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Role of politics in a globalised world: case of global health and COVID-19

UDC 323; 327

DOI <https://doi.org/10.24195/2414-9616.2023-4.22>

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This work aims to explore issues related to politics in a globalizing world. The issue is examined through the prism of research into issues related to the field of health care and their reflection on political processes. The analysis is carried out in the context of global politics. First, a brief overview of globalization processes following the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is outlined. Based on the analysis of globalization processes, an attempt is made to consider the globalization of politics, i.e., political processes. The importance of issues related to the topic of protection of health of population is assessed based on the understanding of the "political determinants of health" and their role in Global Health Governance. Against the background of the coronavirus pandemic, many political processes took place, as a result of which a new direction of research emerged – "pandemic politics," which is also studied as part of this work.

Research method. *This work is based on a narrative review of the literature in political science and related to the object of study directions. Sources have been chosen based on quantitative research approaches.*

Research novelty. *This work is innovative in the context of considering politics as a basis for analyzing processes occurring at the global level. No detailed works on the political determinants of health and pandemic politics in the context of globalization was found in the Azerbaijan scientific literature.*

Conclusion. *The analysis showed that pandemics like COVID-19 underscore the universal importance of global health. COVID-19 reminds us of politics' role in health and its impact on international dynamics. Such global health challenges demand careful policy consideration. This emphasis on global health fuels research influenced by politics, as political decisions affect health across dimensions. Politics shapes global health governance, impacting health outcomes worldwide. Given the growing political importance of global health issues, it is proposed to intensify research in this area through the prism of political science.*

Key words: *Global politics, international relations, globalisation, COVID-19, pandemic politics, global health, political determinants of health.*

Introduction. The purpose of this work is to study the role of politics in moder globalization processes related to health issues such as pandemic COVID-19 and analyze the political determinants of health accordingly.

Research method. The study examined search results for role of politics in modern world within the framework of globalization, pandemics and political determinants of health. Narrative literature review has been used as the main research method.

Research novelty. This study demonstrates innovation by examining politics as a foundational framework for scrutinizing global-level phenomena. A comprehensive review of Azerbaijani scholarly literature revealed an absence of detailed investigations pertaining to the political factors influencing public health and pandemic governance within the framework of globalization.

Main text. Politics permeates all spheres of life and is represented by a relatively broad base of definitions in the scientific literature. The definition of politics is replenished as the world political processes are transformed and associated with new challenges for the world community. As a result, political scientists develop new approaches to the definition that would respond to the emerging challenges.

The Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary [1] defines politics as "the art or science of government."

Based on that definition, we believe that global politics should fulfil similar goals but on a global scale. The composite nature of the "global politics" notion determines the need to consider its components (global and politics) in an inseparable connection, creating an independent field of study.

Globalisation and the events in the world affect the political agenda, simultaneously forming new directions for research in political science. Moreover, almost all spheres of life and activity are interconnected today, creating the ground for the emergence and development of intersectoral research. Thus, global health governance is one of them, as it can be considered from a medical, legal, political, and economic point of view. Although these different areas (politics and health) have traditionally been studied separately, today, their interdependence has determined the need for a new research approach. Many works studying issues of political significance began to be considered in the context of their impact on health and vice versa.

The coronavirus pandemic, having made its adjustments to the political agenda at the global level, has shown that health governance issues from a global perspective require a political approach. This paper will consider the concepts that have emerged at the intersection of global politics, health and governance.

Is globalisation still in progress after COVID-19?

The controversy in world politics amid the coronavirus pandemic seemed to put globalisation on hold. However, although transport links between countries have been reduced to a minimum, they were only partially cancelled. Cargo transportation continued, although in a limited number. Thus, according to the World Trade Organization [2], in the second quarter of 2020, “global merchandise trade volumes declined by 14.3%”. So, the transportation of goods was not stopped completely.

Moreover, Sun et al. [3] indicate minimum disruption of cargo flights due to the necessity of transporting medical equipment and critical goods across borders. Digital communication amid COVID-19 even intensified. A significant change in the use of digital technologies affected various work and life domains [4]. Thus, due to the high use of digital technologies amid the coronavirus pandemic, “the average work-day span ... increased by +48.5 min” [5].

All the earlier-mentioned data indicate that the intensive exchange of information and goods, communication between countries, and trade formed by globalisation cannot be suspended entirely, even in the face of lockdowns and reduced transport links.

The concept of globalisation is widely studied within various scientific branches. Depending on the approach, different definitions can be found. Thus, a search for the query “globalization” from 2019 to 2023 (as of June 18, 2023) only within the framework of Google Scholar produces 300 thousand results, of which 15,200 are for 2023 alone. This data illustrates the relevance of the topic against the background of discussions about “deglobalization.” We intentionally use this resource as a basic one since, in our opinion, it covers the largest amount of data compared to other scientific databases, such as Scopus.

