

RIGHT-WING POLITICIANS AND THEIR RESPONSES TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC – SOME IDEOLOGICAL PARADOXES?

Philip Dandolov

University of National and World Economy, Sofia, Bulgaria, philip.dandolov@unwe.bg

Abstract: The COVID-19 pandemic represented by far the most serious health challenge confronted by the planet as a whole since the Spanish flu in the early 20th century, affecting virtually every corner of the world due to its very high cumulative death toll and the unprecedented social and economic disruption caused by it. The novelty of the virus and its wide-ranging impacts resulted in a multitude of non-pharmaceutical interventions whose purpose was to control the spread of the disease and/or reduce the risks pertaining to the capacity of healthcare systems becoming exceeded. In turn, the measures taken by the governments in order to mitigate the negative effects of the pandemic, which were often based on the advice of health professionals, frequently contributed to further societal polarization along ideological lines. While by no means a universal phenomenon and exceptions can easily be found, surveys conducted in developed countries indicate that as a general rule the citizens feeling part of the ideological right were more likely to be opposed to or skeptical regarding the implementation of strict restrictions on public activities while those on the political left were somewhat more accepting of the need for lockdowns. Relying on a qualitative approach that entails the synthesis and analysis of a vast array of secondary sources from a multitude of disciplines, the paper has two major aims. Firstly, it demonstrates how prior to the pandemic there would have been ample grounds to assume that actors identifying with political conservatism and positioned right of the political center would be more inclined than center-left and liberal-leaning voices to insist that stringent containment measures are adopted, thus suggesting that COVID-19 has brought about a surprising ideological realignment with respect to those espousing more conservative viewpoints and those subscribing to more liberal values in terms of the underlying philosophies concerning the powers that are to be granted to governments and the need for a unified national vision in the case of emergency situations. Secondly, the paper advances the argument that in a few instances, looking specifically at the United States and Belarus, the decision taken by right-wing or socially conservative politicians to subscribe to anti-lockdown discourses and embrace laissez-faire attitudes towards disease management has not necessarily served them well in terms of improving their electoral fortunes, at least in the short-term, and may have also been a missed opportunity to earn brownie points for the causes of nationalism and strengthened national sovereignty due to neglecting to broach the topic of hyper globalization, especially with regard to it being an enabling force when it comes to epidemic-prone diseases.

Keywords: COVID-19, globalization, right-wing politics, conservatism, United States, Belarus

1. INTRODUCTION

In December 2019, an outbreak of a new type of infectious disease, which was determined by scientists to be caused by a novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2), was reported in Wuhan, People's Republic of China. The failure of the local authorities to publicize the true extent of the health emergency in a timely fashion and contain the spread eventually resulted in the epidemic acquiring global dimensions in the early months of 2020, with the World Health Organization (WHO) officially declaring COVID-19 to be a pandemic on 11 March 2020. In addition to the disease inflicting huge suffering on millions of human beings, contributing to significant excess mortality in a multitude of countries for the years 2020, 2021 and 2022, (Pizzato et al., 2024) the strategies adopted by the various sovereign states for the purpose of combating the pandemic in many instances resulted in social and political polarization, inviting disagreements among health experts, biostatisticians, politicians, and regular citizens. In particular, many Western democracies experienced popular opposition to what were deemed to be coercive *public health measures*, even though they were explicitly designed to curb the spread of the virus. Social scientists generally consider the left-right distinction to be the most powerful and parsimonious way of classifying political attitudes. (Thorisdottir et al., 2007) In this regard, what is quite surprising is that a lot of the resistance to “locking down” society emanated from the political right, with one Pew Research Center survey (including 17 advanced economies) from the spring of 2021 substantiating the existence of such a dividing line, with citizens on the ideological right significantly more likely than their peers positioned closer to the left side of the political spectrum to be opposed to restrictions on public activities over the course of the public health emergency. The ideological splits between the left and right were the most pronounced in the United States where 52% of self-identified conservatives and only 7% of self-described liberals stated there should have been fewer restrictions while Greece was notably a country that bucked the trend in this dataset, as the Greeks gravitating towards the political right showed greater enthusiasm for the imposition of pandemic control measures than their left-leaning counterparts. (Connaughton, 2021) In the USA, a

number of further studies clearly established that Democrats were more likely than Republicans to be seriously concerned about their health, wear personal protective equipment such as masks, and strive to avoid large crowds, with those identifying as Republicans accordingly expressing significantly less trepidations about the pandemic compared to Democrats. (De Bruin et al., 2022)

