greater. Belgians of Moroccan descent have been stuck between a rock and a hard place. Moroccan authorities did not approve their travel of the country. Belgian foreign minister Philippe Goffin was urgently seeking a solution to their plight. He recalled the Moroccan authorities had told him those Belgian-Moroccans were “Moroccans in Morocco, and therefore were not authorized to travel”. Among the Moroccan communities in Belgium and Netherlands, there is a sizable majority of Riffians who have stigmatized by “Hirak Achaabi”, an open-ended cycle of protests and imprisonment of nearly 200 activists, artists, and journalists for "undermining the security of the state", after the death of Mouhcine Fikri, a 30-year old fish monger in Al Hoceima, in the historically-neglected northern part of Morocco October 28, 2016. As diplomatic tensions rose between Brussels and Rabat, Goffin mentioned the Hague Convention to make a point in defense of the double-nationality citizens; but did not hear back from Rabat. He also pointed out Morocco was one the first countries where Belgium had sent seven planes to pick up its nationals abroad. He found it odd that his counterparts in Holland, France, and Germany faced similar lack of cooperation from Moroccan authorities in finding a solution for those aground European

Moroccans.



More than 1500 individuals with Belgian-Moroccan dual nationality have been stranded in Morocco for weeks [DR]

6. Britain

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson was the first world leader to test positive for the coronavirus. His symptoms were critical and he was taken to an intensive care unit at Thomas Hospital in London. He asked Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab, to deputize for him. In a rare speech, Queen Elizabeth said the United Kingdom "will succeed" in its fight against the pandemic and praised those "coming together to help others". World leaders have expressed sympathy with PM Johnson. European Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen, wrote on Twitter "My thoughts are with Prime Minister Boris Johnson and his family this evening. I wish him a speedy and full recovery."

The whole National Health Service (NHS) has been put on an emergency footing. The decision was made to cancel all routine operations, such as knee and hip replacements, for three months starting mid-April. The British government has secured between 4,000 and 5,000 intensive care beds. Johnson had decided the return of 20,000 retired NHS staff to help fight the new pandemic. He stated, "First the most important thing is that our policy is unchanged, that's to delay the spread of the disease so as to reduce the pressure on the NHS, reduce the demand on the NHS at that critical peak moment, and that's how we hope to save many thousands of lives."

(36) Still, the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) at the University of

Washington's School of Medicine in Seattle gave a grim prediction. 66,314 people would die of Covid-19 in Britain by early August. However, several leading British scientists have expressed concerns about the IHME model. Professor Sylvia Richardson, of Cambridge University and the co-chair of the Royal Statistical Society Task Force on Covid-19, told the Science Media Centre the projections are based on "very strong assumptions about the way the epidemic will progress." (37)

Jonson had imposed lockdown measures on March 23. However, many Brits have expressed concern around draconian tactics and overreach by police forces. Jonathan Sumption, a former Supreme Court justice in London told BBC Radio, "This is what a police state is like. It is a state in which a government can issue orders or express preferences with no legal authority, and the police will enforce ministers' wishes." Other views have raised the issue of trust in the police and how far the securitization of the pandemic containment can be understood. Raphael Hogarth, an associate at the Institute for Government think tank pointed out "some police forces seem to be using their powers without any regard to the purpose for which these powers were conferred. The purpose of the legislation is to stop the virus spreading, by stopping unnecessary inter-household contact." Neil Basu, assistant commissioner of the British police wrote an opinion article in the Telegraph urging his colleagues to maintain "the trust and confidence of the public." He said, "'How we police this pandemic will be remembered for many years to come.'" An editorial published by the Observer argues "worryingly, the prime minister himself does not inspire confidence. He has struck the wrong tone at his press conferences, undermining the seriousness of the government message to stay at home as much as possible, for example suggesting that he hoped to see his mother on Mother's Day (a mistake his advisers sought to correct afterwards). His way of speaking to the nation stands in stark contrast to that of Nicola Sturgeon, the first minister of Scotland, and Rishi Sunak, the chancellor, both of whom have struck far more capable, sober and reassuring tones." (38)



