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Editorial.

Biopolitical Dimension of Contemporary Political Issues

In 2011 Robert Blank introduced one of the most interesting division of biopolitics into individual, societal-oriented and global-oriented issues (Table 1). All of them concern life as a subject of politics yet on different levels of generality. We claim that up until now, biopolitics was treated as a separate field of public policy concerning a strongly focused set of cases such as political deliberations on abortion, euthanasia, brain death, organ transplantation, human enhancement, as well as using biotechnology, vaccine policy, healthcare issues, HIV/AIDS and cancer policy, human cloning, workplace hazards and other similar ones. However, considering that humans are the center of basically everything happening in the world, any policy concerning a human life in such an extent as biopolitics has to be connected with other areas of politics. Paradoxically, this strong connection is not always discernible at hand.

This situation has changed just recently in the face of the coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2 also known as COVID-19 or coronavirus) epidemic outbreak. First of all, it should be noted that nearly all states of the world and international organizations undertook defensive and preventive measures to limit the spread of the virus. The first country that has faced the epidemic was China. Interestingly, the most populated country in the world significantly

Table 1. Areas of biopolicy

<i>Individual issues</i>	
Human genetic intervention:	Genetic counseling, carrier screening, genetic therapy
Prenatal issues:	Abortion, prenatal diagnosis, reproductive technologies, fetal research, sterilization, sex predetermination
Issues within the lifecycle:	Nutrition and behavior, organ transplantation, psychosurgery and electrical brain stimulation, drug therapy and usage, human experimentation, environmental mutations
Death-related issues:	Aging process, irreversible coma, terminal patients, terminal pediatric patients, suicide intervention, extraordinary care, definitions of death
<i>Societal-oriented issues</i>	
Genetic diversity and human equality, population control, sex differences, race differences, aging populations, sedentary lifestyle, crowding, genetic determinants of behavior, biohazards, nature/nurture debate	
<i>Global-oriented issues</i>	
Environment, contamination of biosphere, climate change and manipulation, toxic biological/chemical substances, biological terrorism, radiation pollution, conflict/global stress	

Source: Robert H. Blank, "Biopolicy: A restatement of its role in politics and the life sciences," *Politics and the Life Sciences*, 1982, 1(1):38–51.

reduced the epidemic spread while other states experience the constant increase of number of infected citizens. Therefore, a frequently asked question is: how was that possible? What did China do? Why is it so efficient in fighting with the virus? For now, the minds of all people in the world are focused on the epidemic, yet we claim that sooner or later these simple questions will evolve into debates on the contamination of biosphere, global security, then on population control and eventually on the Karl Popper's distinction into open and closed society. It is not excluded that many democracies of the world will try to safeguard themselves against any similar situations in the future. Even if they will not make full transition to closed societies, which could face many difficulties such as people's resistance, it is highly possible that they will make themselves closer to becoming militant democracies. Therefore, the biopolitical question about ensuring the most effective population control has a potential for evolving into one of the most vital political issues of contemporary times.

Another consequence of the recent events is an emergence of fertile ground for discussing the matter of individual responsibility. The body of literature on biopolitics has noted a shift from state responsibility to physician responsibility and lately to individual responsibility. However, the observable people's behaviors after the release of information about the epidemic, such as making excessive supplies, reselling basic goods for stunning prices, fighting in stores for a can of bean, as well as concealing information about having contact with an infected person, leaving the high-risk zones, not subordinating to official announcements, not maintaining basic hygiene, etc. already make the shift in theoretical debates much more significant. Who will answer for those actions? Should we behave responsibly? What in fact is a responsible behavior? How to force responsible behaviors? What are the limits of individual responsibility? These questions will certainly open another major thread of debates and normative field for the creation of new social patterns.

Another interesting case is Poland which this year expects presidential elections. Even this area of politics experiences the consequences of epidemic outbreak. First of all, for a long time all Polish media maintained that Poland is free of the epidemic despite the

virus was already present in nearly all countries across the globe. The most probable aim was to keep voter's attention focused on the electoral campaign. Secondly, numerous meetings of candidates with voters were cancelled; and finally, many candidates announced moving their campaigns to the Internet. In fact, these days digital campaigns are nothing new, however, it can be expected that there will be created new methods of using it for political purposes and that Internet will be gradually becoming the main platform of electoral campaigns and political communication.

These few examples cover probably only the most important biopolitical aspects of political reality. It can be expected that many other issues and debates will show up that will push forward the on-going evolution of politics. As always, some will struggle for the conservation of the current state of affairs while others will support progress and development. Another interesting thing is what will be considered conservative and progressive? Will, for example, tendencies for closing societies be considered progressive while defending liberal democracies as conservative? Certainly, political scientists will have tremendous work to do, to observe, understand and explain ever-becoming even more complex political reality.

