

Covid 19: What Is the Lesson for the Future?

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Abstract: Humanity has faced the biggest problem in its post-World War II history. The pandemic caused by COVID 19 has taken the lives of millions of people around the world, exposing not only human fragility, but mainly that countries did not have the tools to provide an adequate response to such a serious problem. The measures adopted by the governments were unable to solve the problem and, to make things worse, even generated others, such as the collapse of economies around the world. The social isolation determined by the authorities recognized the inability and unpreparedness of governments to deal with the pandemic, having also generated an ideological debate that did nothing to solve the problem, but only to transform the serious crisis into a political discussion that can put the model of democracy, the rule of law and the allocation of powers at risk. But what is the main lesson to be learned from this crisis? Society is formed by the people who compose it, the same people who once elected democracy, the rule of law and the distribution of powers as being the closest model to the ideal of political and administrative organization in the civilized world. Governments should work for these people, always seeking the common good and thinking of them as human beings that they are, and not as mere “voters”. Making governments think, more comprehensively, about people, about the education of children and young people, and about the future, without any ideological bias, should be the main lesson left by COVID 19 to governments and humanity.

Keywords: COVID 19, Pandemic, Government, Ideology, Crisis, Economy, Social Isolation, Lesson, Future. Humanity.

I. INTRODUCTION

Will The Covid-19 Pass as A Tsunami Or Will It Remain Indelibly In People's Lives?

There is something that needs to be clarified and that, despite so many answers and explanations, so far they have not been adequately addressed. The reasoning derives, at first, and within a reasonable logic, from a comparison between COVID 19 and a Tsunami. Effectively, in the event of hurricanes, tsunamis or other events of nature that could cause damage, governments warn everyone and advise to leave a possible risk area urgently or to remain in their homes until the end of the catastrophic event. The event takes place, destroys property and reapers lives, and people return to normality. Of course, "loss of life" is not the issue here, nor the destruction of property. No, this is another discussion!

Is COVID 19 a tsunami? In other words, does it correspond to something that, like the catastrophic events of nature, passes and leaves, leaving behind its devastating mark? If the answer to these questions is in the affirmative, then there is nothing to discuss about the need for isolation of people, for example, although this topic is still the subject of debate today. The event is expected to pass and then everyone goes back to their

normal lives, just as it happens in those other situations. At first, at least, no one can say that COVID 19 is a tsunami.

A virus does not pass and goes away like a giant wave, wind or rain. It is very logical, because the virus is in the people themselves, who carry it inside their organism, regardless of suffering more or less effects as a result of its presence. It is understandable, however, that the arguments for isolation stem from the lack of sufficient hospital beds to serve all the people most severely affected by COVID 19. Without enough beds, therefore, many more deaths would occur. In their homes, people were less likely to get the virus.

The question for reflection is another. People were forced to isolate themselves in their homes, but when they came out of isolation, like a tsunami, the virus was gone? I repeat this questioning to ask others ones. Did isolation leave people immune to COVID 19 or were they all still likely to contract the virus? When they left their homes were they not subject to the same risks as before? In other words, the lack of hospital beds did not occur in the same way in many countries, regardless of the social isolation they did?

Staying at home and waiting seemed to be the most sensible solution, or rather, the only possible option, less serious for people, but terribly bad for the economy the development of the communities affected. In fact, there are several studies pointing towards others negatives effects. In spite of *social distancing mandates in winter and spring of 2020 have helped to reduce the spread of COVID-19*, it is necessary to recognize that *these measures have also brought increased attention to the well-established negative effects on morbidity and mortality that social isolation can cause* (HOLT-LUNSTAD, 2020). A study with 27 participants, all UK residents aged 18 years and older, representing a range of gender, ethnic, age and occupational backgrounds, demonstrates that *the social distancing and isolation associated with COVID-19 policy has had substantial negative impacts on the mental health and wellbeing of the UK public within a short time of policy implementation* (WILLIAMS, 2020).

