

Pandemics, Populism and Democracy



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ABSTRACT: Covid 19 pandemic is an external factor that imposed itself on the global stage. Societies are considered open systems that can be influenced by the pandemic. This research will firstly explore the obligatory etiquettes that have been imposed on people's lifestyles by the emergence of Covid-19 pandemic. Secondly, it will study the triggering effect of Covid-19 pandemic on the populist environment. Thirdly, it will investigate the relationship among Covid-19, populism, and democratic systems. A qualitative research methodology will be used, specifically a phenomenological hermeneutic analysis of the phenomenon of populism in the Covid-19 pandemic crisis environment and its effect on democratic rights. Additionally, the different responses of populists towards the Covid-19 pandemic will be studied in order to see whether populist rhetoric triggers democratic decay of rights.

KEYWORDS: Pandemics, Populism, Democracy, Freezment of Democratic Procedure, Democratic Rights

I. OBLIGATORY ETIQUETTES THAT ARE IMPOSED BY EMERGENCE OF COVID 19 PANDEMIC

Different etiquettes and life style imposed by emergence of Covid 19. Some of these rules and regulation were related to critic situation. Also, by returning to normal condition these rules and regulations were suspended. Individual-level strategies such as mask-wearing, hand hygiene, cough etiquette, physical distancing, isolating when potentially symptomatic, and avoiding closed and/or crowded spaces and close-contact social settings were recommended. The recommendations by the WHO provide a useful benchmark to identify the extent to which populists adhere to or deviate from the standard recommended pandemic response. This is preferable to outcome measures like contagion, hospitalization, or fatality levels.

II. CONFRONTATION OF POPULISTS WITH COVID 19

The reaction of populists in times of the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic can be summarized as follows: Firstly, they denied the existence of such a deadly danger and downplayed the severity of the pandemic. Secondly, non-believing populist leaders like Donald Trump denied the existence of Covid-19 and behaved as if they were invincible, even to viruses. Some populists declared that this is a conspiracy, like the Iranian state which promoted conspiracy theories claiming that the virus was made in a laboratory to infect people and benefit the drug industry.

Fourth category, are the populists who attempt to polarize society, by contesting the fact that there is a virus and denying its existence. Moreover, conspiracy theories are often circulated among those who deny the virus's existence. The fifth category includes the suppressive and restrictive effect that involves restricting freedom of movement, freedom of expression, and even freedom of what to wear.

III. POPULISM THROUGH PHENOMENOLOGICAL LENSES IN TIME OF EMERGENCE OF COVID 19

Edmund Husserl, the founder of phenomenology, proposed that the phenomenological research which is descriptive process that focuses on epistemology of how the phenomenon appears to the consciousness. Hermeneutic phenomenology can be conceived as interpretation of what it means to exist in the world. In other words, Hermeneutic phenomenology includes contextual analysis, which is entangled between different nodes. Overall, hermeneutic phenomenology aims to provide a rich and nuanced understanding of human experience and to generate insights and knowledge that can be applied to real world situations.

Populism can be defined as a fluid and complex phenomenon. Populism can be considered as a polymorphic phenomenon, whose meanings are inseparable from the social, political, and cultural contexts in which they are produced. Populism through phenomenological microscope undermines the foundations of democracies. In populist situation there is a distrust to political institution and organization. Populism, touches the nodal points that there is in democracies. A lot of promises of democracy have remained unsatisfied. Many versions and stereotypes of populism have been emerged. Common features like illiberalism, politics of exclusion, post truth democracies (Nina Fernandes Dos Santos & Camila Moreira Cesarii, Braz, 2021).

Moreover, it can be declared that covid 19 pandemic created a fertile ground for populist discourse, as it faced with vulnerabilities, inequalities of global political and economic systems.

IV. DIFFERENT POPULIST REACTIONS TOWARDS COVID 19

Covid 19 virus inaugurated a frightening situation which generated an uncontrollable hurricane. The COVID-19 pandemic is one of the worst health crises in recent history and a major challenge for governments around the world, most of which failed to stop the spread of the virus (Olivas Osuna JJ & Rama J, 2021). Populism and crisis are linked. Pandemic is a public health crisis that broadly affects everyone (Nils Ringe and Lucio Rennó, 2023).

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a shock with unprecedented repercussions in the contemporary world. It quickly spread to Asia, Europe, and the Americas, leaving in its wake a specter of fear and death (Frederico Bertholini, 2023).

