

Political Management of the Global COVID-19 Pandemic

How did countries face the new coming challenges?

Introduction

- Key concepts to unravel: CERC, Rally round the flag, Infodemics & Personalization.
 - COVID-19 Pandemic evolution
 - Comparing some countries
 - Overall conclusions, lessons and some thoughts
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Some key concepts to begin with...

CERC - Crisis & Emergency Risk Communication

- Strategy created by the CDC - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
 - Summarizing, this states that 'The right message at the right time from the right person can save lives'.
 - This strategy comes from lessons learned during past public health emergencies and research in the fields of public health, psychology, and emergency risk communication.
 - It revolves around six principles: 1) Be First; 2) Be Right; 3) Be Credible; 4) Express Empathy; 5) Promote Action; and 6) Show Respect.
 - It evolves along four different phases: Preparation, Initial, Maintenance and Resolution.
 - The main problem with the COVID-19 crisis is... No resolution so far.
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Some key concepts to begin with...

Rally round the flag

- Is a concept used to explain increased short-run popular support of a country's government or political leaders during periods of international crisis or war. Because the effect can reduce criticism of governmental policies, it can be seen as a factor of diversionary foreign policy.
 - This is why many leaders tend to use 'warlike discourses'. They want to prove we-ness and the feeling of belonging.
 - A clear example: <https://morningconsult.com/form/global-leader-approval/>
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Some key concepts to begin with...

