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The World Upside Down: The Pandemic Redefines Globalization

Abstract: This article describes the natural phenomenon of the virus labelled COVID-19 and how its spread shook up the social, cultural and business world of humans. In my analysis, I first describe the devastating effect of the sudden onslaught on human lives and the global market, after it became classified by the WHO-UN as a pandemic, and conclude with identifying some patterns commonly overlooked in existing discussions but which embody some lessons learned. Far from a romanticized view of nature, this global crisis shows how nature can become ugly and even win in a battle with humans, yet simultaneously shows how the cognitive capacity unique to humans can counter the innate transmissibility of nature by an innate flexibility of culture. An unintended consequence of the pandemic is an increased attention to science. This article attempts to shed light on what science is and is not, particularly as relevant to the pandemic. In lieu of vague, abstract notions such as human security, global governance, multilateralism and so on, this analysis approaches the pandemic as a concrete phenomenon penetrating human lives which has led to a re-aligning of parameters in a way that redefines globalization.

Key words: pandemic, society, culture, globalization

As the pandemic moves albeit in slowing pace into its third year, it is no longer considered dramatic to state that the onslaught of Covid-19 virus had taken the world by storm, shaking it to the core, thereupon turning it upside down. In this article¹ I go beyond the “market” and “technology” factors, important though they are, to describe how the initially neglected social and cultural factors ought to be seriously considered in comprehending this global shock and I seek

¹ The analysis is based on a PowerPoint presentation I made with the same title, at an organized session at the Congress of the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (IUAES), with the theme of “Heritages, Global Interconnections in a Possible World”, held in virtual mode in Yucatan, Mexico, on November 9–13, 2021.

to analytically identify some overlooked pandemic patterns. To its credit, the American Anthropological Association was among the first to seek anthropological insights about the pandemic through a Series it initiated called Pandemic Insights. While cognizant of how rapidly those kinds of events change rapidly, I nevertheless recognized the importance of sharing my initial observations written as a brief essay for the AAA news website (El Guindi 2020b).

Inevitably, taking in consideration the social and cultural factors would lead to the fundamentals of what makes humans human. Rather than the commonly deployed humanist sense, which is ideological, human is used here in the scientific sense as anchored in nature but having a uniquely human cognitive capacity for elasticity and flexibility, a feature which enables humans to form social groups and adapt and regenerate new ways of dealing with changing life conditions. Inevitably, the notion of science itself is addressed. In this paper it is revealed how humans' unique cognitive capacity enabled people to meet challenges brought about by the pandemic.

And finally, this analysis reflects on new re-alignments emerging within the global processes that sometimes even seemed to challenge the process of globalization itself. Some observers suggested that the global pandemic and its aftermath, particularly as it was followed back-to-back by the war in the Ukraine may trigger the end of globalization as we know it. On the contrary, I have argued in a recently published article (El Guindi 2022a) that globalization itself was being weaponized by some nations against others, which only demonstrates how deeply and widely anchored its interlinkages have become in today's world. In other words, this analysis does not subscribe to the position that claims the world is witnessing the end of globalization. It calls, however, for a new paradigm that would shed better light on a more realistic framework regarding the dramatic transformations to globalization in our world today. Instead of the "end of globalization" narrative, this emerging paradigm builds on what globalization has offered so far and its inevitability in today's world.

Wonder of Nature

It must be stressed at the onset that viruses (if not manufactured in a lab) are natural organisms which existed from antiquity, seeking animal (including human) hosts. They are inherently transmissible and pursue their innate goal by rapidly mutating.² The quality of mutationality and transmissibility are linked, both being processes programmed for the survivability of the virus. Without this

² This essay is not considering the possibility intermittently covered in the media of a lab-created virus. Investigation and publicly shared conclusions of the Wuhan lab in China are not yet definitive.

knowledge human hosts who are endangered by it see it only as mysterious. Using their rapid communication technology of today such fear spreads faster than the virus itself. It is a fear fanned widely not only by the mystery of an unknown but also by a growing distrust of the sources of information particularly by politicians who seem to intentionally or unintentionally contribute to fear mongering in order to advance their own agendas. Politicians see the people as a voting public since their primary goal is to extend their stay in office. The accessibility of popular means for rapid transmission of information was a gift of advanced technology. Along with information much disinformation also moved around the world. Prior to the onslaught of the pandemic, globalized life marched along and wired populations³ became linked in different ways ranging from communication to market. People became linked, virtually and in person, across time zones and through connected economies and shared global market standards.