This paper argues that the tendency of some socially conservative Americans as well as a number of right-wing public figures and politicians to downplay the extent of the health crisis, which went hand in hand with them advocating for more hands-off pandemic control measures compared to their more liberal counterparts, is in many respects counter-intuitive and would have been difficult to predict in the years prior to 2020 because of being at odds with many core tenets of political conservatism and nationalism. Secondly, by drawing on the examples of two countries that are manifestly different from each other with regard to their political cultures (the United States and Belarus), it demonstrates that underestimating COVID-19 and refraining from adopting an uncompromising stance on the disease largely backfired, at least in the short-term, resulting in serious political costs such as a presidential election loss and a reduction in political autonomy. Thirdly, in its concluding part, the paper contends that many right-wingers appear to have missed an opportunity to use the devastation wreaked by COVID-19 in order to advance a new and powerful criticism of globalization.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The paper relies heavily on the qualitative approach and favours an unobtrusive research method, the purpose of which is to conduct an integrated analysis of secondary sources (as well as of a few primary ones), which may include interviews, policy briefs, newspaper articles, and academic papers, encompassing a wide range of disciplines. (Kutsyruba, 2017). The data that is gleaned from the various studies is thoroughly analysed, interpreted through the author's own lens and synthesized with the goal of finding new meanings and developing alternative perspectives. The article echoes the views of Strike and Posner when it comes to the way in which synthesis is defined – from these theorists' perspective, it constitutes an activity in which separate parts are put together to form a whole, with the result transcending the sum of the parts, contributing to the emergence of an innovative element (Mengshoel & Sim, 2023). The analytical approach may be regarded as inductive due to the general propositions being gradually fleshed out on the basis of the raw data.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Due to its innate virulence and contagiousness as well as various forms of mismanagement in the initial stages following the emergence of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, COVID-19 by its very nature posed a unique challenge to all facets of society and represented an unprecedented health crisis, with the last disease outbreak of comparable magnitude being the Spanish flu global influenza pandemic, which lasted from 1918 to 1920. In a sense, tackling COVID-19 evoked many obvious parallels with successfully fighting a war against a relentless and inexorable enemy. Large-scale epidemics of fatal diseases present serious obstacles to social order (Strong, 2008) and are to a large extent similar to warfare due to being highly likely to generate fears, induce panic, and encourage calls to action. (Giorgis et al., 2023). Metaphors comparing the pandemic to engaging in warfare were ubiquitous, pervasive and recurrent, especially in the early phase of the disease outbreak, with *COVID-19, in the American context, being seen as somewhat analogous to shocking and era-defining events from the distant and not so distant past, such as the 1941 Japanese military strike on Pearl Harbor and the 2001 terrorist attacks perpetrated by Al-Qaeda (commonly known as 9/11).* (Varma, 2020). *While the war analogies have also raised eyebrows due to purportedly missing the mark and promoting the wrong type of attitudes in terms of potentially encouraging insularity, (Musu, 2020) they have been powerful vehicles for uniting society in opposition to a common existential thread, thus bringing about a rally-around-the-flag effect, which represents the tendency of public opinion to become more well-disposed toward the political leadership in times of crises, (Hinton & Vaishnav, 2021) and a tangible increase in nationalist sentiments. (Johansson et al., 2021).* For instance, in the months after 9/11, President George W. Bush's popularity among American citizens soared, with polls showing a steady 80-90% approval rating during the remaining months of the year. (Hetherington & Nelson, 2003). Thus, it does not seem too far-fetched to assume that a hard-line approach with regard to COVID-19 (or at least the appearance of such an approach being attempted), which framed the coronavirus messaging in such a way as to encourage collective responses at the level of the nation as a whole rather than attempting to appeal to partisan politics, could have conceivably propelled the Trump administration to somewhat comparable heights in terms of garnering country-wide approval, at least in the short-term. In essence, from the standpoint of right-wing public figures in the USA, who of course hoped for a reelection of Donald Trump rather than a Joe Biden victory in 2020, it should have been evident that emphasizing rather than de-emphasizing the threat posed by COVID-19 would have been more likely to pay dividends in terms of

encouraging American citizens to band together around a common cause, which in all probability would have improved Trump's electoral prospects.