[Getty]

Some British fans of history are making comparison between Churchill's WWII crisis and Johnson's Coronavirus emergency. Johnson aspires to be in the league of Churchill if he could frame a similar real and inspirational discourse coupled with above-crisis forward thinking. Churchill had encouraged the Brits to keep the faith: "We shall not fail or falter; we shall not weaken or tire. Neither the sudden shock of battle, nor the long-drawn trials of vigilance and exertion will wear us down. Give us the tools, and we will finish the job." Johnson would feel cozy anywhere in any possible context of comparison with Churchill and with what could be an overstretched claim to be "Conservative in principle but Liberal in sympathy", as Johnson wrote. (39) He idealizes Churchill for being as "the resounding human rebuttal to all Marxist historians who think history is the story of vast and impersonal economic forces. The point of the Churchill Factor is that one man can make all the difference." (40) Any deliberate characterization of resemblance between the two men would reveal the unChurchillian character of Johnson, who is perceived in Britain now as a "socially-liberal free-marketer at heart, and for all the irony in the world, with the British left relentlessly calling Johnson a fascist, when the time came to bring down the hammer of authority, Johnson dithered, unlike Churchill, who in his time of need, promptly doubled policing and rationing under a war-economy to pre-empt an establishment of order, during the Blitz. Realism demands state power and hierarchy in extremis, something which modern-liberals-pretending-to-be-conservatives, rarely understand." (41)

7. *United States*

The COVID-19 epic has turned into a public health chaos and a political drama at the White House. The number of the virus infections rose to nearly 528,990 cases with an increase of 26,114 in the previous twenty-four hours, and 20,455 deaths. The United States has about thirty percent of the world infected population and nearly one fifth of the dead. President Trump had been advised about the severity of the new pandemic as of the end of January. The New York Times revealed that, Peter Navarro, Trump's top economic official, had written a memo to the President in January warning the outbreak could become a "full blown pandemic" causing trillions of dollars in economic damage and risking the health of millions of Americans. When the WHO declared a Public Health Emergency of International concern at the end of January after sending a team to Wuhan and Beijing, Trump made a speech at a rally in Michigan the same day, and said "We think we have it very well under control." Nic Cheeseman, professor of democracy at the University of Birmingham notices that "Democratic leaders have to avoid any statement criticizing the actions of other leaders that might downplay the significance of the pandemic; but, their silence now risks handing authoritarians a blank check to cash at a future date." (42)

By early April, Trump shifted once again to blame politics and accused the World Health Organization of being "China centric" and "biased" towards his rival superpower. (43) In one of his tweets, he argued "The WHO really blew it. For some reason, funded largely by the United States, yet very China centric. We will be giving that a good look. Fortunately, I rejected their advice on keeping our borders open to China early on. Why did they give us such a faulty recommendation?" With his typical above-reality Trumpian 'logic' in an election year, he believes the country has a plague, and "we're seeing light at the end of the tunnel", in a day when a record number of Americans succumbed to the growing pandemic. He vowed to impose a "very powerful hold" on funding the WHO. A new CNN/SSRS public opinion poll showed a 55-percent-majority of Americans believe the Federal government performed poorly in preventing or containing the Coronavirus spread in the country. Fifty two percent disapproved Trump's way of dealing with the outbreak.



President trump and his Coronavirus advisors [Getty]

After exhausting his electioneering strategy of monopolizing a new drug being developed by CureVac, a German research company, for 1bn dollars, Trump remains desperate to secure any pharmaceutical formula to claim a public health victory less than seven months before the presidential elections. He has been preaching for weeks in March and April about the alleged effectiveness of two anti-malaria drugs as a potential treatment for Covid-19, with no clear-cut scientific proof. "You are not going to die from this pill," Trump said, before acknowledging that he isn't a doctor; but, has reviewed some of the medical studies, adding, "I really think it's a great thing to try." In a "Facts First" piece, CNN stated "There is no conclusive scientific evidence to support what Trump is saying. Clinical trials are underway, but the FDA and top public health officials have not endorsed Trump's view."

Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, underscored the fact that "the show stopper will obviously be a vaccine". He also maintained "I served six presidents and I have never done anything other than tell the exact scientific evidence and made policy recommendations based on the science and the evidence," he had previously told a House committee earlier this month." (44) President Trump has been anxious to get back to normal life. Throughout the month of March, he often said, "The hardship will end, it will end soon. Normal life will return." He once said late March he "would love to have the country opened up, and just raring to go, by Easter on April 12."



Dr. Anthony Fauci [Getty]

Many politicians have ridiculed his narrative of ‘resuming life soon.’ For instance, Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot dismissed his idea of returning to business as usual while the nation still fights the pandemic. She stated, “It’s unfortunate we have a leader with such a large platform every day who’s not careful with his messaging. Daily ... somebody has to come behind him and clean up the mess.” Illinois Governor JB Pritzker thinks Trump “is not taking into account the true damage that this will do to our country if we see truly millions of people die. And that’s what I think would happen; that’s what the scientists and doctors say would happen.” U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren asserts “our political system has debated the role of government since the founding, but the time for cheap political shots at government is over. Government action is essential to save lives and to rescue our economy. Congress should end its recess and get back to work now.” (45)

State governors both democrats and republicans have had better understanding of the risks and decided strict measures during the outbreak. Nancy Koehn of the Harvard Business School wrote, “If you’re looking for in-the-moment role models, turn to Governor Andrew Cuomo of New York or Governor Gretchen Whitmer of Michigan, both whom are offering de facto masterclasses in crisis leadership: explaining the gravity of the situations their states are facing, outlining the resources being deployed to battle the coronavirus, and calling their constituents to act from their stronger, more compassionate selves.” (46)



New York Governor Andrew Cuomo [AP]

8. *China*

The COVID-19 nightmarish episode has turned into a political football match. China now has positioned itself to be the ‘doctor and the lab’ of the West. However, President Trump’s accusation of the World Health Organization of bias vis-a-vis China added more stress and distraction. John MacKenzie, a virologist and adviser on the WHO’s emergency committee noticed the WHO’s leaders are “very frustrated. The messages come out loud and clear, and some disregard the warnings. The United States largely did, the United Kingdom largely did.” A WHO-China Joint Mission on Coronavirus Disease 2019, conducted a field study and issued its report for the period from February 16 to 24. It included 25 national and international experts from China, Germany, Japan, Korea, Nigeria, Russia, Singapore, the United States of America and WHO; and was headed by Dr. Bruce Aylward of WHO and Dr. Wannian Liang of China. The findings showed three bronchoalveolar lavage samples were collected December 30 from “a patient with pneumonia of unknown etiology – a surveillance definition established following the SARS outbreak of 2002-2003 – in Wuhan Jinyintan Hospital. Real-time PCR (RT-PCR) assays on these samples were positive for pan-Betacoronavirus. Using Illumina and nanopore sequencing, the whole genome sequences of the virus were acquired.” The report also pointed to how bioinformatic analyses indicated that “the virus had features typical of the coronavirus family and belonged to the Betacoronavirus 2B lineage. Alignment of the full-length genome sequence of the COVID-19 virus and other available genomes of Betacoronavirus showed the closest relationship was with the bat SARS-like coronavirus strain BatCov RaTG13, identity 96 percent.”

The report came amidst a common assertion the new pandemic had originated in a “wet market” in Wuhan city in China’s Hubei province where the first infection was reported on December 1, 2019. This brings to memory a déjà vu scenario of the SARS-CoV-1 outbreak in early 2000. However, Chinese officials have under the spotlight for more than one reason after several reports pointed to a possible virus ‘leak’ out of a lab in Wuhan in December. Article 6(1) of the International Health Regulations (IHR) of 2005 requires a state party to report to the WHO, within 24 hours, events that may constitute a “public health emergency of international concern”. Therefore, it could be argued that China violated international law by delaying its reporting to the WHO by more than a month. (47)

Chinese authorities shifted swiftly to a full-fledged lockdown of Wuhan January 23. Li Wenliang, 34, who had been the whistleblowing doctor before he contracted the virus, was punished for raising the alarm on social media late December about a ‘mysterious virus’. The Wuhan local police detained him for “spreading false rumors” January 3. The Authorities also forced to sign a police document to admit he had breached the law and had “seriously disrupted social order.” Li was announced dead by the Wuhan central hospital officials February 6. His death has sparked an explosion of anger, grief and demands for freedom of speech among ordinary Chinese.

