

Whither Coronavirus? When Will It End and What Will Happen Along the Way

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The coronavirus story has generated a number of major subplots.

First is the origin of the virus. Did it occur naturally or was it created in a Chinese, American or Israeli weapons lab? If bioengineered, did it somehow escape or was it deliberately released? As the governments that might have been involved in the process have become very tight lipped and the mainstream media is reluctant to embrace conspiracy theories, we the public may never know the answer.

Second is the nature of the virus itself. There are inevitably skeptics who choose to compare the affliction to a common head cold or normal winter flu and are able to cherry pick so-called experts to support their case. Many Americans are unwilling to submit to a lockdown or isolation and are flaunting their willingness to go out in public and mix freely while others are claiming that the whole thing is a hoax designed to create a panic that will benefit certain constituencies.

There are [press reports](#) of teenagers going to supermarkets and faking a sneeze or a cough in the produce section to show their indifference to the infection avoidance guidelines now being promoted by the media and government. Some critics have also commented regarding the deaths of hundreds of Italians daily, suggesting that in Italy's health care system old people were deliberately being allowed to die.

The fact is that when critically ill people die in hospitals it is sometimes [attributable to triage](#). Triage arises when there are only limited resources to treat the sick, as in the case recently in the Italian Lombard city of Bergamo where hospitals were overwhelmed. Doctors must make the decision to treat those who are ill who are likely to survive as a first priority, meaning that others will only receive limited treatment. Italy has roughly the same number of hospital beds as does the United States per capita and it has more ventilators capable of being used to treat the advanced stages of the virus. It also is receiving assistance from both [China](#) and [Russia](#) on testing supplies and additional ventilators and masks. Italy has conducted far more coronavirus tests than has the U.S. The northern Italian medical services system was up to European standards, better than what prevails in the U.S., but it has been broken by the virus. Spain is heading the same way and there are similar concerns about France.

In spite of all the ideologically driven background clutter, genuinely knowledgeable medical authorities come down overwhelmingly promoting the view that the virus is highly contagious and capable of spreading rapidly, making it a pandemic, and it can be exceptionally lethal to certain demographics, including the elderly and those with weakened

immune systems. The way of combatting it also appears to be agreed upon by most genuine experts i.e. that testing must be widespread to determine who is infected and those individuals should be isolated from contact with others for at least two weeks to limit the spread of the contagion. For those whose conditions worsen, hospitalization and treatment for possible respiratory failure are warranted.

The third big issue is the apparently deliberate failure of the Trump Administration to respond proactively to limit the spread of the virus. Seeking to protect the stock market more than the American public, President Donald Trump initially downplayed the impact of the virus, even calling it a “hoax” during January and February when it first appeared on U.S. soil. It turned out that several institutes affiliated to the Center for Disease Control to deal with epidemics had been dismantled by the Administration and, in spite of the warning provided by what was occurring in Wuhan, the U.S. made no effort to increase its supply of testing kits, masks or ventilators. Meanwhile, congressmen were receiving dire warnings of what was coming from the intelligence community in private briefings, leading to a number of senators [selling their stock](#) in anticipation of a market collapse. That is something called insider trading and it is illegal. It is also a measure of the corruption of America’s ruling class.

The fourth major subplot relates to what will come out of the pandemic once it is over, if it is indeed defeated at all. Critics rightly observe that the government response both at federal and state levels might well be a major overreaction to a health crisis that could possibly be dealt with using a lighter hand. Donald Trump has now called himself a “wartime president,” a particularly odd conceit in that America’s chief executive officer dodged the Vietnam war draft. Trump is now providing daily rambling briefings emphasizing that his administration deserves a “10 out of 10” for its yeoman’s work against coronavirus. The real story is that the president personally inhibited initial efforts to respond to the disease and he is now attempting to regain lost ground by supporting draconian measures to include cash payments to all American residents, even to people who do not need the money. The money itself will have to be borrowed or printed, putting the United States even deeper in debt.

Based on his wartime status, the president and his cabinet are poised to exploit Civil War and Korean War legislation to assume powers over the economy and will likely arrange bailouts of some industries that will then acquire the government as a partner.

The now declared “national emergency” will undoubtedly come to include some forms of martial law to enforce the isolation of targeted populations and it is also [being reported](#) that the Justice Department has asked Congress to allow judges to detain people indefinitely without trial during the “emergency.” As we have learned from the Patriot Act, Military Commissions Act and the Authorization to Use Military Force, allegedly temporary powers acquired by the executive branch have frequently become permanent. Unrestrained power in the hands of a Trump or Biden should frighten anyone who is still interested in voting in November.

There is some speculation that Trump might well follow [the example being set](#) by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel. Israel has banned foreign visitors, is under 24 hours curfew and is effectively in lockdown. It is using cell phone intercepts provided by the intelligence services to track the comings and goings of Israeli residents. The monitoring is being justified as a mechanism to create a record of who is meeting whom and where to support isolation and lockdown efforts. A similar program is [already active](#) in the suburbs

around Washington. The National Security Agency (NSA) already has the technical ability in place that would permit monitoring of the movements of much of the U.S. population. It would be an intelligence community dream and would fit quite nicely with Congress's recent efforts to re-authorization certain Patriot Act aspects of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA).

Fifth and finally, there is the politicization aspect of coronavirus. The virus is being "blamed" on China, a global competitor of the United States. As is often the case, Trump has gotten the ball rolling through his usual verbal toxicity, calling the virus the Chinese Virus or Wuhan Virus. Other Republicans have picked up on the theme, leading to the inevitably Democratic progressive wing complaints that such language was "racist." The fact it, there is no evidence whatsoever that China in any deliberate way either created or unleashed the virus.

And, of course, there is Russia. It would almost seem an old joke that is no longer amusing to blame something new and menacing on Moscow and congress has so far largely refrained from doing so. But that does not mean that the Deep State establishment is holding the Kremlin and President Vladimir Putin blameless. The U.S. intelligence community, through its preferred propaganda sheet the New York Times, is [now reporting that](#) Russia is taking advantage of the coronavirus crisis to spread disinformation through Europe and also in the U.S. In particular, Putin has escalated a campaign-by-innuendo to reduce confidence in the outcome of the upcoming 2020 presidential election. In any event, the Russians are too late as the Democratic and Republican parties' behavior has already convinced many Americans that voting in November will be a waste of time.

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