In addition to the abovementioned considerations pertaining to the wars' and pandemics' overall effects on public consciousness, dangerous diseases such as COVID-19 are associated with at least two types of threats. On the one hand, they pose realistic and relatively easily measurable threats to an individual's (or a group's) physical and economic well-being. (Kachanoff et. al, 2021) On the other hand, they may also conjure up symbolic threats. The latter are especially pertinent in the case of COVID-19 because the need for social distancing (one of the primary means of reducing the risks of exposure, especially prior to the start of the vaccination campaigns) serves to disrupt and throw into disarray the norms, routines, and institutions of social groups that give people a sense of meaning. (Ibid.) As a rule, right-wing actors thrive when there are credible threats that need to be addressed. This is because during hard times large-scale social categories such as the nation can provide solace and a source of solidarity. This trend towards a consolidation of the core group is consistent with the social cohesion model and reflects the belief that in-groups will provide more protection against external threats. (Maher et al., 2022) Furthermore, under conditions of societal threat such as pandemics, people commonly endorse more staunchly conservative and even authoritarian responses in order to assuage group-based concerns. (Arikan, 2023) A pronounced pandemic threat enhances the appeal of authoritarianism due to the dangers posed by the infectious disease, which can be indiscriminate in terms of their impacts. Specifically, in relation to COVID-19, the evidence suggests that anxiety pertaining to the threat of the disease was significantly correlated with the endorsement of authoritarian beliefs in both the United Kingdom and Ireland, essentially activating a latent strain of illiberal political culture. (Hartman et al., 2022) This finding is consistent with the impacts of the stress induced by psychologically traumatic events. Following 9/11, individuals who were close to the World Trade Center at the moment of the attacks moved towards political conservatism. Similar results were observed in Spain after the Madrid attacks in March 2004. (Onraet et al., 2014) Those citizens who turn to authoritarianism due to situational factors (rather than necessarily having an authoritarian predisposition) in addition to being more likely to support national governments and adopting more socially conservative views, as stated above, start displaying a more pronounced out-group bias towards perceived "others", such as immigrants. Essentially, even those who typically espouse left-wing views may at least temporarily start giving the nod to anti-immigration policies. (Maher et al., 2022) From the perspective of right-wing political entrepreneurs, such as those supportive of Trump in the United States, the trend towards illiberalism would be desirable in terms of broadening the appeal of their ideology by encouraging more people to shift towards more exclusionary understandings of the national community. Thus, it is once again seemingly illogical how self-identified pro-Trump conservatives and the president himself (who often appeared to play down the threat of the virus and frequently seemed to flout the advice of his own public health officials, such as immunologist Anthony Fauci) (Colvin et al., 2020) were on many occasions so vociferous in their support for the relaxation of the pandemic control measures, which contributed to leaving some members of the wider public with the impression that COVID-19 was not/was no longer a particularly serious threat. In a sense these right-wing pro-Trump figures were taking the wind out of their own sails, as they did not really try to provide fertile ground for prolonging the period of nationalist mobilization, thus actually reducing the likelihood of engendering conservative shifts among their compatriots and potentially getting them on the same page when it comes to "pet causes" such as immigration. Two of the central features of right-wing ideology, which are especially consistent across time and space, include the resistance to change (that can be viewed as roughly synonymous with traditionalism) and the acceptance of inequality (or hierarchy). (Thorisdottir et al., 2007) In terms of guaranteeing stability and immutability, strong measures towards the reduction of ambiguity and the avoidance of uncertainty remain of crucial importance, as they are also proven to serve psychological functions, such as the need to attain epistemic certainty. (Aichholzer & Gründl, 2020) Thus, quite a few self-professed right-wingers' tendency to be lukewarm towards truly robust and even eliminationist approaches towards COVID-19, thus increasing the likelihood that individuals in their community would sooner rather than later encounter the virus in some form, (Khullar, 2020) appeared to be very much at odds with the conservative desire to go to great lengths to prevent uncertainty. Returning to the theme of immigration, right-wing politicians' penchant for promoting one-size-fits-all approaches to complex issues, such as the frequently expressed emphasis on mass deportations as a solution for crime in states close to the Mexican border, (Kilander, 2024) curiously contrasts with their support for more nuanced and less eliminationist measures towards tackling COVID-19, such as right-wing public officials', some of whom were part of the Trump administration, greater willingness (compared to their liberal-leaning counterparts) to back a "focused protection" approach or age-stratified lockdown, allowing for freedom from most restrictions for young and healthy individuals, which was proposed by Sunetra Gupta, Jay Bhattacharya, and Martin Kulldorff, the three scientists who drafted the Great Barrington Declaration in October 2020. (Crisp, 2020)