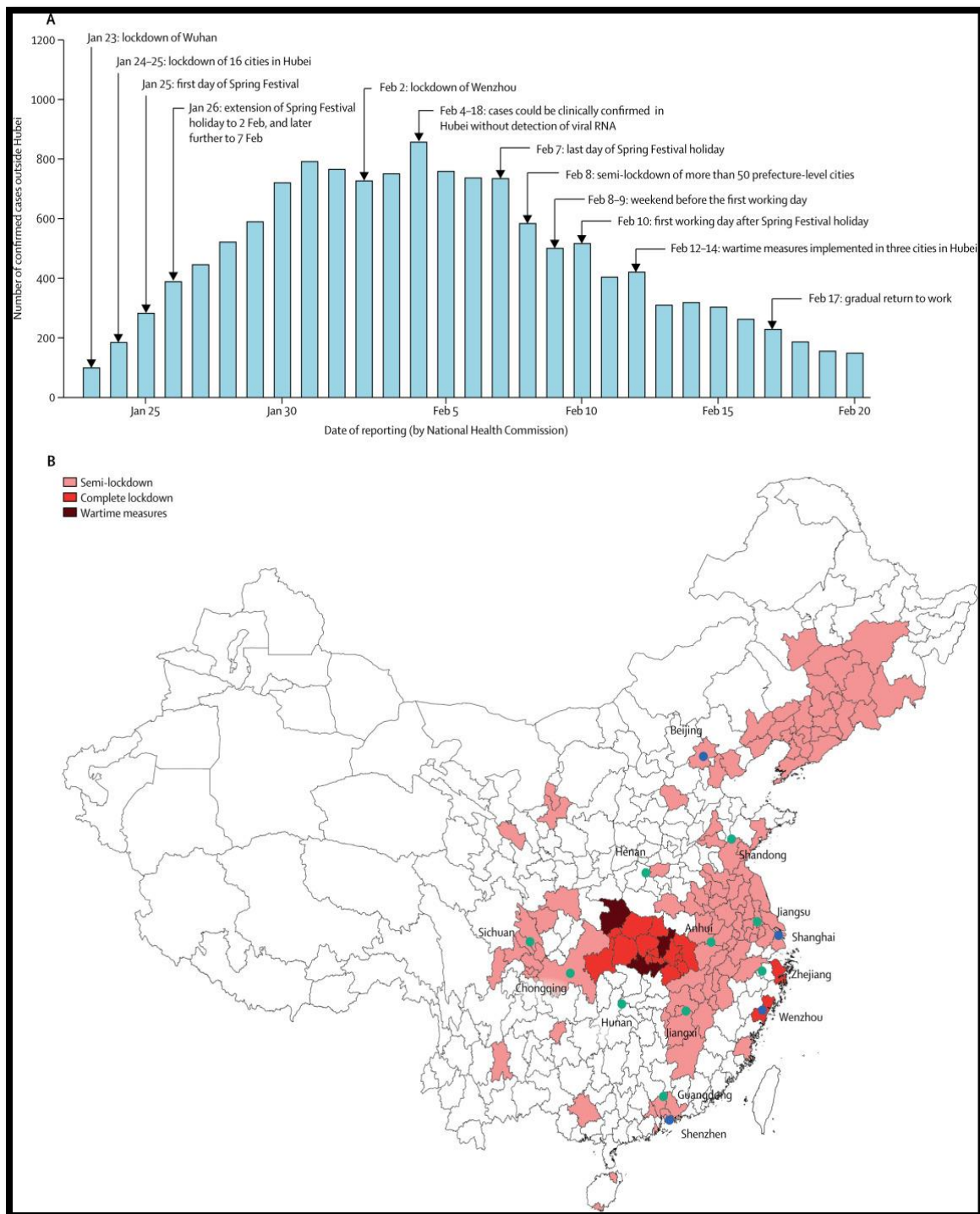


Whistleblower Dr. Li Wenliang before and after his death [Getty]

