

## **Coronavirus Everywhere - The Unknown Scale of the Crisis**

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In the last few weeks, after it has been declared as a “Pandemic” by World Health Organization on 11 May 2020, the novel coronavirus has managed to invade all aspects of our life. This global emergency has forced countries to close their border, to suspend schools and universities, and even to utilize wartime measures of curfew. Today, according to the most recent data from UNESCO, 1.524.648.768 students, counting up for 87.1% of total enrolled learners, do not go to schools and billions of workers do not work, many of them are on unpaid leave or facing unemployment. (1)

Considering these circumstances, no-one can classify this pandemic merely as a global health crisis. Because this novel coronavirus and its unraveling crisis do not only spread through viruses but also through misinformation, malicious stereotypes, biases, and panic. Even at the onset of this global crisis, we have seen many people that wanted to turn this crisis to economic opportunity. Selling masks and sanitizers for astronomical prices, illegally firing employees with no compensation in these times of uncertainty, and creating fake drugs and cures for economic profit; all these tactics were possibly coded in our genes from medieval plague period resurfaced nearly in every part of the world from the richest to the poorest.

The economic impact of the crisis has strikingly unraveled by demonstrating all kinds of inequality. We have seen millions of wealthy people in panic buying all available essential goods, leaving none to the disadvantaged for their necessities. One of the most currently debated economic issues is the protection of big companies against the unemployed and those who have lost their jobs in this process. While wealthier people have the chance to put their businesses on hold and stay at their warm houses with their families by receiving substantial bail-outs from governments, poorer people do not have the chance not to work. They have to wait in crowded lines to receive government benefits or unemployment supports if there is any available.

The economic reality of the crisis shows us the importance of national and global solidarity in this war against the pandemic. I believe that it is possible to classify these efforts against the Coronavirus Pandemic as a “total war” with multiple fronts. Additionally, one of the distinctive characteristics of this war is that it is not a war that only states are involved. No-one is immune to this crisis and all kinds of individual commitment and efforts are of paramount importance. In this complex situation, staying at home can be a very well-measured, appropriate, and easy-to-implement response to this crisis; nevertheless, there are millions of people that do not have a home, even shelter. This crisis most disproportionately inflicts people running from wars that ravaged their homes. Additionally, the collapsed health systems of war-inflicted countries have little-to-none capability to help those in need. All of us should think if wars are necessary and rational at this critical juncture of history that every effort and adjustment can save lives.

Accordingly, the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has called for a global ceasefire to halt all hostilities as he said "The fury of the virus illustrates the folly of war. That is why today I am calling for an immediate global ceasefire in all corners of the world," (2) In this aspect, the role of nation-states and international organizations are extremely valuable. During this crisis, the international community should leave the methods of traditional diplomacy that is guided merely by national interest as this virus does not recognize any borders, ethnicities, or faiths. They should focus on the instruments of "thematic diplomacy" to form a singular international commitment and solidarity to halt this global crisis and help all those in need.

We are all in agreement that this crisis deeply affects our day-to-day lives. However, would this crisis also affect our decisions for the future? Humans are not completely rational creatures, especially in times of crisis. In complex situations, when there is an overflow of information, we deviate from making rational judgments. Instead, we use cognitive shortcuts to guide us in decision-making. The Coronavirus Pandemic is certainly an extremely complex situation for our generation as we are under huge pressure and highly susceptible to decision-making biases. These biases can prevent us from making rational decisions in our lives and in our political affairs.

We make important decisions during elections in choosing the candidate to vote for. In doing so, we process a great deal of information from many different resources for different topics to make a rational decision. But, in these times of crisis, can voters vote rationally in elections? There are many ongoing electoral processes in the world that are affected by this virus, some have suspended these elections, but some are continuing by digital voting or voting by mail. However, when we evaluate the content of these ongoing election campaigns, there are all about coronavirus. For example, when Bernie Sanders and Joe Biden's campaigns for U.S. Democratic Primaries are evaluated, we see that over %80 of all content is about coronavirus. And people have the tendency to evaluate candidates on the most recent information they receive as Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky have confirmed in their research of "availability heuristic" in 1973. (3) It seems that voters are at the risk of irrationally making long-term decisions only by evaluating candidates' performance on coronavirus, not also on other essential matters.

As a conclusion, we should not see this crisis as the dawn of politics and social interaction, but as a multi-faceted global issue that requires a solid global commitment that no-one is intellectually restricted to contribute. In these challenging times, this crisis shouldn't blind our rationality, it shouldn't make us susceptible to misinformation. In this period of social distancing, we should seek real knowledge and work to help others in need from pandemic's multiple effects.

- 1) <https://en.unesco.org/themes/education-emergencies/coronavirus-school-closures>
- 2) <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/03/1059972>
- 3) <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0010028573900339>