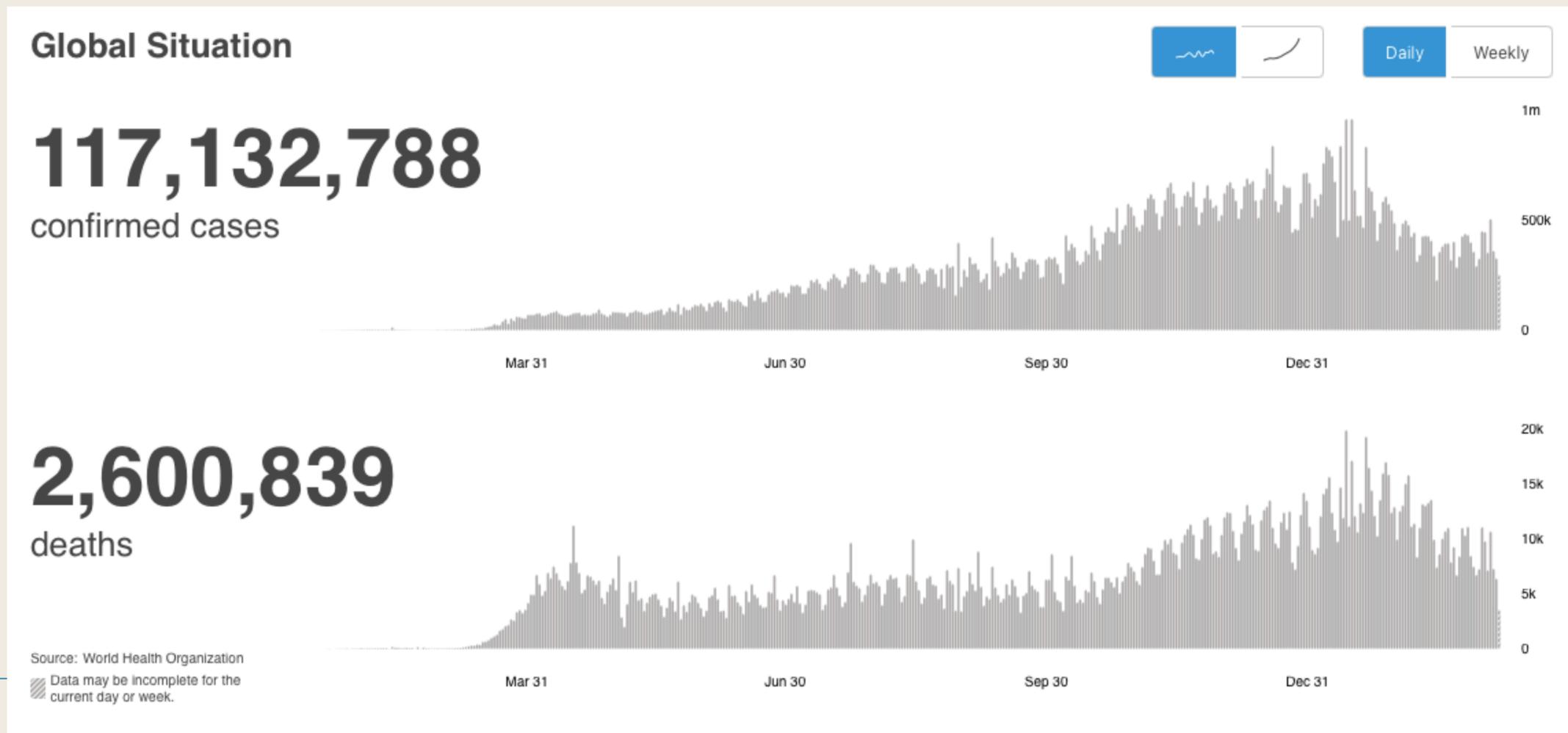
Infodemics & Personalization

- Infodemics:
 - Coined by Tedros Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the WHO, in one of his early speeches addressing the COVID-19 crisis: 'We're not just fighting an epidemic; we're fighting an infodemic'.
 - It refers to a global epidemic of misinformation and disinformation also needed to be tackled as claims spread rapidly through social and mainstream media platforms.
 - Personalization:
 - Who is in charge during a crisis can have an enormous impact on how many lives are saved or lost. Leaders must make decisions and communicate them effectively to many different groups.
 - Two models of leadership: The Politician Prominence Model and The Expert Appointee Prominence Model.
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The COVID-19 Pandemic evolution

The world is facing an unprecedented test. And this is the moment of truth. Hundreds of thousands of people are falling seriously ill from COVID-19, and the disease is spreading exponentially in many places. Societies are in turmoil and economies are in a nose-dive... We must respond decisively, innovatively and together to suppress the spread of the virus and address the socio-economic devastation that COVID-19 is causing in all regions. The magnitude of the response must match the scale of the crisis – large-scale, coordinated and comprehensive...

The message of the report we are issuing today is clear: shared responsibility and global solidarity in response to the impacts of COVID-19. It is a call to action. We must see countries not only united to beat the virus but also to tackle its profound consequences.



How did countries managed their crisis?

Three Asian examples: China, Japan and South Korea

China

-  From first case, to Vaccine Front through denial, obscurantism and victimization.
-  Intergovernmental issues between provinces and central government.
-  Battling some *infodemics* from the state while spreading some others from it.

Japan

-  Public Health vs. Economy. First, economy; later the people.
-  Some readiness as MERS and SARS were close in time.
-  Again, Intergovernmental problems and mismanagement.

South Korea

-  No Lockdown, efforts on tracking and testing.
 -  Extreme success of SK's Government: elections in April 2020 gave the government 180/300 seats.
 -  Real time notifications to people that might be in contact with infected population.
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How did countries managed their crisis?

The Big Three: USA, Russia and India

USA

-  Mainly focused on their own problems: Impeachment, BLM, Social protesters.
-  The role of the *infodemics* and when a leader shows no leadership.
-  Intergovernmental problems: States vs. The Union.

Russia

-  Communications managed and controlled by the State
-  The State was not trustworthy for both COVID deniers and COVID-paranoids.
-  Intergovernmental problems + Population suspicious about the given information

India

-  Economy over Public Health: just 42 LD days and when cases were at high, reopening began.
 -  Voluntary lockdown + Curfew
 -  Modi's popularity soared as was seen as unable to manage the crisis
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How did countries managed their crisis?

The case of Spain

-  Special Political situation: first ever coalition government in 40 years of democracy.
 -  95 days of lockdown since March 14th.
 -  Without support from the main opposition parties: 15 days of grace.
 -  Problems with communication: Who has the lead voice?
 -  Intergovernmental problems: Where decisions were made?
 -  *Infodemics* at their best: regular news outlets + Political Parties + Social Media.
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How did countries managed their crisis?