Later in March, China’s ‘anti-corruption authorities’ or the so-called Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI), investigated Ren Zhiqiang, an influential critic of the Chinese Communist party after he depicted president Xi Jinping as a “clown” in the way he had handled

the pandemic. The investigation considered him an offender of “serious violations of discipline and the law.” In his comment on the speech President Xi delivered February 23, Ren pointed to a “crisis of governance” in the ruling party, and portrayed what he saw “not an emperor standing their exhibiting his ‘new clothes’, but a clown stripped naked who insisted on continuing being emperor.” (48) Valérie Niquet, head of the Asia program at the Foundation for Strategic Research in Paris, notices Chinese leaders have one priority: regime survival. She wrote, “The ‘China dream’ of ‘rejuvenation of the Chinese nation’ is a tool to achieve that objective. But the dream has turned into a global nightmare. Beijing has embarked on this desperate information war in an attempt to revive it.” (49)

The Chinese authorities went to extreme lengths to cleanse the image of Wuhan from the stigma of being the world birthplace of COVID-19. In the second week of April, the state-backed Global Times ran a catchy headline "Like a phoenix, Wuhan reemerges from dark coronavirus lockdown in warm spring." Other media outlets published several articles with a common theme of Wuhan was "gradually getting back to normal," including a boom in weddings. Chinese officials decided to lift the 76-day lockdown of Wuhan in Hubei province April 9. In a surprising twist of events the following day, CNN reported on the situation in China with an alarming headline “China is on a knife edge between recovery and another wave of coronavirus cases.” Coronavirus-tested residents of Wuhan were issued “QR codes through a government app. Only those with green codes -- meaning they are symptom free and passed a coronavirus test -- have been permitted to leave their homes. Anyone without such a code will still face restrictions on their movement.” (50) The medical journal “Lancet” published a study based on the outbreak in China, and cautioned Coronavirus lockdowns across the globe “should not be completely lifted until a vaccine for the disease is found.” Professor Joseph T Wu from the University of Hong Kong, who co-led the research, in a Wednesday news release stated, "Although control policies such as physical distancing and behavioral change are likely to be maintained for some time, proactively striking a balance between resuming economic activities and keeping the reproductive number below one is likely to be the best strategy until effective vaccines become widely available." (51)



Timeline of events in China between [Jan 23 and Feb 17, 2020]

Conclusion: Is There a Coronavirus-forged World Leader?

The paper has highlighted eight strategies of containing the new pandemic by American, European, north African, and Chinese leaders, while another challenge will emerge soon in deciding adequate economic reforms in the future. There has been a common struggle of testing for the virus more than other challenges of mobilizing their respective populations to commit to various levels of confinement and social distancing. I see a quantitative and qualitative dilemma in dealing the vast numbers of tests and deciding the proper testing protocol across the globe. As mentioned earlier, there has been no one consistent, or standardized, approach to

identifying new infection cases. Testing is being done in different countries in different ways and for different purposes. I have noticed in the very European medical field, the Brits and the Germans, for example, have applied different protocols with dissimilar results. Four months into the separate national battles against the pandemic now, there has been no consensus or a unified way of identifying the infection, let alone designing a potential remedy or cure for all.