Despite intense linkages, the simple scientific fact about the naturalness of viruses and their antiquity in the lives of humans had escaped most ordinary folk. It was not a marked fact to be shared. Accordingly, many found themselves unprepared to face the onslaught of Covid-19, and it turned into a global crisis. People who had been living ordinary lives, knowingly or unknowingly following invisible globalization forces which prioritized technology and economics, were abruptly thrust into a crisis that endangered and disrupted their lives. The cause was some seemingly mysterious phenomenon that was difficult to comprehend, and was deadly.

Among the enigmas of this pandemic in my analysis is the pattern of its beginnings which defied expectations and predictions that the spreading infection would spread first in poor countries with weak public health systems, such as Africa. No persuasive explanation was offered when the infection perplexed the world and defied predictions by appearing and spreading rapidly in prosperous north European countries first. Africa, in fact, (except for South Africa) had a comparatively low rate of infection. Difficult as is to understand, it was the global north with advanced public health systems and more prosperous economies that has seen the most damage from Covid-19. I did make this observation in writing (This is where I first pointed out this pattern El Guindi 2020b) calling for research attention that would account for such pattern⁴.

³ It is recognized of course that many populations (and individuals among otherwise wired groups) continue to be isolated from that world, due to geo-physical isolation or inaccessibility of technology or internet. This is not due to the difficulty of using devices, since using a mobile phone does not require high-level intellect, and access is cheap. In some cases, it is by choice.

⁴ Only recently I saw this aspect being covered. The *Epoch Times* had a piece called "Real Reasons 'Underdeveloped Countries' Unaffected by COVID and what America can Learn from Africa", by Jennifer Margulis.

As described earlier, the reaction to the virus at first was that to something unknown and mysterious. Science was not on people's radar. In fact, this was at a time when an ideological drift was emerging among many folk who expressed doubt about science, a trend that became labelled the "anti-science movement. As the pandemic situation slowly unfolded, the mysterious invisible "thing" was becoming concretized. The World Health Organization (WHO) of the United Nations classified it "scientifically" and provided it with a formal label. The particular virus of 2019 was given the label Covid-19 and the crisis was classified as a pandemic. Its mutants were also ultimately identified and successively labeled as they kept forming and rapidly spreading. This step was crucial in turning the mystery into a reality to be reckoned with leading to the demystification of the virus as more communication was shared between the scientific community, the politicians and the public.

While increasingly demystified, the rapid spread and increased danger became fertile ground for rumors and conflicting "facts". The rise in the loss of life as the enforced isolation from family and friends particularly when people were kept from being with their elderly family even when they died from the pandemic was a very grim reality to live with. Inevitably, fear set in and uncertainty took over.

Some trends, appearing most prominently in the United States, linked public health advice on measures against the spread of Covid to people's freedom of choice. This led to a resistance against recommended or enforced measures such as wearing face masks, lockdowns and rapidly produced vaccines. Overall, this attitude also entailed an antiscience posture which was addressed in a Perspective Essay appearing recently, July 12, 2023, in the Proceedings of the National Association of Science, which describes an evidence-based study exploring the psychology behind such antiscience positions. The authors "specify four core bases of key principles driving antiscience attitudes ... grounded in decades of research on attitudes, persuasion, social influence, social identity, and information processing" (Philipp-Muller, et al.). The authors go on to state that such "antiscience attitudes are more likely to emerge when a scientific message comes from sources perceived as lacking credibility; when the recipients embrace the social membership or identity of groups with antiscience attitudes; when the scientific message itself contradicts what recipients consider true, favorable, valuable, or moral; or when there is a mismatch between the delivery of the scientific message and the epistemic style of the recipient" (Philipp-Muller, et al.). Confirming the above conclusions are cases of fraud in science activity. Most recently, on July 25, 2022 Ryan Saavedra of the Daily Wire reported a story allegations of fraud in research on Alzheimer's disease carried out by a University of Minnesota Scientist and which had already been published (Saavedra 2022). This is by no means the only story about fraud occurrences in science activity. But they add to an existing distrust. Needless to say, such cases of purported fraud are exponentially outweighed by what is mostly reliable science activity.