The propensity to be accepting of more permissive control measures with regard to COVID-19 appears to be out of touch with one additional staple of right-wing ideology. Right-wing parties and movements with emphasis on social conservatism are often characterized as purveyors of the contemporary politics of nostalgia (an ambivalent social emotion elicited by a sentimental longing for the past). President Donald Trump's frequently quoted promise to "make America great again" has been characterized as echoing this (re-)emergence of nostalgia on the political scene. (Schreurs, 2021) Similarly, in other Western countries the rhetoric of populist parties is typically predicated on ideas of lost national sovereignty, a deteriorating moral order of society, and serious issues with the welfare state. Deploying collective memory in order to cultivate a romantic image of the national past and mobilize the electorate plays a prominent role in nationalist-populist discourses. With regard to the master frame of nostalgia, elderly people could be argued to represent the heartland (the notion that what the national-conservatives are proposing is far from a utopian scenario, but represents a realistic return to a more benevolent past). (Frischlich, 2023) Thus, the older people who are also the ones often more likely to vote for socially conservative parties represent an embodiment of the collective memory of the nation. Given COVID-19's highly disproportionate impacts on the elderly populations, (Baena et al., 2023) it is even more surprising that many right-wing conservatives appeared not to be too inclined to champion a tough approach to handling the virus, which by a purely numerical logic (reducing overall infections in the wider society) would have likely lessened the infection risks for senior citizens.

In terms of concrete manifestations pertaining to electoral outcomes, even though it is always difficult to provide an exact ranking of all the different factors that have been decisive in an election, the Trump administration's performance when it came to containing the pandemic was certainly a major contributor to his electoral demise in 2020. COVID-19 was deemed quite significant in the post-election analysis conducted by the Trump campaign Florida pollster Tony Fabrizio. (Dawsey, 2021) In the November 2020 election Trump held an advantage with the voters who were mainly focused on the state of the economy, but his opponent Joe Biden managed to outperform him among the Americans (who constituted a larger share) for whom COVID-19 was an issue of paramount importance. In fact, it is believed that there was a high likelihood of Arizona, Georgia, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin, which were narrowly won by Biden, remaining in the red column, if the COVID-19 cases in these states there had been 5% lower. (Dawsey, 2021) In the run-up to the election, Trump and the Republicans lost ground among the older Americans (aged 65 and over), which have traditionally been a very reliable voter bloc, with indications that Biden had managed to establish a significant lead among them. In particular, between March and May 2020 Trump saw a 19-point erosion in support among this demographic, attributable to their assessments of his policies on the COVID-19 issue. (Gambino, 2020)

In Eastern Europe, Belarus' authoritarian president Alexander Lukashenko, another politician who could be characterized as ticking many boxes with regard to right-wing and socially conservative leanings, (Chulitskaya & Matonyte, 2018) for instance due to his promotion of traditional, patriarchic families as well as pronatalism, took a major gamble and managed to compromise his political position within Belarus due to his lax management of COVID-19. The Belarusian president notably refused to impose a lockdown at any stage during the pandemic and tended to be dismissive of what he dubbed as fear mongering about the disease. (Kramer, 2020) What has been characterized by Belarusian banker and prominent opposition political figure Viktor Babarika as a "totally irresponsible" management of the coronavirus pandemic, (Roth, 2020) was one of the main factors that sparked mass protests in the country in May 2020, the largest anti-government demonstrations in Belarus' modern history. Even though the protests were eventually forcefully suppressed by the authorities, Lukashenko managed to squander most of the amount of popular goodwill that he had enjoyed before and due to the support extended to him by the Putin regime, which was crucial for allowing Lukashenko to weather the protest storm, (Hill, 2021) the Belarusian leader, who had previously been somewhat successful at keeping Moscow at arm's length, found his foreign policy options reduced, essentially forcing him to cast his lot with Russia. (Chupryna, 2020) It is quite likely that if Lukashenko had approached the threat of the virus differently, he would have actually been in a position to boost his popularity, given that for the first time in 16 years, strict restrictions on public gatherings and border closures would have had a strong air of legitimacy to them, with his "paternalistic" style of governing the country suddenly appearing to (at least to a degree) be vindicated. Thus, the Belarusian case represents another peculiar example of forceful actions against COVID-19 appearing to be in line with a right-wing conservative actor's underlying ideology and representing a shrewd move politically in terms of the distinct possibility of serving to solidify his grip on power, but in this instance the prominent politician once again pursued a seemingly counter-intuitive course of action.