Some authors [Balsa-Barreiro et al., 2020] point to “deglobalization” as the basis for political movements resulting from “misalignment and confrontation between people and establishment” against the background of hyperconnectivity in the world. Assessing globalisation against the background of the coronavirus pandemic, Irwin [6] characterised the process as “slowbalization.” However, we are not inclined to think so because the world is starting to return to its usual pace now that the pandemic, according to the WHO, is already over. Thus, according to the World Bank [7], a recovery in growth rates (including in output and investment) to the pre-pandemic period in advanced economies is expected as early as 2023. Although in the case of developing countries, the recovery process will take longer, it is still underway, which indicates the strength of the processes of globalisation.

Al-Rodhan and Stoudmann [8] point to differences in the interpretation of globalisation depending on “political ideology, geographic location, social status,

cultural background, and ethnic and religious affiliation of a person.” After analysing various definitions from 1995 to 2006, the authors [8, p.5] propose to define globalisation as “a process that encompasses the causes, course, and consequences of transnational and transcultural integration of human and non-human activities.”

Speaking of globalisation, one might get the impression that “there is nowhere else”; there are no areas left that would not be affected. Nevertheless, despite some slowdown amid the pandemic, the process continues, including the movement of goods, technology and services. As scientific advancements continue to emerge, countries increasingly collaborate to acquire these advancements or establish joint production ventures.

Why politics is “global” today?

The intersection of global politics, health, and governance is complex and ever-evolving. The formation of the concept of global politics is directly related to globalisation. As a result, events occurring within one country began to impact other countries. Thus, quite often, migration takes place due to socioeconomic reasons. This process is well described within the concept of labour/economic migration. According to International Labour Organization data [9], approximately 113.9 million international migrant workers are in high-income countries, comprising 67.4 per cent of the estimated 169 million. Boyer et al. [10, p.7] note that today “types of actors in world affairs are greater in number and more varied in type”; therefore, international relations “is sometimes viewed as anachronistic and inaccurate.” Authors propose to use the term “global” as it is more “inclusive of types of interactions that take place in today’s world,” its scope also covers different spaces of interactions.

There are various reasons for the growing global perception of politics. The politics and processes of globalisation are interconnected. Thus, globalisation creates conditions for eliminating barriers between countries in trade. However, political decisions may limit it, despite the actual possibility. A striking confirmation of this is the introduction of economic and other sanctions, which can be adopted within individual countries or organisations (e.g., the European Union). For example, the United States imposed an economic embargo on trade with Cuba in 1962. From the point of view of geographical proximity, the reasons for the difficulty of economic ties are minimal. However, these restrictions exist, which is explained [11] by the response “to certain actions taken by the Cuban Government.”

Another factor influencing the politicisation of globalisation is the emergence of global threats, the solution of which requires collective efforts at the global level. Health issues are a prime example of this. Viruses know no borders, and the emergence of a threat in one part of the world has the potential to quickly become a global emergency, which happened

during the coronavirus pandemic. However, fighting against and eliminating such threats requires collective decisions on a global scale. The same applies to climate change as it poses significant systemic risks to human prosperity, and its solution requires political decisions [12].

According to Mansbach and Taylor [13], authoritative decisions are not solely made by governments in the global politics of a state-centric world. Instead, numerous domestic, transnational, and international institutions and groups, both formal and informal, play a significant role in governance, expanding the sources of global authority beyond just state governments. Following this approach, the world is considered “as a whole,” where the interactions of all involved on the global stage actors are considered.

Against the background of the globalisation of politics and vice versa, the politicisation of global processes, it is worth noting the concept of Global Governance, which has become relevant in countering the COVID-19 pandemic.

Against the background of globalisation and the rise of transnational threats, the role of the World Health Organization (WHO) began to rise. The need for cooperation to prevent global health threats led to adoption of International Health Regulations [14]. It represents the only “set of legally binding rules that aim to prevent, protect against, control, and provide a public health response to the international spread of disease.” Gostin and Katz [15] describe IHR as “the only agreement with the international legal and political legitimacy to set global security standards.” In this paper, we will not touch on the Pandemic Treaty, as it is under development, and it is challenging to conclude its political implications for global health.

Global Health Governance (GHG) and Political Determinants of Health

There are different approaches and terminology regarding processes that go beyond the boundaries of an individual state in political science, such as international relations, foreign policy, international politics, and world politics. Within the framework of this work, we rely on a global approach since our work focuses on the concept of global health, which is also associated with globalisation. Thus, one of the examples of its impact on health-related processes in the world is the development of the “Global Health Governance” field of study.