My observations on public reactions to science in the context of the pandemic are both specific and complex. Ironically, when the invisible life-threatening organism of a seemingly enigmatic nature accosted the world, the people felt deep fear and experienced feelings of helplessness. For the public, immediacy becomes imperative. And so it becomes far easier to deal with facts, verified or not. In social media, whose purpose is access of information and immediate communication, any proclamation (whether originating as rumor or unverified media source) is absorbed as fact. This need for immediacy put pressure on politicians to deliver. Initially their response was confused which led a growing distrust. Local and state politicians were scapegoated as providers of false facts. Under pressure many were fumbling to please a voting public. While some were expressing a carefulness to share only reliable facts but found themselves under pressure to “deliver”. Their challenge was to balance public health safety, maintain the domestic economy, and provide “facts” about the pandemic. At the forefront was the need to please the voting public.

Regarding science, the response that I observed combined two contradictory attitudes – a rejection of science by some and a total leaning on science seeking badly needed answers and a sense of comfort by others. The latter, however, were not only seeking facts, but needed certainty. Certainty comes from rapid and definitive answers, exactly two features that science cannot promise. Ordinarily, people do not do well with uncertainty. Humans always seek certainty in their lives. It is by certainty that most people find comfort. This is more easily found in religious faith or practice. Perhaps, it would be appropriate in this context to shed some light on what science is.

Does Science Produce Certainty?

People who resort to science seek reliability of information. Reliability is based on the systematic nature of data and the theoretically grounded analysis of such data. Science is not simply the “building of knowledge”. It is not about giving rapid answers in order to provide comfort. I illustrate here what I consider to be the essence of science by the story attributed to Albert Einstein, when he was asked about the fact that he gave exactly the same exam to his students more than once. Ordinarily, many educators consider testing to be key to teaching/learning and would avoid giving the same exact test to students, working hard instead at formulating different tests. Albert Einstein’s answer to the question of giving the same test is, in my consideration, what science is really about. He is purported to have affirmed giving the same test since “The answers have changed”.

To preserve the integrity of science any systematic scientific research must go through a number of phases. Rigor is a process, and science takes time. This is a crucial component of the science process – continuing research and experi-

mentation, updating data, reconsidering hypotheses, and rewriting explanations. Scientifically reliable generalizations are slow to produce. The time it takes for verifying conclusions to subject them to “peer reviewing” as a prerequisite to publication is not how public folk acquire information or seek answers, nor do they have access to such publications.

Ordinary folk are not comfortable with such a prolonged process. People seek immediacy. The pace of science is too slow to satisfy a public’s anxious need to know. Furthermore, constant experimentation and possible changes in the scientific conclusions give science the character of uncertainty. People seek certainty. Regular folk are not trained to keep up with the “changes in the answers to the same questions.”

One difficulty people faced was how to deal with science. Scientifically reliable facts are slow to produce and often difficult to understand. Rigor is a process. Once a study is conducted, results have to be written and published in a peer-reviewed journal to be considered scientific. Science takes time. The pace of systematic research is too slow to satisfy a public’s anxious need to know. Dealing with science is living with uncertainty, and humans have difficulty with that. Religion (and magic) offer more immediate comfort and more certain answers.

It is certainty that most folk are seeking. But science by the very nature of its mode of query and method of search cannot provide such certainty and certainly not instantaneously. As Albert Einstein recognized, the science process marches along and theories are constantly reconsidered as experimentation continue. Therefore, yes, “answers to the same questions do change”.