4. CONCLUSION

This article established that there are a multitude of theoretical grounds, according to which right-wing conservative parties with nationalist inclinations would appear to draw benefits from being more uncompromising in their

handling of the pandemic in comparison to their more left-leaning political opponents. It also looked at two countries in which there are ample grounds to assume that the overly liberal strategy when it came to virus management backfired spectacularly, in the first case being a significant factor for the incumbent's loss in a presidential election and in the other leading to mass protests, further compromising the president's already contested legitimacy and leaving with him less wiggle room for (geo)political maneuver. If at some point in the future a health challenge similar to COVID-19 rears its head once again (hopefully we never get to find out) and certain lessons are allowed to sink in, it is possible that many politicians on the right may choose to steal the thunder of their more liberal counterparts and decide on tougher measures with regard to the nature of their responses. In a sense COVID-19 may even be regarded as a missed opportunity for conservative parties proclaiming nationalist credentials, which on a number of occasions took credit for banning travel from certain countries in early 2020, (Bierman et al., 2020) but did not seem especially insistent on border closures and were not particularly proactive in broaching the subject of deglobalization (De La Baume et al., 2020). One of the most important factors with regard to the number of infected people during the (perhaps) most difficult first months of the pandemic, the expediency and competency of the national authorities' responses aside, was the extent to which the country (as well as its specific regions or cities) was globalized, which was quite predictive of the COVID-19 diffusion patterns. (Sigler et al., 2021) It remains to be seen whether the shock waves sent by the pandemic that impacted many different sectors of society will spark further debates regarding the possibilities for reining in some aspects of globalization through a new form of global governance that is premised on improving the systems of prevention, control and treatment with regard to major cataclysmic events.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my colleagues from the Department of International Relations at the University of National and World Economy for the encouragement and inspiration provided when it comes to the process of compiling such papers.

REFERENCES

- Aichholzer, J. & Gründl, J. (2020). Support for the Populist Radical Right: Between Uncertainty Avoidance and Risky Choice. *International Society of Political Psychology*, 41 (4), 641-659.
- Arikan, G. (2023). Sociotropic and Personal Threats and Authoritarian Reactions During COVID-19. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 49 (3), 447-459.
- Baena, C., Joarder, T., Ahmed, N.U. & Chowdhury, R. (2023). Aging and the COVID-19 pandemic: The inter-related roles of biology, physical well-being, social norms and global health systems. *Maturitas*, 167 (1), 99-104.
- Bierman, N., Megerian, C. & Stokols, E. (2020). Trump brags about his China travel ban. Health experts say it's had little effect. *Los Angeles Times*.
- Chulitskaya, T. & Matonyte, I. (2018). Social security discourses in a non-democratic state: Belarus between Soviet paternalistic legacies and neo-liberal pressures. *Public Policy and Administration*, 17 (4), 539-554.
- Chupryna, O. (2020). Lukashenko, Putin and the protests: Why Belarus is being pulled further into Russia's orbit. *London School of Economics and Political Science*.
- Colvin, J., Lemire, J. & Miller, Z. (2020). White House turns on Fauci as Trump minimizes virus spike. *The Associated Press News*.
- Connaughton, Aidan. (2021). Those on ideological right favor fewer COVID-19 restrictions in most advanced economies. *Pew Research*.
- Crisp, E. (2020). White House Embraces Herd Immunity in Latest Push to End COVID-19 Lockdowns. *Newsweek*.
- Dawsey, J. (2021). Poor handling of virus cost Trump his reelection, campaign autopsy finds. *The Washington Post*.
- De Bruin, W.B., Saw, H.-W. & Goldman, D. P. (2020). Political Polarization in US Residents' COVID-19 risk perceptions, policy preferences, and protective behaviors. *Journal of Risk and Uncertainty*, 61 (2), 177-194.
- De La Baume, M., Moens, B., Roberts, H., & Von der Burchard, H. (2020). Europe's far right knows how to waste a good crisis. *Politico Europe*.
- Giorgis, P., Semenets, O. & Todorova, B. (2023). "We are at war": The military rhetoric of COVID-19 in cross-cultural perspective of discourses. *Frontiers of Artificial Intelligence*, 6 (1), 1-9.
- Frischlich, L, Clever, L., Wulf, T. & Wildschut, T. (2023). Populists' Use of Nostalgia: A Supervised Machine Learning Approach. *International Journal of Communication*, 17 (1), 2113-2137.
- Gambino, L. (2020). America's seniors ebb away from Trump as coronavirus response disappoints. *The Guardian*.
- Hartman, T.K., Bennett, K.M., Bentall, R., Gibson-Miller, J., Hyland, P., Karatzias, T., Levita, L., Martinez, A.P., Mason, L., McBride, O., McKay, R., Murphy, J., Shevlin, M., Stocks, T.V.A. & Vallières, F. (2021). The

