



# A post-Coronavirus world



**Carina Perelli**

**T**he coronavirus spreads and quarantines are nationally imposed, shedding a light on problems in pre-existing systems and safety-nets. All around the world, we see how those who have essential jobs risk getting the virus without hazard pay, at the same time that telecommuting has become the saving grace for the lucky non-essential workers who can do it, and those who can't work remotely worry about finances and whether they will have job to come back to. In the majority of countries, hospitals are filled to capacity and don't have enough equipment or staff needed to treat all the patients they do have.<sup>1</sup> Unemployment websites crash and their phone lines jam as non-essential businesses shutdown.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, right-wing governments are speaking of UBI schemes,<sup>3</sup> not as an unrealistic pipedream that could only exist in a utopia,<sup>4</sup> but as a possible temporary solution to get people through quarantine. Regardless of how long the quarantine process will last in different countries, all of the global problems that the virus has indirectly shed light on will not fall back into the darkness and remain unseen. The virus has proven that all of these problems are not endemic to any one country in particular, but rather that these are global problems. It is in these chaotic times, that we should not be only asking ourselves, as a global society, about the imminent present, but also examine how this will shape the future.

The armed forces are currently submitting to the medical professionals' expertise. The real soldiers in the "war" against COVID-19 are medical professionals and sanitation employees.

1 <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/health/coronavirus-italy-doctors-intensive-care-deaths-a9384356.html>

2 <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/03/26/record-breaking-unemployment-claims-may-be-vast-undercount-150417>

3 <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2020/03/18/government-considersuniversal-basic-income-help-workers-coronavirus/>

4 <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/03/17/universal-basic-income-ideas-are-part-of-emergency-coronavirus-plan.html>



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At this point, the commanders of this “war” are doctors and nurses. How will this shape the armed forces and their role in society? On the other hand, what about elections? Some countries, states, and boroughs will have to postpone their elections.<sup>5</sup> What will this imply in terms of how they will be organized? If some choose to make their constituents vote remotely, how will it be done and how long would it take to set up a proper digital electoral system? How will all of this impact each area where an election has been suspended?

In light of this pandemic, emergency procedures have emerged from different governments, some of them even colliding with human rights and constitutional laws. Society is turning a blind eye to these procedures due to the supposedly temporary nature of them, but they should not be forgotten or left as it is when the storm passes. Such powers and policies, however temporary, could very easily become precedents. When the time comes that we are able to flatten the COVID-19 curve, we must be vigilant about whether these sorts of procedures truly are temporary or not. What regulations will be kept? Which ones will need to be abolished once the epidemic has finished as they are too dangerous to keep outside of a state of emergency? These are things that need to be monitored.

Xenophobia and discrimination are on the rise<sup>6</sup> as many people around the world are facing economic and financial problems due to the quarantine. Those who have tested as positive for coronavirus will probably face discrimination, treated like lepers, with some not even allowed back into their own apartments if the landlords suspect that they have tested positive.<sup>7</sup> The flames of class warfare are receiving more fuel, as individuals who lost employment fear eviction,<sup>8</sup> as theft and burglaries and riots might rise, and as domestic and child abuse rises during quarantine.<sup>9</sup> The chasm between the haves and the have-nots widens and the bridges continue to fall. The construction of the Other as the enemy is happening in front of us as we speak.

We know that the coronavirus won't just go away and disappear into the ether, even after the dangerous phase has passed. Epidemiologists have been warning of a virus outbreak for years and say that another outbreak will happen again.<sup>10</sup> It's a matter of when, not if. The time has come that we ask ourselves, as a global society: What have the different governments learned from this and how can they prepare on a global scale for the next one?

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5 <https://www.idea.int/news-media/multimedia-reports/global-overview-covid-19-impact-elections>

6 <https://time.com/5797836/coronavirus-racism-stereotypes-attacks/>

7 <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/coronavirus-some-landlords-fearing-infection-risk-turn-away-tenants-returning-from-china>

8 <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2020/03/20/nation/renters-out-work-due-coronavirus-fear-evictions-rising/>

9 <https://www.propublica.org/article/domestic-violence-and-child-abuse-will-rise-during-quarantines-so-will-neglect-at-risk-people-social-workers-say>

10 <https://www.businessinsider.com/epidemiologists-on-chances-of-future-coronavirus-outbreak-2020-3>



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How do we fix the health-systems in our respective countries and what parts need to be retooled? How can we fix the safety-net?

Just like how same-sex marriage was an indirect and unexpected development of the AIDS epidemic, the coronavirus will also have an indirect impact on policy and culture decades down the line. All of these problems have the potential to affect public security and the health sector on a global scale. We must prioritize putting these changes into perspective and try to see what effects and impacts, however indirect, COVID-19 will have on a global scale.

How do we prepare for the domino-effect of these issues? Do we need to change policies and norms? Is reform needed? If yes, what sort of reforms are going to be needed? What do we need to prepare for? We must come up with solutions for these problems and their future unintended consequences before we are caught flat-footed by them. We must face the future and not just let it happen to us.