It is far easier to deal with facts than with data, which are commonly used as if interchangeable. However, they are not the same. This was revealed to me empirically during immersive field data-gathering experiences such as my intensive fieldwork among the Egyptian Nubians (1963–1965) (Callender and El Guindi 1971; El Guindi 1962; 1963–1965; 1966; 1978) and later among the Valley Zapotec of Oaxaca (1968–1980) (El Guindi 1972 [1980]; 1973; 1977a; 1977b; 1982).

The ethnographer during the data-gathering process is “faced with a morass of raw facts” (El Guindi 1986). To quote from a previous publication of mine (El Guindi 2020, 100) “[G]athering data in the anthropological project is not like collecting facts in journalism or for documentation. A fact is a thing that has actually happened or is declared to have existed. A datum, on the other hand, is something (a quantity or relation) given, granted, or admitted, used as a basis for making an argument, an inference, or a calculation, or for determining an unknown quantity or relation”. Does the anthropologist facing the challenge of a fieldwork setting consider any raw fact a datum? Clearly not. Then, which of the facts are converted into data? Analysis determines that. The quote continues: “Therefore, although all data derive from facts, not all raw facts are data” (El Guindi 2020, 100).

Henceforth, Albert Einstein's simple response to the question of why he gave the same test to students leads us to profound understanding of a core aspect of science, namely, theory-based discovery. To further clarify, I bring up another very relevant encounter, although arising in a different context, namely how a movie camera is positioned for data-collection, objectively or subjectively, artistically or scientifically. This is the essence of segments from a classic discussion between Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson. The whole discussion is priceless and most charming. While raising visual ethnographic issues we find ourselves in the midst of fundamental anthropological theoretical concerns. In a publication I labeled "For God's Sake, Margaret", which comprises a select segment by segment piece of the total conversation, while adding my own comments to each segment appearing as a chapter in a book on Visual Anthropology (for reference to the chapter see El Guindi 2004).

The segment of the conversation of concern here was about the camera recording as it is being left stationary (what Gregory Bateson wanted for the sake of art) versus moving around with the camera to capture spontaneous behaviors and events (which is what Margaret wanted for the sake of scientific objectivity). In a different context but this episode addresses the same issue of fact and datum. As mentioned earlier, the datum is a fact that is transformed by being entered into the analytic process by the analyst. This process of fact becoming data within the analytic project describes what science is about.

Going back to the pandemic, it became evident that "[T]he current global health crisis demonstrates how we need a science of health" (El Guindi 2019) just as we need a science of climate, rather than entirely promoting activism based on ideological rhetoric which in most cases misrepresents the significance of science and dilutes its findings. The Covid-19 virus exemplified a mystery to people who now have wide access to information but are limited in terms of access or full understanding of published research in scientific sources. It becomes the responsibility of the public health officials at the global level as well as at the national and local levels, and of politicians to communicate scientific finds in a way that a public can understand and appreciate.

Wonder of Society

Unlike the virus which is a natural phenomenon and which has recurred throughout our planet's history, humans, also fundamentally natural⁵, have personal

⁵ The prominent late French anthropologist, Claude Lévi-Strauss, emphasized the cultural character of social relations in these words: "what confers ... (a) sociocultural character is not what (is retained) from nature, but, rather, the essential way in which (there is *diversion*) from nature (Lévi-Strauss, 1963, 50). Another late French anthropologist, Marcel Hénaff, further emphasized the development of humans out of nature

lives, kin and relative, friends and enemies, neighbors and acquaintances, opinions, needs and desires, likes and dislikes, life choices, and so on. Above all, they have imagination, a fundamental basis of human cognition and its unique quality that takes it beyond its natural basis making the leap forward to humanness. In my analysis, it is at this level of humanness that the pandemic hit the hardest.

The pandemic altered the social environment and face-masking turned human interactions into cold transactions devoid of smile and touch⁶, connecting without direct contact. Italians longed for belonging and, invoking cultural identity, sang opera on their balconies. New Yorkers yelled at copycats of the Italians to shut up. New York is not Italy and New Yorkers are very different from Italians. Culture does indeed matter. Public health officials could not keep Egyptians from rushing to infected relatives in a nearby village. The former was concerned with public health safety, the latter with emotional support and hugs for sick relatives. As pointed out earlier, the instant response to the crisis worldwide was how the pandemic would adversely affect the world economy. National and local politicians, particularly in the West, strongly expressed concern about local business. This rapidly colluded with the reality that the threat was faced by both businesses and people. Ordinary people were directly affected by the overwhelming virus spread. They suffered from infection and watched from a distance as their relatives died in isolation. The elderly died alone. Families could not visit. Overall, people were anxious and lived in fear.