- Authoritarian Dynamic During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Effects on Nationalism and Anti-Immigrant Sentiment. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 12 (7), 1274-1285.
- Hetherington, M.J. & Nelson, M. (2003). Anatomy of a Rally Effect: George W. Bush and the War on Terrorism. *Political Science and Politics*, 36 (1), 37-42.
- Hill, I. (2021). Lukashenko running on empty. Lowy Institute.
- Johansson, B., Hopmann, D.N. & Shehata, A. (2021). When the rally-around-the-flag effect disappears, or: when the COVID-19 pandemic becomes “normalized”. *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties*, 31(1), 321-334.
- Hintson, J. & Vaishnav, M. (2021). Who Rallies around the Flag? Nationalist Parties, National Security, and the 2019 Indian election. *American Journal of Political Science*, 67 (2), 342-357.
- Kachanoff, F., Bigman, Y., Gray, K. & Kapsaskis, K. (2021). Measuring Realistic and Symbolic Threats of COVID-19 and Their Unique Impacts on Well-Being and Adherence to Public Health Behaviors. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 12 (5), 603-616.
- Khullar, D. (2020). How Trump became the pro-infection candidate. *The New Yorker*.
- Kilander, G. (2024). Almost half of Republicans support using military to lock up immigrants in camps: Poll. *The Independent*.
- Kramer, A.E. (2020). ‘There Are No Viruses Here’: Leader of Belarus Scoffs at Lockdowns. *The New York Times*.
- Kutsyuruba, B. (2017). Using Document Analysis Methodology to Explore Educational Reforms and Policy Changes in Post-Soviet Ukraine”. In Silova, I., Sobe, N.W., Korzh, A., Kovalchuk, S. (eds.) *Reimagining Utopias. Theory and Method for Educational Research in Post-Socialist Contexts* (Bold Visions in Educational Research book series). Sense Publishers, 199-214.
- Maher, P., Bradshaw, D., Foran, A.F., Griffin, S., Jay, S., McHugh, C., Muldoon, O., Quayle, P., Roth, J. & Ryan, M. (2022). Pandemic threat and group cohesion: national identification in the wake of COVID-19 is associated with authoritarianism. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 163 (6), 789-805.
- Mengshoel A.M. & Sim, J. (2023). Metasynthesis: issues of empirical and theoretical context.” *Quality & Quantity*, 57, 3339-3361.
- Musu, C. (2020). War metaphors used for COVID-19 are compelling but also dangerous. *The Conversation*.
- Onraet, E., Cornelis, I. & Van Hiel, A. (2014). The Relationships between internal and external threat and right-wing attitudes. A three-wave longitudinal study. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 40 (1), 712-725.
- Pizzato, M., Alicandro, G., Gerli, A.G. & La Vecchia, C. (2024). Impact of COVID-19 on total excess mortality and geographic disparities in Europe, 2020-2023: a spatio-temporal analysis. *The Lancet Regional Health – Europe*, 44 (1), 1-11.
- Roth, A. (2020). Belarus blues: can Europe’s ‘last dictator’ survive rising discontent? *The Guardian*.
- Schreurs, S. (2021). Those were the days: welfare nostalgia and the populist radical right in the Netherlands, Austria and Sweden. *Journal of International and Comparative Social Policy*, 37 (2), 128-141.
- Sigler, T., Charles-Edwards, E., Corcoran, J., Kimpton, A., Loginova, J., Mahmuda, S., Wohland, P. (2021). The socio-spatial determinants of COVID-19 diffusion: the impact of globalisation, settlement characteristics and population. *Globalization and Health*, 17 (1), 56-70.
- Strong, P. (2008). Epidemic Psychology: A Model. *Sociology of Health & Illness*, 12 (3), 249-259.
- Thorisdottir, H., Jost, J.T., Liviatan, I. & Shrout, P.E. (2007). Psychological Needs and Values Underlying Left-Right Political Orientation: Cross-National Evidence from Eastern and Western Europe. *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, 71 (2), 175-203.
- Varma, S. (2020). A pandemic is not a war: COVID-19 urgent anthropological reflections. *Social Anthropology*, 28 (2), 376-378.