However, this ‘staying at home’ points to something much deeper: human fragility, on the one hand; and the neglect of States towards their respective populations, on the other. The consequences: millions of people lost their lives and the economies of several countries were devastated.

Two important aspects need to be noted. The first concerns the ideological debate that ends up putting people in the background, pointing the focus more on political and personal interests at the expense of the intrinsic interest in human life,

which, in fact, should be the effective reason for discussion in any hypothesis.

The second is that, so far, there have been no discussions about plans to prevent future pandemics from causing as much destruction as that caused by COVID 19, considering the fragility noted above. In fact, against earthquakes, for example, men have built more and more secure physical structures, carrying out major engineering works. Why not think the same and take precautions against these “new” evils of the 21st century? Why have governments not yet realized that their actions must be directed, essentially, at people, as human beings that they are? Will Covid-19 pass as a tsunami or will it remain in any way - including the threat that new viruses could emerge soon, indelibly in people's lives? In the following topics it will be addressed these issues.

II. THE ERROR OF THE IDEOLOGICAL DEBATE IN THE FIGHT AGAINST COVID 19

It has been seen in the 21st century, and at a time as delicate as the present, a dualism that has been exacerbated in ideological politics. It is that, now, with COVID 19, this dual-ideological game has put people's own lives at risk, demonstrating that what matters least to these ideologues are the people they promise to be defending.

Despite having an open (controversial) concept, the word ideology receives numerous meanings, depending on the field in which it is addressed, figuring the expression of 'false social consciousness' as one of them.

Many theorists of ideology rightly claim that ideology centrally involves 'false consciousness'. But what does 'false consciousness', in its ideological aspect, actually want to express? Engels, in a letter addressed to Franz Mehring pointed out that: ideology is *a process carried out by the so-called thinker consciously, it is true, but with a false consciousness. It clarifies that the ideologue imagines false or apparent motive forces. False consciousness has to do, therefore, with how agents maintain their beliefs, and not with the cognitive status of the discursive content of these beliefs, as the "false" in the "false consciousness" can deceptively suggest* (SHELBY, 2003).

It has been quite usual lately to talk about ideology. Ideology has become common sense, as if it could be applied indiscriminately as a synonym for thought, opinion or idea, capable of encompassing different meanings, even contradictory to each other. In fact, the indiscriminate use of the term ends up emptying its content, much more than expanding it. The Dictionary of Politics (BOBBIO, MATEUCCI, 2010) says that there is a plethora of meanings of the word ideology, having been used “both in practical political language and in philosophical, sociological and political-scientific language”, reducing itself to two tendencies that it has been described as being *strong meaning* and *weak meaning*.

Regarding the debate on the social and/or economic reflexes of the decisions adopted by governments due to the pandemic caused by Covid 19, with the consequent mistakes or successes, ideologies have been stolen the scene, to the detriment of people's effective interest. It is that they are no longer just about theories, speeches, or philosophical opinions conflicting with each other, in an academic context. No! People have been forced to stay at home and the economic activity responsible for the development of the countries has advanced in stride towards a well that is expected not to be so deep that it will take years to get out of it.

Staying at home or producing, making the economy spin, moving forward, money circulating or risking contracting COVID 19? There was no shortage of arguments to defend any position (MUDDE, *Cas*, 2020) (BRENNAN, Elliott, 2020). As already pointed out, this reality leads to something much deeper: human fragility, on the one hand; and the neglect of States towards their respective populations, on the other. And there is nothing dual or ideological in this statement, since they are arguments which are independent of one another and that, for this very reason, deserve to be addressed separately.

When it comes to human fragility, it is necessary to recognize, in view of the pandemic perpetrated by COVID 19, that physical nature is, in fact, as delicate as a crystal, and that it may break at any moment, thus, requiring zeal and care in its treatment, which refers to prudence and reasonableness in decision-making, especially when this physical life can be put at risk. A virus that strikes practically every space on Earth, with an amazing speed, and that has already taken the lives of millions of people, is more than a proof of this reality.