No wonder they were seeking satisfying and rapid official responses about the medical aspect of the virus. But information trickled in slowly, and politicians stumbled in attempts to balance the issue of public health and matters adversely affecting the economy. Some were reduced to recitations in press conferences of daily infection and death rates. To people, it was life and death, and to politicians, it was survival in office. Politicians behaved as if running for office and dealt with the people as voters. True measures for health safety, particularly mandates for isolation and physical distance, were leading to losses of income for small businesses and working people. In the United States, by virtue of its

and into culture: "We know that ... biological reproduction supposes the union of two partners of opposite sex. Nature demands nothing else" (Hénaff, Marcel 1998, 44).

⁶ It is worthy to recognize that interactive communication is not merely verbal. Other cues are deployed, particularly gestures and facial and bodily movements that usually accompany the verbal expression. At the personal experience level, I noted how this aspect of communication is vital in interactions. During the days when masks were strictly worn in public at all times, I encountered bewildered looks from persons I knew when I gestured "hello" to them, as if searching my face for the other cues which were of course masked. So masks, while protecting people from virus spread, also hid facial cues that usually accompany verbal utterances, and which are used for decoding interactive communication.

decentralized governance structure, decisions were made and undone by governors and mayors, which led to loss of confidence and trust.

Clearly the pandemic revealed not only governance and economic problems but, more relevant to people's lives, a very human dimension. It allowed people to rediscover their humanness (El Guindi 2020a), which was gradually being lost to a robotized world. Older notions of trade based on exchange and trust turned into market and profit, and the element of "value" lost its human dimension of honor and morality. Business became amoral, with values centered on the individual, and technology, despite all romanticized efforts to humanize it, dehumanized life and social interactions.

It is interesting that as communication by telephone began to replace face-to-face contact, the youth of today moved rapidly away from communicating by telephone toward texting, a mode devoid of both physical presence and human voice. As a substitute, emojis and emoticons were to add "human" expression, becoming an industry conveying the illusion of humanizing dehumanized interactions. In fact, these industry-made images serve more as cartoons in people's lives rather than to humanize their relations as is generally marketed in over-romanticized terms.

Globalization Marching Along, And... Suddenly!

The global world into which the virus threat penetrated was already becoming a menace: instability, insecurity, religious and ideological extremism, daily violence, humans trafficked for their organs and for sexual pleasure. Going back to normal after the pandemic was itself questioned (El Guindi 2020b). Therefore, one aspect I stress here is how the pandemic "unmasked" existing but hidden social conditions and societal flaws. This point was not immediately visible, but eventually, overlooked societal problems were being considered – issues of unemployment, homelessness, racial inequality, unequal access to health services and education privileges. Vulnerable groups were more likely to suffer health problems and become infected by the virus. The irony here is that attention to these problems was not necessarily due to a change of outlook but owed more to self-protection, because viral transmission makes everybody vulnerable. It evens out the plane. If one is vulnerable, all are vulnerable; thus the only path to take was equality.

Globalization was marching along, prioritizing technology and economics without borders, until the virus stopped these processes in their tracks and realigned them in a way that includes other equally important matters revealed by the challenges of the pandemic, such as public health, human well-being, political power shifts, environmental challenges, educational concerns, centrality of the nation-state, and a re-focus on science.

To communicate the “science” of the pandemic to the public world posed a dilemma. The people needed reliable facts and began leaning toward science to get such facts but it became quickly apparent that most folk needed a mediated kind of information that while accurate needed to be comprehensible to the non-specialized. Reliable data gradually trickled and the evolving communication technologies instantly expedited their communication, thus radiating the information out from global sources, such as the WHO, to national health centers and on social media, which made it rapidly accessible to peoples around the globe⁷.

