

The Transformation of the Global Civil Society during the Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract: The Covid-19 pandemic has affected not only health systems worldwide, but also global civil society, it has posed a global threat to humanity with significant implications and indicated weak points of postmodern civil society such as the lack of global solidarity and global cooperation, the lack of global health equity, the increase in poverty, social insecurity and deep inequality, the lack of support for the liberal international order, the lack of coordination mechanism for responding to the pandemic.

Three main crises of postmodern society are identified and analysed: relations of cooperation between nations and states, protests in different countries, the inadequacy of scientific and technological achievements of civilization.

The analysis of these crises led to the conclusion that, along with the negative impact of the Covid-19 pandemic for humanity, it should be seen as a crucial moment for human civilization that identified gaps and directions for the development of global civil society.

The transformation of society today must take place in terms of rethinking the consequences and results of globalization, and taking into account the processes of socio-political and socio-cultural transformation. Today, humanity needs to transform global society by reconsidering the role of WHO as a leading intergovernmental organization in the global health system, strengthening the role of global governance, creating a new paradigm of global health, developing global cooperation, solidarity and coordination towards global health equity.

Keywords: *Covid-19 pandemic, postmodern society, transformation, global civil society, global solidarity, global coordination.*

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Introduction

The development of States in the postmodern era is characterized by the transition to a qualitatively new period of social recovery. In this postmodern phase, civil society has transformed into a global civil society, and now influences, through its institutions, the policies and governance of the countries of the world, blurring national and territorial borders, changing the system of world order. The emergence and existence of global civil society are characterized by the transformation of the structure of the modern world and the national systems of governance, economic and political development strategies that generate the continuous interdependence of the world, as the basis of its functioning. The unity of human civilization improves the interweaving of the countries, consolidates them to solve the global problems of the mankind. The unity of human civilization improves the interlinkages between countries, consolidates them to solve the global problems of the mankind. Currently the global civil society creates new values and the rules of global responsibility, strengthens the role of **public international organizations**, which reproduce the practices of governments and transnational corporations. Global civil society shapes policy that takes into account the nature of international relations, reduces respect for the power and emphasizes human participation and self-expression.

Postmodernism affects all areas of the vital activities of States of the world, forms a qualitatively new approach to the phenomena of society, influences globalization, and emphasizes that modern global civil society should be considered in a profound interpretation of individual reality (Nerubasska & Maksymchuk, 2020; Nerubasska, Palshkov, & Maksymchuk, 2020). It is postmodernism that has led to a reappraisal of values and beliefs, norms and stereotypes, to transformation of ideals, increased social activism, globalization of consciousness, awareness of the limitations of technological progress, and the risks and dangers associated with it.

Along with this, the postmodern era has presented new challenges to the world, created new assignments that need to be solved. The most fundamental problem is the Covid-19 pandemic.

Once it became clear that humanity was facing a serious threat, many issues related to this problem arose in the global community.

Given the changes and challenges that exist in the world, their unpredictability and the need to protect the States, there is an acute problem of the consideration of the peculiarities of the transformation of the society during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The pandemic Covid-19 is the most complex topic nowadays, and the most discussed in scientific circles about the impact on healthcare (Ciotti, Ciccozzi, Terrinoni, Jiang, Wang, & Bernardini, 2020; Qiu, Shen, Zhao, Wang, Xie, & Xu, 2020; Dragan, Grajewski, & Shevlin, 2021; Zhou, Huang, Chen, Yuan, Shen, Dong, Cheng, & Guo, 2020; Rismiller, Cartron, & Trinidad, 2020); economy (Noy, Doan, & Taupo, 2020; Vidya & Prabheesh, 2020; Hanieh, 2020; Shaikh, 2020), policy (Capano, Howlett, Jarvis, Ramesh, & Goyal, 2020; Mintrom & O'Connor, 2020; Brooks & Geyer, 2020) and law (Maxeiner, 2020; Nueangnong, 2020; Teremetskyi, Duliba, Kroitor, Korchak, & Makarenko, 2020; Wang, 2020). Studies are also focusing on the impact of this pandemic on the society of some countries (Song, 2020; Hua & Shaw, 2020; Viero, 2020).

However, to date, there is not much research on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on global civil society, so our research is relevant. We are trying to demonstrate the impact of this pandemic on global civil society, including various crises of post-modernist global civil society.