Pandemics can be considered a global crisis. Implementing measures such as social distancing and lockdowns, limiting individuals' freedoms seemed to be the only way to limit the contagion (Lisa Zanotti and Carlos Meléndez, 2023). In time of global crisis, extremist right-wing populists who deny covid 19 pandemics. Also, they put blame on others, and polarize society. Also, they increase distrust to institutions and science. Populists, by means of fault folks disrupt the procedures which may result in mismanagement of global crisis. Disruption of global crisis resolution in case of pandemics like Covid 19 pandemics, may cause life loss of many people.

In case of pandemics like Covid 19, some democratic laws and regulations have been suspended. Like, Free movement, which was recognized as a right for human beings. This kind of free movement is suspended. Moreover, new rules and regulation are applied in time of global crisis in order to control its outbreak.

Another example is that in some countries they legalized wearing masks in different countries and different societies. In time of prevalence of Covid 19, new rules and regulations are imposed to different societies and countries. For example, those who catches the disease should be quarantined. Moreover, Force and legal force is used to quarantine people. Rudrio Duterte in the Philippines who has literally asked the police to shoot down the quarantine violators (Moffitt, Benjamin. 2015).

In countries like Hungary, they completely changed the structure of the state. Changing the structure of the state can cause change in the structure of the society. Moreover, more power was given to the state because of extraordinary situation of Covid 19 pandemics. In other words, it can be declared that extraordinary situation causes emergence of rules and regulations that are over the norms and rights which were defined as rights and global rights of the people.

Moving beyond rules and regulations in extraordinary situation. Moreover, rules and regulations which imposed to the society in times of extraordinary situation of Covid 19 pandemics. Then, normalization of these rules which were dominant in extra ordinary situation can be considered as normalization of anti- democratic situation.

From another point of view, populists thrive on crisis. "Populists love the pandemic; the Covid bell tolls for Eastern Europe's populists". The performance of crisis is an internal core feature of populism"; populists not only utilize but also trigger and perpetuate crises for partisan advantage (Agnes Bator, 2023). Dimensions of Benjamin Moffitt's model of how populists "perform during crisis" (Moffitt 2015).

According to the investigations done by Giorgos Katsambekis & Yannis Stavarakakis (2020); populist responses to the pandemic have been as heterogeneous and as context-dependent as the ideological profile and programmatic orientation of populist actors themselves. Then it can be declared that populism as an 'anti-scientific', 'irresponsible' and 'authoritarian' response to the health crisis, this article shows that 'populism' does not articulate satisfactory and scientific responses towards COVID-19 (Antonis Galanopoulos & Giorgos Venizelos , 2022).

V. PANDEMICS, POPULISM AND SHIFT IN DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

Covid 19 pandemic has caused different changes and shifts in different arenas at universal levels. It affected communication type, communication tools, educational tools, educational methods, life styles, administrative tools, global order and administrative procedures. The effect of covid 19 wasn't restricted to the previously mentioned domains. Also, it impacted states and non-state actors. Administration, governments, states, and governance have also faced shift and transformations.

As a matter of fact, pandemic of covid 19 accelerated change in social structure. After outbreak of Covid 19 pandemic, individuals had tendency to stay alone and detached. Individuals kept less concentrated. And social structure transformed. Transformation after Covid 19, wasn't restricted to social structure. This transformation has happened at administrative level. Anti-democratic rules normalized after Covid 19 pandemics. According to Niels G. Mede and Mike S. Schäfer (2021) as stated in Science-related populism declining during the COVID-19 pandemic: Results of this study, show that science-related populist attitudes decreased after the pandemic started (Niels G. Mede and Mike S. Schäfer, 2021).

Populists in power are generally counterproductive to keeping the death tolls low in their respective countries, their decisions have worse consequences (Gabriel Cepaluni, Michael T. Dorsch, Semir Dzebo, 2021). Right wing populists like AFD capitalize many of nodal points of unfulfilled promises of democracies. Pandemic situation opened the door for extremists. We have extremist politicians which attempt to freeze in democratic progress. Pandemics has caused freezing of democratic procedures of societies.

At the extreme, the COVID-19 crisis may strengthen politically and socially regressive forces and increase acceptance of authoritarianism (Nils Ringe and Lucio Rennó, 2023).

Then it can be observed that pandemic of covid 19 had regressive affect and caused freezment of democratic procedures in time of

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covid 19 crisis.

VI. CONCLUSION

In brief, Covid 19 pandemic has had effects on various domain of society, including communication, education, lifestyle, administration and governance. It has also accelerated changes in social structure and caused a tendency towards detachment and social transformation. Moreover, the impact of pandemic hasn't been limited to social structure alone; it has also affected political systems and governance. Shift toward authoritarianism and the pandemic opened the door for extremist politicians who attempt to freeze democratic progress and led to regressive effect on democratic procedures and democratic rights.

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