From Borderless Global World to Bordered Nations

The World Health Organization (WHO) acted as a global hub, instantly reaching anxious folk around the world. Nations acted as transmitters of public health safety measures to their peoples. The nation was inevitably reinforced. Ideologues predicting or wishing for one global world needed to rethink their views. After all, the United Nations, the global institution erected to deal with global issues is composed of members who are nation states. In other words, the United Nations became the hub and its members, the nation-states were firmly centered as critical units that communicate and manage information and recommended measures against the crisis to local populations.

This countered a view adopted by observers and thinkers promoting a borderless global world. I consider this line of thinking more of an ideological position than an analytic one. In fact, I contend that the pandemic discredited it as it revealed it to be unrealistic and impractical. Once it was disclosed to the world that a virus is active and posing a global threat, events moved rapidly and confusion was slowly giving way to a less chaotic reality.

The World Health Organization of the United Nations presided over the scientific process concerning the nature of the virus itself, the disclosure and the communication of relevant information concerning public health issues and measures to be undertaken worldwide and a concerted effort to demystify the

⁷ The reference concerns peoples around the world who are linked to the global communication network and who access technologies of communication. Anthropologists are very aware of local populations around the world who continue to communicate using traditional personal means and who are unable or have no access to the global network. This concerns remote populations and extends also to some ‘modern’ folk who can have access but are challenged by simple technologies of communication such as mobile telephones. The problem with not accessing such technologies is that they have become necessary tools for services, such as food delivery and medical assistant, and interactive communication in general. Literacy (writing) is not the primary challenge in this case, because voice messages are an option in most devices. Mindset and comfort zone are probably behind the latter cases.

phenomenon. First, it had to determine whether the threat was epidemic or pandemic. Then there was the task of classifying the particular virus posing the threat to the world. After determining the class of viruses this current one belonged to it provided with a label, namely Covid-19. This enabled the world to commonly share precise tools for communication which disambiguate. It was providing the public with a shared and precise vocabulary. Ordinary folk and public intellectuals alike used the same vocabulary and were aware of the measures to take for minimizing harm.

Arresting the process of openness, the pandemic forced a decision of border closures. The nation-state reemerged as the most effective mode for reaching local communities, protecting human security, and providing safety from terror and the spread of the pandemic infection. It was the channel through which measures proposed by the WHO were carried out on the ground. The WHO became a global observer of national behaviors, exposing selfish attempts to hog vaccines or claim primacy in their production. "Vaccine nationalism" was criticized. This was reminiscent of the selfish behavior of hoarding toilet paper by individuals at the onset of the pandemic.

Significantly, the pandemic created a level field, with no regard to color, race, ethnicity, social standing, origin, etc. The playing field was level, despite some entrenched preconceived ideas by some to focus on different reactions to the calamity based on skin color or level of development. For example, at first when the virus spread rapidly among northern European prosperous nations, many tried to counter this fact by saying it all started in Africa and that Africa will have the largest incidence of infections and deaths. They were proven wrong. The virus moved at a staggering rate of transmission first "out of Europe" and given the nature of the virus rapid transmissibility through shared space most of the world felt its impact. Ensuing deaths of vulnerable populations led to fear, isolation, and confusion. The WHO was an instrument of stability in both public health information and the rapid communication of measure to be taken against ensuing harm.

One component in this process is worthy of our attention. Although the means of communication was by worldwide press releases and conferences, official communication was done through the legitimate UN channel to its members. UN members are nation-states. After initial fumbling nation-states established means to receive such rapidly transmitted information about the virus and communicate it through appropriately cultural channels to their people. This is an important point. Arresting the process of openness of borders to prevent transmissibility of the virus, the pandemic forced a decision of border closures. The nation-state reemerged as the most effective mode for reaching local communities, protecting human security, and providing safety from terror and the spread of the pandemic infection. It was the channel through which measures proposed by the WHO were carried out on the ground.

