

COVID-19; BEYOND THE BIOMEDICAL RISK



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COVID-19; Beyond the Biomedical Risk

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It has now been over seven months since the world has been permanently disrupted by the 2019 novel coronavirus, better known as COVID-19.

Unlike in the weeks following the onset of the pandemic, we can now draw a relatively accurate picture of the situation and its consequences on both individuals and societies that are grappling with this health dilemma. Nonetheless, a new uncertainty emerges as we are entering the winter season: further waves of viral infections. Although the earlier concept of a second wave was not shared evenly throughout the scientific community, some even minimizing its potential impact, it is being reported that global daily cases keep rising.

As the old adage goes, “Misfortunes never come alone,” we can expect other risks to appear. Economics presents a prominent factor at the core of this issue. More precisely the consequences of various national policies on their respective economies must be taken into account in order to tackle the pandemic. Studies on the global macroeconomics of COVID-19, using various predictive modelling scenarios of the virus outbreak, show that even under the most optimistic scenario, economies worldwide will face hardships. This should not be underestimated.

Economic hardships can be correlated to a slew of sociopolitical problems, especially civil unrest. Though economical difficulties are not the sole source of all societal ills, they can be linked to the present state of affairs as a common denominator at varying levels. A historical study of past pandemics shows that, more often than not, they are followed by civil instability.

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Socioeconomic impacts and imposed restrictions.

This is usually triggered by the degradation of socioeconomic relations combined with government-imposed restrictions. Even more direct is the effect of a faltering economy on a country's infrastructure. Abrupt underfunding of water, sanitation and waste sectors will aggravate already present vulnerabilities in developing economies and could compound sanitary issues.

On the healthcare front, it is even more problematic. Certain healthcare systems have seen a reduction in resources in comparison to infrastructure sectors, and most have experienced a disruption of services and a backlog of medical procedures. Moving forward, this situation should

be expected to amplify health risks for travelers and local populations alike.

Risks associated with international mobility are affected by COVID-19, particularly those originating with persons, groups and organizations. Most notably, local authorities in certain parts of the globe have used sanitary imperatives as a pretext to usher in arbitrary and repressive measures threatening basic liberties. Others have been inept at finding solutions to stem the negative economic and social outcomes of the outbreak. Even criminals and armed non-state players want to be in on the action and the pandemic has offered them new opportunities. Although "normal" violent and petty crime saw a general decrease in major U.S. cities during the lockdown, cybercrime significantly increased. Moreover, terrorists and violent insurgents will likely focus on localized assaults against burdened, over-stretched and sometimes discredited local authorities still struggling in the aftermath of the first wave of COVID-19.

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In Conclusion

In today's globally connected world, this unprecedented viral phenomenon has imposed itself as a game changer. It is clear that overseas activities and travelers will be further impacted by the fallout of the pandemic in months, if not years, to come. In a context of international mobility, this virus presents more than a bio-medical menace, it is a catalyst that exacerbates certain existing threats but also spawns new ones.