The European Union

- 🇪🇺 What could the EU do for you? Apparently nothing.
 - 🇪🇺 No common tracking, no common measures, no coordination.
 - 🇪🇺 Despite this: The only leadership that accepted failures in the management,
 - 🇪🇺 Unable to manage solidarity among Member States (MS).
 - 🇪🇺 After all the chaos, four measures:
 - 🇪🇺 Sharing information among MS
 - 🇪🇺 EU Civil Protection Mechanism to assist MS
 - 🇪🇺 Combine purchase of medical equipment + Vaccine Investments
 - 🇪🇺 Economic stimulus: 1.8 Billion €
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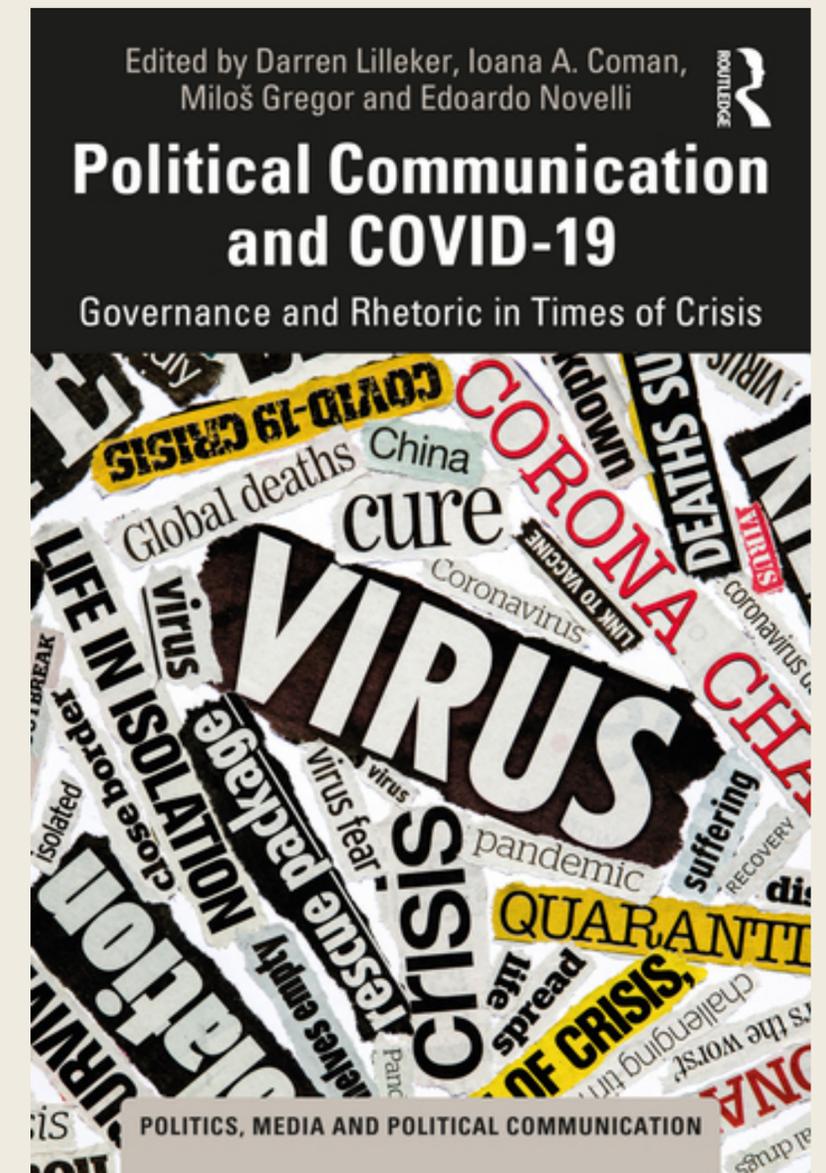
How did countries managed their crisis?

Similarities and differences

SIMILARITIES	DIFFERENCES
Economic stimulus	Lockdown and timing
Health vs. Economy	Tracking and Info-sharing
Intergovernmental issues	Democracies vs. Non Democracies
	Left-wing gvmts. vs. Right-wing gvmts.
	Readiness: Asian vs. Non-Asian

Conclusions and lessons after a year

- Did the countries learn anything from these three to four waves?
- There was -and still is- a twofold lack of coordination: between countries and international organizations; and in those political decentralized countries among their subnational units.
- The medical crisis merged with a misinformation crisis.
- Saving lives vs. Saving the economy.



Thank you very much for your time!

Now, the floor is yours

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