The global institution of the United Nations, communicated to nations-states, who in turn communicated using their own cultural strategies to communicate with and enforce measures of health safety to the local population. By doing so, there was a re-establishment of the world governing units of significance in today's world. The idea of a borderless global entity and imagined world governance evaporated as the basis for a viable paradigm, while what was being re-affirmed most clearly was the more effective and pragmatic structure of three intersecting units of governance: the global, the national, and the local. The pandemic was an instrument to empirically re-affirm this structure.

Wonder of Culture

One remarkable quality of humanness is its unique capacity for culture, enabled by the plasticity of the cognitive apparatus that makes it possible for humans to relate beyond dyads to large groups of other humans. It is one single species sharing this capacity which generates universal cultural patterns, such as kinship and ritual, for example. Such domains are universally present among humans anchored in a logical structure – an algebra underlying practices, as it were (El Guindi 2020). A feature of this unique cognition is having imagination to 'create' realities and a capability of flexibility in facing living conditions.

Contrary to romanticized views of nature, it does have an ugly side to it. Whether bacteria mutating into "superbugs" defying antibiotics or viruses mutating to spread wider among its human hosts in defiance of vaccines, humans are faced with natural borne organisms which are hard to defeat. It makes it hard to subscribe to the over-romanticized view of a pristine, beautiful nature that is violated and exploited by humans. It is a struggle. Neither side can be victorious. Humans are not programmed to perform nor do they live by instincts. As we learned from facts of climate change humans are increasingly aware of having to co-exist with nature and minimize harm. As Covid taught us we must modify our behavior to avoid threats and adopt mindsets based on conclusions from reliable studies. But one thing is clear, humans need togetherness to survive. The shock from the pandemic onslaught led to flexible nonlinear, multidirectional changes in many realms – business, work, travel, school, family, politics, health, social life, and more. In the sphere of world politics and economics, globalization was proceeding on a path of interlinkages and interdependencies that are hard to undo.

In a way, one can look at the virus and the challenge it posed to human hosts as a way to test human capacity and we can claim that nature won this battle. However, if we take in consideration the societal element and the cultural ways that humans devised to cope with the "new normal", we can confidently say that the element of flexibility allowed humans to adapt and move on.

From Lessons Learned to Reflections on a Re-Aligned World

As argued in this article, the pandemic turned the world upside down by re-aligning these parameters in a way that redefines globalization. While the virus recognized no borders, it led to the weaving of globalization processes within national sovereignties arresting paths being imagined by vague abstract notions such as human security, multilateralism, and global governance.

One outcome inevitably resulting from the pandemic experience is the template for action that has developed gradually from the various stages of the experience and the attempts to deal with emerging problems and challenges. The template sets a partial model that would be suitable for dealing with a world health crisis, and perhaps in some ways for any kind of world crisis. The world experienced another major crisis back-to-back as the pandemic was beginning to phase out – the Ukraine war.

I contend, in this regard, that there is a remarkable similarity at some level between this tumultuous event (the Russia-Ukraine war) and the Covid-19 Pandemic. The world in February 2022 was emerging from under the weight of the turbulent two-year pandemic and its devastation on people's health, livelihood and social well-being, as well as its serious devastation to the world economy, wondering whether life can ever go "back to normal" after the fear, loss of life, social isolation that ensued (El Guindi 2020; El Guindi 2020b), when it finds itself violently thrust into a bigger shock that rocks the people and the world order to the core.

In other words, the world was badly shaken first by Covid and immediately followed by the Ukraine war. Predictions about a "new world order" began with Covid and continue as the War in the Ukraine progresses. In my analysis, talk about the world order is really about military and economic dominance by certain nations protected by military coalitions (El Guindi 2022a). The west consists of Europe, the US, the UK, Canada. Military coalitions purportedly formed for defense purposes, have become tools for expansion by military means e.g., NATO, AUKUS etc. On the other side, Russia is re-emerging with its own partners, China, India, Arab and African and Latin American countries. The "Infinite War on Terror", authored by the US and the UK is anchored in the notion of clash between 'civilizations' and with its sight set on other nations' natural resources, to be acquired by imposed 'constructive chaos' leading to internal instability, regime changes, and proxy battles. Proxy battles used private combat units and terror groups like ISIS, Da'esh, Qa'da, etc. creating global violence leading to an influx of "refugees" escaping war and poverty and seeking livelihoods in Europe and the United States. The world saw growing global instability, insecurity, poverty and inequality.