Looking at the whole picture, it seems to be a three-way failure of leadership, national public policies, as well as international institutions, and should not be overshadowed by mere crisis management. The fact that the infection cases have escalated to 1,781,383 and the deaths to 108,864 on April 12, not to mention the psychological impact and not-yet-known economic ramifications worldwide, indicates a strategic decline in both national and international dimensions at what has become a hyper-individualistic era with the new trade war of face masks at land and sea. Every state has been struggling with the pandemic for itself for nearly twelve weeks now. So far, we have seen crisis managers at the Elysees, 10 Downing Street, or the White House trying to either trumpet the “War” narrative as did Macron, to promote the apologetic “unprecedented challenge” as did Spanish Prime Minister Sanchez, or perform some wrestling or Judo moves as Trump has shown vis-a- vis with the pandemic outbreak. The world is awaiting a real leader who can take the pandemic by the horn and mobilize one medical front for all countries. Someone who can turn this chaotic situation into an opportunity of wisdom, innovation, and inspiration. The best advice suggested by the WHO chief is: “please quarantine politicizing COVID. We shouldn’t waste time pointing fingers.” World leaders will have different score cards in the final evaluations. For most of them, their performance pivots around public health failure and a political letdown. Italy’s EU ambassador Massari: “We are facing exactly the type of emergency in which a “Europe that protects” must show it can deliver. Unless we wake up immediately, we run the risk of going down in history like the leaders in 1914 who sleepwalked into World War I. The virus will pass, but any rotten seeds of complacency or selfishness will stay.” (52)

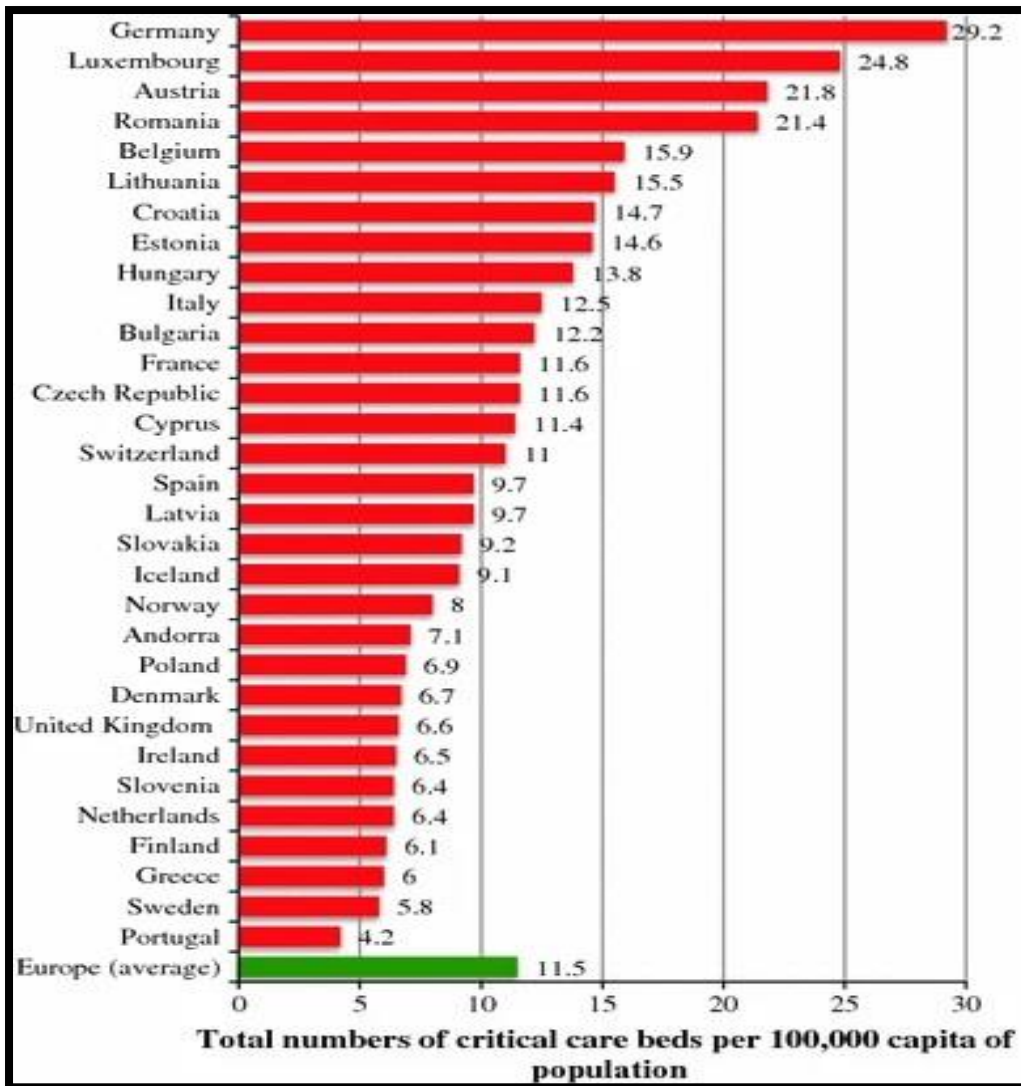
One should acknowledge governments and the whole international system might be caught off guard. However, the question remains how the international community has absorbed so much about the need for nuclear deterrence. We are now more than seven decades away from WWII, no leader, no international institution has seriously worked for minimum pandemic deterrence. The findings of the new Global Health Security Index, publicized in October, should be the point of entry into reconstructing public health and prevention systems nationally and globally. So far, no real leader has emerged yet from the rubble of Coronavirus. This point implies the need for a criterion for an objective assessment. Since an all-testing capability and full