The global governance concept emerged in the early 90s of the 20th centuries. Some scholars attribute its development to the “global change” that created a “borderless world” [16, p.5]. Halliday [17,] indicates that this concept, in addition to the traditional bodies of international security and economic management, also covers interrelated institutions found in all issues and regions, which often overlap, and a growing number of non-state actors, i.e., international civil society.

According to Eilstrup-Sangiovanni and West-erwinter [18], global governance represents complexes that widely differ. Those complexes are “clusters of overlapping institutions and actors that govern specific policy issues.” Across different governance complexes and over time, variations in the rulesets, actors involved, and conflicts arise. Indeed, the concept of “global” indicates an extensive scope of involved parties. As one of the most pressing issues today, for example, the “green agenda” requires the involvement of all countries since our planet is “common.” Cutting down trees in one part of the planet damages world ecology. That is why forests are called the “lungs of the planet,” not of individual countries. Accordingly, during the development of the Global Green New Deal, the international community, specifically G7 countries, implemented global governance in this area [19].

The second direction that contributed to the development of the global governance field of study is global health (GH). The scientific literature presents various approaches to the definition of GH. Thus, Beaglehole and Bonita [20] studied its different definitions and proposed a new one as “collaborative trans-national research and action for promoting health for all.” According to the authors, appealing to a “global” approach in terminology would allow coverage of all health-related policies, including in various sectors, not just the health sector. Health, indeed, is no longer only a medical problem. Ecology, socio-economic conditions, political instability, wars and other factors directly affect the population's health. That is why the “political determinants of health” (PDH) concept emerged in the scientific literature. According to Jacobs et al. [21, p.39], PDH represent “the implications of politics and policy that influence the social conditions in which people live and the health outcomes they experience.”

For a long time, scientific research focusing on health factors was based on the study of medical, economic and other causes. However, as Mishori [Mishori, 2021] points out, “Time to Focus on the Political Determinants of Health” has arrived. PDH determine the impact of factors related to power distribution, economic and social development on health. That is, the state should monitor the causes of diseases, and when mass causes are identified, an immediate response is required with the development of an appropriate policy/strategy to eliminate them. Accordingly, global governance in health-related issues is closely related to PDH.

How do we define global health? J.P. Koplan et al. [22] introduced the preeminent and extensively adopted explication of the “Global Health” (GH) term. Thus, according to the authors, it is “an area for study, research, and practice that places a priority on improving health and achieving equity in health for all people worldwide.” Authors indicate that GH under-

scores the significance of addressing health challenges that transcend national boundaries, encompassing various determinants and proposing solutions. This field integrates many disciplines beyond health sciences, fostering collaborative efforts. Moreover, it represents a fusion of population-based preventive measures with individual-focused clinical care, striving for a comprehensive approach to healthcare.

Despite the rather broad definition proposed by the authors [22], their work should have considered the potential impact of political factors, which raises an important question. Nevertheless, the authors point to various “determinants”, which automatically include political ones. Moreover, the authors note the importance of various disciplines “within and beyond the health sciences.” That is, the scope of GH turns out to be much broader than medicine or sociology, and it is quite reasonable to assume political science as well, which is already apparent today when considering the PDH.

According to Claborn [23], the GH concept encompasses concerns that possess political foundations and cover “a wide range of issues, including but not limited to” climate change, urbanisation, health equity, social injustice, and income disparity. These issues within the realm of GH are inherently intertwined with political viewpoints and contentious debates surrounding scientific models, governance structures, ethical considerations, and health policies. Kickbusch [24] notes that “the crisis in global health is not a crisis of disease, it is a crisis of governance.” According to the author [24], examining health from the perspective of political determinants involves evaluating how diverse power dynamics, institutions, processes, interests, and ideological stances influence health outcomes within different political systems and cultures and across various levels of governance.

GHG is a synergy of two directions – global governance and global health that has evolved into an independent field of study. K. Lee and A. Kamradt-Scott [25] assert that the “global health governance” expression first emerged in the 1990s. Analysing the concept based on the study of global governance, the authors put forward three concepts of GHG: “1) globalization and health governance; 2) global governance and health, and 3) governance for global health.” According to Fidler [26], GHG is “the use of formal and informal institutions, rules, and processes by states, intergovernmental organizations, and nonstate actors to deal with challenges to health that require cross-border collective action to address effectively”. At the moment, this definition seems to be the most comprehensive.