Knock-on effects of COVID-19 pandemic on global civil society

Ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being at all ages as one of the aims of the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations for 2016-2030 was lost with the pandemic of Covid-19 (United Nations, 2015). The Covid-19 pandemic, which in three and a half months virtually spread to all continents, has demonstrated not only a global health crisis, which is unlike any other but also an alarm signal that the path chosen by humanity needs drastic changes.

Firstly, SARS-Cov-2 disease threatened everyone equally, regardless of culture, sexual identity, level of privilege, status in the society or place of residence. According to the WHO, as of March 4, 2021, 14,853,685 confirmed cases of Covid-19 were registered, including 2,554,694 deaths (WHO, 2021). The impact of Covid-19 varies among countries and territories. The highest number of cases was registered in the USA (29,526,086), India (11,173,761), Brazil (10,796,506), Russia (4,290,135), United Kingdom (4,201,358), France (3,835,595), Spain (3,142,358), Italy (2,999,119), Turkey (2,746,158). The highest number of deaths was recorded in the USA (533,636), Brazil (261,188), Mexico (188,886), India (157,784), United Kingdom (124,025), Italy (98,974), France (87,835), Russia (87,823), Germany (72,007), Spain (70,501) (Worldometer, 2021). These statistics reveal that the quantity of real deaths and Case Fatality Rates corresponding to those deaths vary across the same country to a large extent. Such factors as the social and economic development of states, access to health care and

to necessary health services, efficiency and effectiveness in health care systems, the prevalence of chronic diseases, as well as the associating diseases could have influenced that situation. (Kucharski, et al, 2020)

The pandemic had created a real situation in which governments are free to experiment since they tackled the same problem, but proposed diverse solutions. Consequently, we have possibility to compare the applied types of government policy instruments and the factors influencing their choice of certain solutions. (Capano, et al, 2020). Borders have been closed, restrictive and austerity measures have been imposed to counter the spread of the disease. A number of countries took measures to prevent government officials performing minor functions from going to work, while private entrepreneurs encouraged their workers to stay home if possible and work on line (Seyfi, Hall, & Shabani, 2020). Moreover, several countries were slow in responding to the start of the pandemic (China, Italy), and the USA and Sweden did not support the containment strategy. As the result, several countries had achieved very good results in preventing a large outbreak of the Covid-19, while the others have been hit hard.

Secondly, multifold number of Covid-19 has been affecting the whole world in various spheres of the life throughout almost all the areas with the greatest impact on health, economy and education (Osman, 2020).

The Covid-19 pandemic has become the largest global threat to the world economy since the financial crisis in 2008-2009 (OECD, 2020). According to the World Trade Organization and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development world merchandise trade fell by 9.2 percent in 2020 because of the Covid-19 pandemic (WTO, 2020).

The Covid-19 pandemic has destabilized the world economy and highlighted the huge difference in countries' ability to cope with and overcome this phenomenon.

The Covid-19 pandemic has deformed world trade since the delay of goods in many countries and with the cessation of world production in several countries, posed major challenges to the transportation, the retail trade in oil and petroleum products, and triggered the world order in the stock market (Vidya & Prabheesh, 2020; Hanieh, 2020; Shaikh, 2020).

The Covid-19 pandemic has significantly changed all socio-economic, political and cultural institutions and all aspects of daily life at the local, national and international levels. It has also brought all communication online, increased teleworking, social communication, providing basic communications services through computer systems and virtual environments.

The evolution of digital and Internet technologies has drastically changed the way people communicate and do business in the period of lockdown (Naidoo, 2020). As a result, the Covid-19 pandemic has developed cybercrime and created an "unprecedented" wave of coronavirus fraud.

According to UNESCO, in an attempt to contain the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic, most governments around the world have temporarily closed schools. As of 28 March 2020, approximately 84% of students in the world (1.463 billion students) have suffered from school closures, more than 162 countries have closed all schools. (UNESCO, 2020a). Furthermore, adoption of such measures as social distancing by governments for smoothing the infection curve and reducing overall mortality has led to the closure of universities and colleges around the world. (Rashid & Yadav, 2020).

Thirdly, during the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic human rights were violated in many countries around the world, access to information and press freedom was restricted. Some governments have used the pandemic as a pretext to grab power, use excessive force, and harass vulnerable populations (Forman & Kohler, 2020).

The situation of journalists in many parts of the world has deteriorated significantly as a results of the Covid-19 pandemic. Several governments have taken measures to harass journalists for reporting on any information of the situation in the country (statistics of sickness, data on the provision of personal protective equipment, data on the supply of such equipment), including physical attacks, arrests and detentions. For example, the most imprisoned journalists are in China, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Vietnam, Syria, some journalists are still considered missing and abducted in such countries as Syria, Iraq and Yemen. (UNESCO, 2020b).

