**Forum: Health**

**Agenda: On measures to promote and implement sustainable and fair lockdown procedures in the event of a global pandemic**

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**Introduction**

**Background Information**

On December 31, 2019, WHO reported the first case of a previously unknown virus that had originated in Wuhan, China (Coronavirus). Chinese officials had stated that, despite the similar symptoms such as pneumonia, this was not a reoccurrence of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome or Middle East Respiratory Syndrome; on January 7, 2020, the Chinese officials had identified the virus as a novel coronavirus, which was later named by the WHO as COVID-19; and on January 21st, US officials announced its first confirmed case of the novel coronavirus, followed by its first human-to-human transmission case (“Coronavirus”). Despite the high infectious rates in China, the WHO did not declare that this outbreak is not a public health emergency of international concern (“Coronavirus”). Lock down measures have been immediately and intensively taken by China after its announcement of the epidemic. Although China had failed to deliver accurate messages regarding the virus’ transmittivity, due to its effective yet forceful lockdown measures, China was able to stabilize the number of confirmed cases. However, this was not the case around the world. The president of the United States and numerous other media, for example, called the virus as a “hoax,” and even called upon this as a propaganda set by the democrats. A lockdown is essential in order to minimize contact and limit the spread of the virus.

**Topic Overview**

“On measures to promote and implement sustainable and fair lockdown procedures in the event of a global pandemic” is a topic that contains great ambiguity. As the objective is to not only promote “sustainable” lockdown, but also a “fair” lockdown, in which the two words seems to oppose each other. Some countries may pursue a “fair” lockdown which secures the basic human rights during lockdown, and some countries may pursue a “sustainable” lockdown, which is a lockdown that is long-lasting without having any rules broken. Your first step as a delegate is to determine what your respective country prioritizes. For instance, China, a country with an authoritarian government, may prioritize a “sustainable” lockdown, which is enforced upon people. Examples include mandatory masks, security cameras that avoids people from leaving their building, and etc. The US, on the other hand, is a typical example that prioritizes a “fair” lockdown. Rather than being focused on the lockdown, the government prioritizes the economic situation of individuals, allowing people to work despite the high number of cases.

However, it is crucial for delegates to also understand that the two terms are non-exclusive. This is because in the long run, a sustainable lockdown is impossible without it being fair to a certain degree. Therefore, the main objective of this conference is to decide on to what extend countries should focus on these components of a lockdown. If it is too focused on being fair, the lockdown will fail to achieve its purpose, and if it becomes unfair, the human welfare will face negative consequences as people revolt. This chair report will be critically examining one of the factors that is deeply interrelated with the sustainability and the fairness of lockdowns.

Overall, delegates must strive to formulate an agreement on the degree of forcefulness in a lockdown in which “fairness” is sustained while the lockdown fulfills its purpose. If delegates lean towards focusing too much on “fairness,” then the lockdown wouldn’t be able to contain the virus from spreading, while if the delegates focus too much on a forceful lockdown, then the basic human rights are violated. In order to reach an agreement, delegates must first have a clear understanding of their countries’ political structure. A forceful lockdown may be more desirable for an authoritative government than it is to a democratic government.

**Role of Media**

Media framing is a crucial component that affects people’s perception of the pandemic. In order to understand how the media affects and shapes public perception, it is important to address how media utilizes “framing” in their live and written news coverages. According to Jim A. Kuypers, “framing is a process whereby communicators, consciously or unconsciously, act to construct a point of view that encourages the facts of a given situation to be interpreted by others in a particular manner” (Green, p. 50). In the case of a pandemic, the media can play a crucial role in the containment of the pandemic by affecting how people behave. Two of the most commonly viewed media in the United States will be closely analyzed in order to exemplify how media affects public perception.

**Case Study: FOX News**

Fox News is the most watched US cable news network with a key demographic of those aged over 55 and identifying as Republican (Schaal). The conservative talk show is famous for its lengthy opening monologues, political analysis and use of clips to support the claims of its host, Sean Hannity.

A notable feature of Fox News coverage of COVID-19 prior to March 16th was their use of selective framing and narrative to influence public opinion of COVID-19. Fox News’ coverage of COVID-19 in its early stages largely employed attribution of responsibility frame combined with the conflict frame, where the coverage minimized the threat of the virus to individuals and instead focused on criticizing another media’s coverage of COVID-19, rather than on the virus itself. For instance, this can be seen from Fox News *Hannity* from March 10th, 2020, where Hannity’s intro begins with the message "If you are over the mass hysteria, if you're over politicizing and weaponizing of the coronavirus, you are not alone” (Hannity, 00:03). As he continues to criticize the ‘mob’ media in a skeptical tone, the split-screen consecutively displays the headlines “CORONAVIRUS HYSTERIA”, “BLAME TRUMP GAME”, “MEDIA DELUSION” and ‘POLITICIZATION OF CORONAVIRUS” in the span of one minute as Hannity’s incredulous tone and criticism of ‘left-wing media’s coverage’ includes words like ‘despicable’, ‘conspiracy theory’, ‘hoax’ and even a joke about Russia and Ukraine manufacturing the coronavirus on purpose (Hannity). The use of such sensationalist language as ‘hoax’ and ‘conspiracy theory’ aims to mislead and provoke a negative reaction towards competing news outlets among the public, furthering the conflict narrative created by Fox News.