However, even before the pandemic, about 820 million people worldwide did not have sufficient access to food in 2018, according to the UN report, with approximately 30,000 people dying of hunger everyday in the world, with the addition of more than 800 million people without access to potable water. It could be mentioned several other data, but these ones are enough to understand what it is said.

This scenario that is revealed by the numbers, not only related to the deaths caused by COVID 19 so far, but especially those pointed out in the previous paragraph, shows that there is still a long way to go before the concept of human dignity is effectively understood in all its dimensions. For this very reason, It is emphasized here the issue of human fragility, so that everyone, including governments, can understand that it is for people, as human beings, that they must work, that the development of the economy cannot make any sense without being tied up social development, while obviously respecting human dignity.

But then, which path should have been followed? Go out and produce or stay at home and wait for the virus to disappear? These very important questions have sparked many debates that, regardless of the choices made, have threatened people's lives, and so they could never have been answered with

ideological biases, for it is the most valuable good at stake: people's life, which is fragile and must be well cared for, regardless of anything.

There is a need, therefore, for a total reframing of behaviors and debates, as well, which should be more responsible and ethical, without political, electoral or power interests, without aiming at taking advantage and without giving room to negligence or non-professional strategies or attitudes.

Leaders need to understand that these ideological debates could not exist in this "wartime" that humanity has experienced during the pandemic. A kind of "ideological truce" should have been declared and decisions, whatever they were, should have been met with a pure and clean heart and an altruistic feeling, enabling reason and conscience to exude correct, just and better decisions for all, without distinction. In fact, leaders need to understand that when it comes to human lives, interests should always be above fallacious ideologies that, throughout history, have already demonstrated all the destructive power they have.

If we look at the whole scenario, as a Shakespearean tragedy, so many contradictions, mismatches, neglects and falsehoods will be found, but unfortunately cannot be seen by those who are blinded by ideologies or who have given up the right to think and reflect.

In the current context of COVID 19, it cannot be recognized that there has been an immersion in the search for possible solutions, both by people and by governments. However, there was no proper confrontation, since, in most cases, an ideological background mixed the discussions. It is clear that problems need to be addressed and resolved, especially when it comes to such serious issues, but ideologies must stay out of the debates. What about the future viruses that may eventually arise? Will millions of people have to die again? No, it can't be. The future cannot be neglected, because if so, the chaos that the world population experienced during this period of COVID 19 will be irreparably repeated, perhaps even more catastrophically. After the pandemic, it cannot be allowed to simply go back to the way it was before, without any lesson being taken, leaving people simply, and again, at the mercy of uncertainty.

In fact, as long as the debate is submerged in these antagonistic discussions that lead to more doubts and uncertainties than to the necessary solutions to be adopted for the future, the world will still have to live with the old solutions (ideological or not) and their severe consequences: the economy will continue to collapse; industry will not produce, nor will the commerce have anything to sell and people will continue to die as a result of hunger, misery or lack of basic sanitation in their homes etc. All this demonstrates only the (historical) neglect of governments, as will be pointed out below.

III. THE NEGLIGENCE OF GOVERNMENTS OR HOW TO THINK ABOUT THE FUTURE SHOULD BE THE

MAIN LESSON OF THE PANDEMIC PROVOKED BY COVID 19

Social isolation was the official recommendation of health agencies to prevent the massive proliferation of COVID 19. That's what was seen. However, there was a strong movement against this recommendation, considering the economic and social chaos this could cause. The World Health Organization has published a guide with considerations for adjusting the relationship between public health versus social measures, recognizing the serious economic problems that could be caused by the closure of business activities, but did not point to a specific solution that would be able to mitigate the economic effects.