The pandemic being used to justify police violence, authoritarian power grabs and corruption (Forman & Kohler, 2020), has led to the flourishing of corruption in health care around the world, fraud, abuse in public procurement, etc. Examples of healthcare funds being embezzled, public contracts falsified, power misused as well as patronage and preference in administration or organization, medicine or medical care deceit are not rare. (Teremetskyi, et al, 2020).

Thus, the continuous Covid-19 pandemic has doubtfully created a global threat causing not only a crisis in civil society in each country but also a crisis in the development and functioning of global civil society as a whole (Demertzis & Eyerman, 2020).

Is the Covid-19 pandemic a deconstruction of postmodern society?

The Covid-19 pandemic has determined that no country in the world is fully prepared for a pandemic, which indicates the overall weakness of a global health programme focused on health security both globally and locally (Shamasunder, Holmes, Goronga, Carrasco, Katz, Frankfurter, & Keshavjee, 2020).

The Covid-19 pandemic has caused chaos with serious consequences and pointed to various crises of post-modernist global civil society, creating the need of its rethinking and transformation.

The first crisis is the cooperative relations between nations. If globalization, which has become the basis of world development, not only opened but also blurred interstate borders, and belonging to nations or races, the pandemic, on the other hand, revived the nation-state, and the national identification became the main means of determining righteousness from danger.

In the majority of countries around the world, the first reaction to a pandemic was to retreat from national borders and to turn inward for protection.

Countries have imposed unprecedented measures, from border closures and travel bans to the introduction of social distancing, restrictions on internal mobility, including total lockdown, quarantines for arriving passengers, termination of sporting events, closure of cultural events, gyms, swimming pools, pubs and bars. In several countries, everyone except essential workers was required to stay at home. For example, the government of Israel has imposed severe restrictions for its population by adopting a ban on leaving their homes for more than 100 metres unless necessary (State of Israel Ministry of Health, 2020¹). The government of Sweden, on the other hand, placed a strong emphasis on individual responsibility as a specific feature of the Swedish strategy, did not regulate the spread of the disease (in particular, there was a waiver of mass testing, face masks), but only issued recommendations and advice on social behaviour. (Lindström, 2020).

The spread of misinformation and infodemic during Covid-19 has devalued those postmodern values and lifestyles of global civil society, emphasizing nationality or race, and increased interpersonal conflicts. The emergence of misinformation and fake news has led to anti-Asian racism, xenophobia, and the Covid-19 crisis has been interpreted through a racist or xenophobic lens. People of Asian origin were subjected to racial slurs,

insults, verbal and physical abuse (Xiang, Li, Zhang, Jin, Rao, & Zeng, 2020; Ho, 2020; Perry, Whitehead, & Grubbs, 2020).

Member States of WHO have focused their activities on their interests rather than on global interests. Countries with the worse level of development threatened to gain a service role vis-à-vis leading state that can use the activities of international organizations and international political relations to their advantage by using their influence. Pandemic has increased the inequality among countries. For example, while wealthy countries obtained chemical reagents needed to test for Covid-19, blocking the productions of these in their favour while other countries (notably Brazil, South Africa) had to wait up to 2 months to acquire the same reagents (Nhamo, Chikodzi, Kunene, & Mashula, 2020).

The second crisis is the protests in different countries. The Covid-19 has intensified problems and inequalities that have long existed, pressures connected with restriction of women's rights, the blocking of migration movements and increased control subordinated to biopolitics (Andrae, Kirchhof, & Solomon, 2020). As a result, protests around the world have raised the awareness of Governments for existing problems. People protested against worsening of economic conditions, hazard or low pay, while demanding assistance from the government, better health protection or the end of the lockdown. Thus, the pandemic has become a development for existing conflicts and contradictions in the society.

The third crisis – is the inadequacy of scientific and technical achievements of civilization. The pandemic of Covid-19 has displayed the limitations of medicine and institutional health services worldwide. The emphasis on evidence-based medicine did not prevent individual decision-makers from deciding that the existence of herd immunity is based on the presence of similar influenza characteristics as airborne infectious disease, which was empirically questionable from the outset. (Lindström, 2020).