**Case study: CNN**

CNN was similarly influential in portraying information about the virus to the general American public (Jurkowitz). Unlike Fox, CNN’s demographic is mostly dispersed in the 24-54 bracket and encompasses predominantly Democrats (Hashmui).

). Like Fox News, CNN used the responsibility frame, but instead of claiming that the responsibility lay in the exaggeration of the virus, CNN attributed to the responsibility to the government for its inadequate response to the virus, which the network considered a serious threat. *Cuomo Prime Time,* which runs opposite to Fox News’ *Hannity,* on March 16th addressed the virus in grave terms, with Cuomo’s intro using an allusion to JFK’s inaugural speech “...ask what you can do for your country” (Cuomo, 00:01), which directly points to the responsibility angle. Cuomo further goes to blame President Trump for having “no such soaring rhetoric” (Cuomo, 00:25) and not being able to “fix this [pandemic]” (Cuomo, 00:33). The use of the adjective, “soaring,” by Cuomo serves to accuse President Trump, and to some extent, Fox News, of not employing a serious rhetoric to address the gravity of the virus and displays a lack of trust in the President, who, he believes is not able to effectively deal with the pandemic.

Furthermore, Cuomo emphasizes not just government responsibility, but also individual and collective responsibility through his address. He urges the viewers to think not just about themselves but about others as well as he states, “We can only win here, if you and I are able to surrender the me to the we” (Cuomo, 1:28). Through the diction “surrender” he elaborates on his extended metaphor of war and the phrase implies the importance of collective responsibility in the face of the virus as he warns people that such responsibility would not be taken if people fail to “test the reality out of personal convenience” (Cuomo, 1:37).

**So, what does this have to do with fair and sustainable lockdown?**

Delegates, after reading the two case studies, you may be wondering about how this relates to our topic. This is significant since not only the government’s measures affect the lockdown but also people’s perception towards the pandemic will guide their reaction towards the measures. The central focus of these case studies was to examine how the two major primetime news shows use linguistic and visual devices in their coverage to frame the pandemic to its viewers. Through these case studies, it is clear that certain frames can potentially **manipulate** public’s perception of the risks of virus. The media are instrumental in shaping public opinion and, in the case of a pandemic, they influence the way people respond to the health crisis. It has the power to contain the spread of the virus through effective communication aimed at encouraging preventative measures among the public while curbing the spread of misinformation. However, the media can also distort reality through misinformation, scientific misconceptions and deliberate downplaying of facts.

**Data and evidence analysis**

In light of the devastating human cost of Covid-19 in the US, where the number of deaths has exceeded 100 thousand and the number of confirmed cases is over 2 million as of June 7th (Countries/Areas), Fox News has become the primary suspect, not only facing a potential lawsuit (Entertainment), but becoming the subject of studies examining the extent to which it has contributed to the spread of COVID-19 in the country.

Meanwhile, according to UNACAST, a data company, which measure a state’s “social distancing score” based on the data collected from individual cell phone’s location, assesses each states level of social distancing through alphabet grades. A 70% decrease in travel corresponds to a grade A, while a 25% decrease in travel corresponds with a grade F (Ngo). States such as Louisiana, Tennessee, and Ohio are given a grade below D-, which is about 25% to 45% decrease in travel (Ngo), on their social distancing status, and these states corresponds to the regions where viewership for Hannity is high (Shapiro). Chart, line chart

Description automatically generated Furthermore, the above graph also shows that no substantial actions were taken by people to reduce their mobility until March 19th, which corresponds to the period Fox News reversed its position on the pandemic (Morrison).

Moreover, according to the study “Misinformation During a Pandemic” published by the University of Chicago, comparing the viewership difference, they found that for areas that had a major viewership on Hannity, Fox news’ major primetime, there were “approximately 30 percent more cases” of people being infected in comparison to areas that had a major viewership on Carlson (Burstztyn, 2). After Hannity had shifted from a dismissive tone to a concerning tone after March 16th, the paper states that “the diverging trajectories on COVID-19 cases began to revert” (Burstztyn, 2).

The main conclusion that can be drawn from the examination of the media coverage of COVID-19 is that media framing has determined public perception by dividing it into those that made light of the pandemic and those that perceived it as a national threat.