Indeed, with regard to the issue of the global economy, the crisis caused by COVID 19, *has caused the deepest recession since the Great Depression in the 1930s*. Reports have pointed to *a decline in GDP of over 20% and an increase in unemployment in many countries*. It should be noted that regardless of the type of social content determined by governments, *even in countries where containment measures were relatively light*. The first data had already clarified that the economic and social costs of the pandemic would be high. Certainly, an analysis of the effects of the pandemic and the future of the economy, including the growth prospects, the impact on activity and the implementation of support for a fiscal and monetary policy, is still necessary.

It was clear that no one knew for sure the best way to go in this conflict between maintaining (in theory) people's health through social isolation, and the economic chaos that could result from this measure. Although this debate is quite relevant, he pointed only to a discussion about the possible consequences of the adoption of one measure or another, and yet permeated by ideological issues that have contributed nothing to the solution of the problem itself. What about the future? How to prepare for a new pandemic in an attempt to avoid the problems that Covid 19 caused today? What will be the lesson for the future? Will governments know how to deal better with a similar problem in the future?

For this reason, it is necessary to understand about human fragility and the negligence of governments, but without entering into the merits of this debate that has taken on a profound ideological character, where the population has been the most affected, as has always happened in these issues.

The first step that must be taken is to abandon the ideological debate, with a change in the behavior of all who runs the nations of the world. Only in this way will the world be prepared to face problems of the same nature in the future.

Preparing for the future should be a commitment for all people, as well as for all governments and all states, but unfortunately, leaders are more concerned with winning the next elections, neglecting the implementation of a social policy capable of facing pandemics without millions of people having to die and without economies having to collapse.

A century ago, the world had to face a pandemic like the one that plagues humanity since 2020. The world had 100 years to prepare, not to prevent, perhaps, but to be able to face it without major sacrifices of the population, preventing lives from being taken and economies collapsing. In fact, between the years 1918-1919 somewhere between 20 and 40 million people were killed by the pandemic influenza known as "Spanish Flu" or "La Grippe". More people died than in the World War I. The "Spanish Flu" has been considered "as the most devastating epidemic in recorded world history. More people died of influenza in a single year than in four years of the Black Death Bubonic Plague from 1347 to 1351." That's why the influenza of 1918-1919 was considered a global disaster. There have been more deaths than AIDS has caused in 42 years.

The world has had more than a century to prepare for COVID 19, but nothing has been done, and now, on an emergency basis, billions of dollars have had to be spent to build field hospitals, acquire medical and hospital equipment, protective materials and even directly feed people who have been forced to stay in their homes, without producing, affected by the terror, fear and social isolation inflicted on them.

But if the Spanish flu had already been forgotten, after all 100 years had passed, another warning was given just over 10 years ago. In fact, in 2009, a new influenza virus (H1N1) was discovered in Mexico that causes a disease that came to be known as swine flu. This virus also spread in a matter of months to more than 100 countries. The World Health Organization on June 11, 2009 declared the beginning of the first flu pandemic in 40 years. What was the lesson left by H1N1 that contributed to the confrontation of Covid 19? Apparently, almost none, otherwise millions of people would not have lost their lives.

A reserve fund could be set up, maintained especially by the world's largest economies, but under the tutelage of international organizations such as the UN, to be used to tackle problems such as the pandemic. Perhaps it would be more economically viable to maintain this fund than to carry out the post-pandemic economic recovery, especially when lives can no longer be recovered.

The negligence of governments concerns negligence with the future itself. Other H1N1 or COVID 19 viruses may appear and perhaps in less than 10 years. Those who have a system of protection for their populations, whether in the social or economic aspects, will be the winners in this war in which everyone loses, one way or another.

IV. CONCLUSION

Society is formed by the people who compose it, the same people who once elected democracy, the rule of law and the distribution of powers as being the closest model to the ideal of political and administrative organization in the civilized world. Governments should work for these people, always

seeking the common good and thinking of them as human beings that they are, and not as mere "voters".

This reflection is important so that the model of the Democratic State of Law is not put in check, making room for old models (even with another garment) to be reborn, gain space and may threaten Democracy. It seems that government officials have not yet realized this danger, they have not realized that, sooner or later, those who are seen as mere voters can be the first to rise up against this neglect of them (governors) towards society in general. It must not be forgotten that civil society has already taken a leading role in several areas that were previously restricted exclusively to the State.