Nonetheless, the crisis of medicine has become apparent even in the most developed countries, and the global network has failed to perform the expected and desired functions. Given the fact that as early as 1948 the WHO was created to coordinate health affairs within the United Nations system, the WHO still does not have the necessary authority to carry out its mission - to ensure adequate global health in the world. (WHO, 1948; Benvenisti, 2020).

So is the Covid-19 pandemic a crisis of postmodern society?

In looking for the answer to this concern, it is worth noting that it was thanks to Covid-19 that such problems as the lack of global solidarity and global cooperation, the lack of global justice in health, the increase in

poverty and social insecurity, deep inequality, the lack of support for the liberal international order, the lack of coordination mechanism for responding to the pandemic as a global crisis have been solved.

The Covid-19 pandemic has vividly demonstrated that the main challenge of improving global health is the lack of political cooperation. Economic, political and social conflicts within and between countries have made all WHO's efforts to combat the pandemic impossible. (Benvenisti, 2020).

The above-mentioned crises, which raised during the Covid-19 pandemic and the pandemic itself, require the transformation of global civil society by strengthening the role of global governance and the creation of a new paradigm of global health, advancement of international collaboration, solidarity and alignment to ensure the highest attainable standard of health for everyone. (Stonington, Holmes, Hansen, Greene, Wailoo, Malina, Morrissey, Farmer, & Marmot, 2020; Shamasunder, et al, 2020).

Consequently, due to the Covid-19 pandemic there is a possibility of it to become a longer-term need to transform global health (Casale, 2020).

Reaching these goals is not about developing more effective contingency plans for health emergencies or global governance crises, but about rethinking the role of key actors involved in implementing the concept of "global health" and rethinking the values it should embrace. We are drawn to the issue of 'global health', its values, expectations of its future and how we imagine that to happen. (Casale, 2020).

The transformation of society today relates above all to a rethinking of the effects and results of globalization, and thus to the process of socio-political and socio-cultural transformation. The Covid-19 pandemic starkly underlined that knowledge of the underlying molecular mechanisms of many diseases remains inadequate (Rani, Hamad, Zaher, Sieburth, Madani, & Al-Tel, 2020); it also illuminated the phenomena that have existed and have been known to us for a long time, it established several important issues that will need to be addressed.

We believe that the role of WHO as a leading intergovernmental organization in the global health system should be reconsidered in this regard. In practice, the WHO had failed to live up to its commitments under the International Health Regulations (WHO, 2005), resolution A73 / CONF./1 Rev.1 18 May 2020, which initiated a stepwise process of impartial, independent, and comprehensive evaluation into the response of individual states and WHO to the Covid-19 pandemic and the application of measures to stopping the spread of coronavirus (WHO, 2020). Today WHO lacks not only funding and coercive power but also a system for identifying

emergencies, access to areas where its outbreak occurred in its early development, a mechanism to verify the country's compliance with international emergency rules, a mechanism to respond to the violation of the rules. In addition to WHO, other UN agencies, country leaders, regional authorities of many countries, various organizations (the private organizations and the organizations of the civil society), along with other people, should be involved to ensure global health. As we are concerned of the people's well-being, the roles of individuals, civil communities and civil society should be taken into consideration. (Casale, 2020).

Addressing the causes of the impact of the pandemic cannot be resolved only internally by each State. That can be done only in global solidarity, where the active commitment of each country is necessary. Global cooperation between bio-laboratories and big pharmaceutical companies for the production of Covid-19 vaccine can be considered as prime example of such global solidarity during the pandemic. Nowadays in the world, 73 vaccines have been developed and are being tested, 21 of which are in the final phase of testing programmes. (Zimmer, Corum, & Wee, 2021).

The creation of a new global health order is extremely ambitious, where global justice is and must be central to global health. The world needs a radical rethinking of priorities of global health. This requires consideration of the relationship between health development, social, economic changes, and the reduction of health inequalities between countries, not only combat with diseases but also health promotion.

Conclusions

The continued Covid-19 pandemic has posed a global threat to humanity with serious consequences and pointed to various crises of post-modernist global civil society. Today, global civil society needs to be transformed by strengthening the role of global governance, creating a new paradigm for global health, developing global cooperation, solidarity and coordination toward global health equity

Taking to account the adverse effects, the Covid-19 pandemic should be considered as a crucial moment for human civilization, which indicated gaps and directions for the development of global civil society. Such areas of development of global civil society include changes in perceptions of global governance, the global health care system, public space, large public meetings, public transport, education, trade, tourism, restaurant business, the needs of vulnerable groups.

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