containment of the pandemic are out of reach, one can consider a five-point criterion: a) the proportionality of saving infected bodies in comparison with the number of deaths; b) number of most critical care beds per 100,000 people; c) number of labs mobilized in each country to explore for an adequate vaccine against the new pandemic; d) type of public discourse adopted in mobilizing the nation; and e) minimum restriction or maximum lockdown of public life. The following chart of April 12 provides a quantitative mirror of the top eight countries:

Country	Total Cases	New Cases	Total Deaths	New Deaths	Total Recovered
<u>USA</u>	533,115	+236	20,580	+3	30,502
<u>Spain</u>	163,027		16,606		59,109
<u>Italy</u>	152,271		19,468		32,534
<u>France</u>	129,654		13,832		26,391
<u>Germany</u>	125,452		2,871		57,400
<u>China</u>	82,052	+99	3,339		77,575
<u>UK</u>	78,991		9,875		344
<u>Iran</u>	70,029		4,357		41,947

Worldometers.info [April 12, 2020]

Any comparison between the number of infection cases and the death toll in the top Coronavirus-plagued countries would show Germany with the lowest number of fatalities: 2871 out of 125,452 with less than a 2 percent ratio. Another index evokes the number of critical care beds available in the country. The following chart ranks Germany in the first position in comparison with other European countries; while other non-European nations suffer from greater shortages of hospital-bed capacity including the United States.



The variability of critical care bed numbers in Europe [POLITICO]

Angela Merkel seems to be the leader with a pragmatist edge, rational and transparent approach, and no deliberate investment in the “war” discourse. She is the only head of state who included in her crisis team social scientists and experts in constitutional rights to help plan the transition into a post-Coronavirus era. Merkel has been a reliable and calm navigator of her nation, and has given the world a model of crisis management. I expect potential leaders will emerge in the post-Coronavirus era by necessity, not by choice, as non-traditional doctors will design new vaccines and innovative policy experts develop a new business model since the neoliberal system has been contested now more than ever. The political establishment in some countries has started to listen. This week, French president Macron visited the lab of professor Didier Raoult and his minority-majority junior fellow researchers. For nearly two months, they have been ridiculed for the controversial chloroquine-based treatment for coronavirus. This is one example of would-be new leaders of the future; they will emerge out their quiet labs and modest classrooms, out of the global civil society. The pandemic will impose a bottom-up challenge on the status quo, on the top-down structure of politics, finance and knowledge. Coronavirus has been a democratically-spread pandemic, and individuals and families around

the world will look up to result-oriented pragmatic new leaders who will help them secure their basic human needs: health, jobs, and security.



German Chancellor Angela Merkel gives a media statement on the spread of the new coronavirus at the Chancellery in Berlin March 22 [Reuters]

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