**Keep in mind**

Although as delegates, you may be prompted to discuss the solution or the vaccine to COVID-19, but keep in mind that our topic at hand is “sustainable and fair lockdown.” Although I, as a Chair, will be keeping the conference on topic, you, as delegate must prepare and research without diverging away from the topic. Resolutions must provide guidelines to prepare against any future outbreak as the COVID-19.

**Key Terms**

Pandemic: A disease that is prevalent throughout the country or the world.

Lockdown: An emergency protocol in which people are restricted to leave a certain area. In the case of a pandemic, a lockdown measure is taken to minimize human to human contact.

Media Framing: A process whereby communicators, consciously or unconsciously, act to construct a point of view that encourages the facts of a given situation to be interpreted by others in a particular manner

1. Conflict frame: instead of stating how a certain situation has been addressed, the news frames the event by prioritizing the conflict between parties.
2. Human interest/personalization frame: use of personal experiences and/or prioritization of personalities of parties rather than more important aspects.
3. Consequence frame: reporting events in terms of the different consequences they will have on an individual, groups, organizations, or countries.
4. Morality frame: where the media moralizes the event by questioning the morality of the political actors.

**Selected Timeline of Events**

*2019 December 31st – Wuhan Municipal Health Organization report a string of pneumonia-like cases in Wuhan, China.*

*2020 January 30th – WHO Director-General declares a public health emergency of international concern and advises that “all countries should be prepared for* ***containment****, including* ***active surveillance****,* ***early detection****,* ***isolation*** *and* ***case management****,* ***contact tracing*** *and* ***prevention*** *of onward spread of 2019-nCoV infection”*

*2020 February 11th – Coronavirus is officially named COVID-19.*

*2020 February 20th – The 2020 global stock market crash occurs.*

*2020 March 11th - WHO declares coronavirus outbreak as a pandemic.*

*2020 March 17th – The first human trials of coronavirus vaccine begin in Seattle, United States.*

*2020 March 24th – United Kingdom enters lockdown.*

*2020 April 2nd – Total COVID-19 cases surpasses 1 million.*

*2020 June 27th – Total COVID-19 cases surpasses 10 million.*

**UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events**

As the outbreak of COVID-19 has become a global threat, the role of the United Nations is crucial, and it has been acting as a medium of communication of ideas and policies.

UN’s response to COVID-19 is based on three pillars of operation:

* Delivery of a large-scale, coordinated and comprehensive health response.
* Adoption of policies that address the devastating socioeconomic, humanitarian and human rights aspects of the crisis.
* A recovery process that builds back better.

While UN involvement in this issue range from food security and nutrition, human rights, socioeconomic impact, jobs, educations, and universal health to tourism, debt, and jobs, the chair report will only be including a selected response as the list is exhaustive and provided in the “selected bibliography” section.

**Socio-economic impact**

Responses to socioeconomic impacts are based on fundamental approaches such as global measures to match the magnitude of crisis, regional mobilization, leaving no one behind for national solidarity. These responses include monetary-fiscal stimulus, which is a policy used by the government to manipulate the price level of the economy, and this is efficient in rescuing an economy out of a recession. It also includes anti-protectionist measures, as trade is a crucial component of a country’s economy.

As of 16th of March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) launched the COVID-19 Partners Platform as a tool for all countries. Through this platform, donors and contributors may collaborate in the global response COVID-19 response.

The WHO Director-General announced the co-chairs of the Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response (IPPR) to evaluate the world’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This announcement was a response to the request in a landmark resolution adopted by the World Health Assembly in May, which called on WHO to initiate an independent and comprehensive evaluation of the lessons learned from the international health response to COVID-19.

**Possible Solutions**

After reading the introduction thoroughly, you should have a clear understanding of media framing as one of the main possible solution to a sustainable and a fair lockdown. A simple example includes an increase in taxation to whichever media that overly exploits media framing. However, this must be carefully used, and the government’s objectivity must be ensured. If the government becomes biased in their decisions, they may be accused of exercising political manipulation through controlling and limiting the media, which violates the freedom rights.

Moreover, one of the major opposing force to a sustainable and fair lockdown is the economic situation of a country as some individuals are not able to work from home. Therefore, governments must be flexible in their usage of economic policies. Delegates must research on various monetary and fiscal policies, which can potentially save a country’s economy from an economic recession. Redistribution of income must occur naturally in order to ensure the sustainability of lockdown, and this is done through various macroeconomic policies.

As shown, one of the main keys to solve this issue is by restoring the economy. Trade, one of the most important components of a country’s economy, has been limited by protectionist measures, especially between the United States and China. The so-called “trade war,” causes negative impacts to the global trade, as the US and China are two of the largest economy in the world. Therefore, such tensions should be mitigated as a measure to liberalize trade in order to stimulate the economy.

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