Significantly, alternative models are beginning to emerge which are based on mutuality, cooperation, and the exchange of economic and technological services, without military designs across borders. Egypt strongly proved the fallacy of the concept “Arab Spring” which was imposed by the West as extension of the constructive chaos plan for the Arab World. I had discussed this issue previously in my article published in *Eruditio*, the e-Journal of the World Academy of Art and Science (El Guindi 2018). Countering the imposed chaos, Egypt carved its own way of strengthening global networks through bilateral economic exchanges. In lieu of “coalitions” a paradigm I labelled “ring of global exchanges” developed (El Guindi 2022b) building on what globalization interlinkages provided but without notions of “clash” or “chaos”.

The pandemic provided the world with a template for action which centralized global responses in the face of a global crisis. Re-alignments accelerated by the Ukraine war are leading to a break-up of the existing world dominant structure perhaps allowing the world to make use of the template and creating space among nations outside the western sphere to bring forth new paradigms for a more stable world.

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*Svet izvrnut naopačke:
Pandemija redefiniše globalizaciju*

U ovom radu opisan je prirodni fenomen virusa nazvanog kovid-19 i kako je njegovo širenje izazvalo potres u socijalnom, kulturnom i poslovnom svetu ljudi. U svojoj analizi najpre opisujem razorni efekat iznenadnog ataka na ljudske živote i globalno tržište, nakon što ga je SZO UN klasifikovao kao pandemiju, a na kraju identifikujem određene obrasce koji se obično prevlađuju u postojećim raspravama ali koji otelotvoruju neke od izvučenih pouka. Daleko od romantizovanog pogleda na prirodu, ova globalna kriza pokazuje kako priroda može postati okrutna i čak pobedi u borbi s ljudima, ali istovremeno pokazuje kako se kognitivni kapaciteti svojstveni čoveku mogu suprotstaviti urođenoj prenosivosti prirode urođenom fleksibilnošću kulture. Jedna nenameravana posledica pandemije je povećana pažnja usmerena ka nauci. U radu se nastoji razjasniti šta nauka jeste a šta nije, posebno u odnosu na pandemiju. Umesto neodređenih, apstraktnih pojmova kao što su bezbednost ljudi, globalno upravljanje, multilateralnost i tako dalje, u ovoj analizi se pandemiji pristupa kao konkretnom fenomenu koji prodiše u ljudske živote a koji je doveo do ponovnog usklađivanja parametara na način koji redefiniše globalizaciju.

Ključne reči: pandemija, društvo, kultura, globalizacija

*Le monde à l'envers:
La pandémie redéfinit la globalisation*

Dans ce travail est décrit le phénomène naturel du virus appelé covid-19 et la manière dont son expansion a provoqué un ébranlement dans le monde social, culturel et professionnel des gens. Dans mon analyse je décris d'abord l'effet destructeur d'une attaque soudaine dirigée contre les vies humaines et le marché global, une fois qu'elle a été classifiée par l'OMS de l'UN comme une pandémie, et à la fin j'identifie certains modèles habituellement passés sous silence dans les débats existants mais qui incarnent certaines des leçons morales tirées. Bien loin d'une vue romantisée de la nature, cette crise globale montre que la nature peut devenir cruelle et même vaincre les hommes, mais aussi que les capacités cognitives propres à l'homme peuvent s'opposer à la transmissivité congénitale de la nature par la flexibilité congénitale de

la culture. Une conséquence non voulue de la pandémie est l'attention accrue tournée vers la science. Dans le travail on s'efforce d'éclaircir ce que la science est et ce qu'elle n'est pas, particulièrement par rapport à la pandémie. À la place des notions vagues, abstraites, comme le sont la sécurité des gens, la gestion globale, multilatéralité etc, dans cette analyse la pandémie est approchée comme un phénomène concret qui s'imisce dans les vies humaines et qui a amené à un nouveau réglage des paramètres d'une manière qui redéfinit la globalisation.

Mots clés: pandémie, société, culture, globalisation

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