



INTERNATIONAL WEBINARS AND LIVE EVENTS

CORONAVIRUS: THE GEOPOLITICS AND GOVERNANCE OF A GLOBAL PANDEMIC

The Global Health Centre - 07 April 2020

Vinh-Kim Nguyen, *Global Health Centre; Professor of Anthropology and Sociology, Graduate Institute:*

Since the beginning of the crisis, we witnessed **remarkable global scientific cooperation** but on the other hand, we have seen what we call “**therapeutic nationalism**” with closing of borders for example.

Ilona Kickbusch, *Chair of the International Advisory Board, Global Health Centre:*

COVID19 shows us that **politics and geopolitics play a major role in global health**. Today, **China** is filling a void left by the **USA** in terms of political leadership.

But if we look at what defines leadership, China will have a problem: Global leadership depends on **trust** and we can't trust **China's data released about the virus**; it is also about setting a **leadership agenda** and we still did not see China doing it; last point is **pragmatic flexibility**. It will be very difficult for China to adapt on this point. For these reasons **China will probably not be the next global health world leader**.

Vinh-Kim Nguyen: Should the EU and Western democracies step up and **fill this leadership void**?

Ilona Kickbusch: Yes, but not in the way the Global North sees the world. It should be a **global consensus, focusing on human rights** and the most vulnerable. We need to “**decolonize global health**”

Vinh-Kim Nguyen: Where does the **World Health Organization (WHO)** have to stand?

Ilona Kickbusch: WHO has to find a new voice, they must be a **strong health diplomacy organization**, that can impose global health regulation.

Vinh-Kim Nguyen: Many people feel that this **crisis is a crisis of neoliberalism**. If that is the problem, is it really about reorganizing the WHO? What do you think about this idea?

Ilona Kickbusch: **Neoliberalism and capitalism** play a role, indeed. On the other hand, we have witnessed during the cold war that other systems are not working well either. **We need to revisit our current economic system and the willingness of it to invest in global health. It is important to go back to the drawing boards and re-write the rules of investment in global health.**

Regarding WHO, the first and most important step is **to fund it better**. No organization can function without proper funding. There is no reason why WHO should not be financed by some sort of **global taxation system**. In this case it would be much more independent and efficient.

Vinh-Kim Nguyen: So far, do you see a real **threat for democracy** during this crisis?

Ilona Kickbusch: I think there is definitely a threat and the scale of it depends on how weak is the democracy in your country. **The best containment strategy is to have a strong democracy.**

We also see that **big tech companies** are not well regulated about **data collection**. This is where democracies will have to be careful. We have to be vigilant health surveillance is not used to monitor citizens on other matters.

Vinh-Kim Nguyen: When do you think the **lockdowns** will end?

Ilona Kickbusch: There is a **big political aspect** regarding the lockdowns in each country. That is why it is important to observe how political leaders acted during the crisis. The way **leaders** have been handling the crisis explain well the **democratic situation** in one country.