As pointed out by Professor Roland Roth in his study of NGOs as actors in civil society, *NGOs represent the hope of a cosmopolitan democracy capable of responding, on a global scale, to the great problems of today's societies.* (ROTH, 2003)

There are also studies that emphasize the important role that international economic organizations play in regulating the global economy today, as well as the incidence of NGOs in this process. The transition from a world system based on states to a space organization that is called "complex multilateralism" is even considered. The emergence of these groups has contributed to the expansion of international economic regulation, due to the increased presence of international economic organizations (IMF, World Bank and WTO) and NGOs and civic groups that have more effective means to coordinate their actions and consequently for their visibility and their effects. The response of international economic institutions (IEI) has been to adapt their institutional structure to the growing importance of global social actors. (O'BRIEN, 2003)

The problem is that at a time like this, when millions of people died and countries had their economic activities paralyzed, where ideological debate has taken the place of reality, balance and reasonableness, that ideal model begins to be questioned, being extremely dangerous, because it makes room for other non-democratic models.

There is also an urgent need for a change in thinking and behaving, serving COVID 19 as an example for governments to think about the future, differently from what happened with the Spanish and swine flu. A public policy of protection against pandemics should be created and maintained constantly, with the urgent allocation of funds, either for the construction of shelters, which can be easily transformed into hospital, or for the acquisition of materials and equipment, but mainly to support and encourage the development of studies in the area of health technology and scientific research, aimed at preventive and emergency action.

Education should also be carried out for the population, especially children and young people, so that they learn to be supportive, to think about the interests of the community, the

good of others, teaching them to live in a period of pandemic without the need for isolation, that has to culminate in the closing of commercial and industrial establishments, destroying the countries' economy.

The social isolation and the paralysis of the economic activity, resulting from the measures adopted by the governments ended up contributing to this crash of the economy, which in turn also implies the bankruptcy of companies, mass layoffs and economic retraction.

This demonstrates that those responsible have not been (and are not) able to find adequate solutions to the social problems that arise, especially when it comes to a question of the scale of a pandemic, such as the one that has been facing recently. It is the incompetence of governments to deal with the problem that arises and that leaders try to hide it with measures that drastically affect the productive sector, precisely the sector that moves the country, which pays taxes, generates jobs and makes wealth circulate.

As Jacques G n reux asserted in *Une raison d'esp rer. L'horreur n'est pas  conomique, elle est politique, the crisis is not one of the economy, but, above all, of political will, political courage, political debate, political information, political commitment, struggle politics - a crisis of democracy.* (G N REUX, 2000)

It is an appeal that Stiglitz made even before the existence of the desolate scenario in which the world entered in the face of the crisis caused by the pandemic of COVID 19. He called for the realization of new social contracts, considering that the inequalities that became manifest with the falling wages, rising unemployment and cuts in the social safety net, coupled with huge increases in bank bonuses and corporate wealth, in addition to the expansion of their own safety net, generated resentment and bitterness. (STIGLITZ, 2010)

However, it must be emphasized that at no time does one fail to recognize the essentiality of the capitalist economy for political, economic and social development. But, as Stiglitz asserted, an environment of resentment and bitterness, of fear and distrust, can never be the best way to begin the long and difficult task of reconstruction. For this very reason, he predicts that there is no choice whether to restore sustainable prosperity. And so it strongly suggests for a new set of social contracts based on trust between all elements of our society: between citizens and the government, between this generation and the future. (STIGLITZ, 2010)

In fact, thinking effectively about people and the future, without any ideological bias, should be the main lesson left by COVID 19 to governments. And, in a nutshell, this calls for a total reframing of the behavior of political and institutional leaders along with the population, and the election of priorities for health, together with a transparent system of monitoring and demanding government actions.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declared that he has no conflict of interest

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