Transnational cooperation in health amidst globalisation and conflicting geopolitical interests raises questions about the practical implementation of GH. Thus, globalisation has had an impressive impact on global health policy and governance. First

of all, this is manifested in the strengthening of ties and, accordingly, interdependence between countries. That ties, in turn, create new opportunities and agendas for cooperation. However, political contradictions between countries or different political institutions within the same country can create barriers and neutralise these opportunities.

Pandemic politics and GHG

COVID-19 has become a hitherto unseen momentum in the context of its impact on world science. The number of articles grew exponentially daily. Thus, although the pandemic threat emerged only at the end of 2019, as of June 19, 2023, Google Scholar returns more than 5,330,000 results on request of “COVID-19.” Such large-scale coverage is explained by the pandemic affecting almost all fields, impacting different science branches. Sometimes these spheres were unexpected. Thus, linguistics has become highly “enriched” as new terms such as “lockdown”, “covidiot”, and many others have appeared [27]. So, “we’ve created new language for coronavirus” [28] that some authors explained as “viro-linguistics” [28].

One of the new terms that came into circulation was “pandemic politics” (PP). This field is associated with considering the intersection of politics and measures taken in public health to counter a pandemic. A Google Scholar search for “pandemic politics” (as of 20 Jun. 2023) returns 3,650 results. A search on the related “pandemic policy” field returns 7,090 results; “COVID-19 politics” – 1,130 results. Based on the provided numbers, we can conclude that the PP field of study is new to scientific literature.

Pandemic politics as a research area includes the study of the formation of responses to the pandemic by political actors, institutions and related political processes, as well as the impact of the pandemic itself on political dynamics. Barberia et al. [29] indicate that “political decisions, constellations, and behaviours exert a large influence of the dynamics” of the pandemic. According to the authors, performance and response to Covid-19 can increase or decrease support for the incumbent parties and leaders. A study from Switzerland [30] also confirmed the dependence of political trust among the population on the measures taken against the background of the pandemic; thus, the authors concluded that “political trust increased after the lockdown, but it was negatively affected by ... perceived threats from the government policy response.”

According to Barberia et al. [29], a pandemic can also affect the perceived risk and utility of voting and, thus, the turnout and electoral outcomes. However, authors conclude that although the pandemic may reveal “weaknesses of each country, each political system, each public administration, and perhaps even each politician”, it has no such significant political consequences. Nevertheless, we believe that the political aspects of the pandemic can be considered to improve

social policy since the population's discontent is often associated precisely with the socio-economic aspects of the pandemic. Thus, Thiers and Wehner [30] assessed the "COVID-19 battle" in Britain and concluded that "political leaders' reactions and decisions are central to managing this global health crisis".

There are different approaches to defining the concept of pandemic politics. For example, Altiparmakis et al [31], consider the pandemic politics in the context of "government responses to COVID-19". Tesche [32], "by building on synthesis of the new intergovernmentalism and the emergency politics", assesses the pandemic from the point of view of the mechanisms of interaction between European Union (EU) institutions for the implementation of anti-pandemic measures. When evaluating pandemic politics, the author conducts a study from the point of view of 'emergency politics.' Shepherd et al. [33] assessed US politics against the background of the pandemic and concluded that it "become the most powerful lens through which to understand and process the pandemic".

Williamson et al. [34] look at pandemic politics in terms of its impact on teaching practice and distance learning. Other studies assessed PP regarding social distancing [35], primary care delivery [36], etc. All those studies testify that the PP field is more expansive than areas exclusively familiar to political science. It covers both social and medical and other factors.

The scope of the PP is quite broad. First of all, the politics within the state is based on decisions and legislative documents adopted at the government level. For example, some of Regulations (now revoked) adopted in England in 2020 include "The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions, No. 3)", "The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Self-Isolation)". The EU has also adopted numerous documents defining measures to combat the pandemic, such as the "COVID-19 Guidelines for border management measures to protect health and ensure the availability of goods and essential services".

Documents adopted within individual countries covered various areas, including the economy, agriculture, customs, and others; that was the case for organisations, the EU specifically. Zhou et al. [37], having studied the states' politics concerning the pandemic, concluded that "the government response significantly affected the development of the pandemic". Thus, the authors traced a direct relationship between an increase in government response and a decrease in mortality.

Concerning the quarantine measures taken, almost all UN member states, to one degree or another, implemented the recommendations of the WHO and developed appropriate policies. Thus, the most widespread measures were the population's mandate of wearing medical masks, lockdowns, PCR testing and social distancing.

The pandemic impacting all spheres of life has also affected politics. Some studies point to the "politicization" of the pandemic. Thus, Google Scholar (as of June 10, 2023) returned 26,100 results for the query "politicization of COVID-19 pandemic". Most often, this issue is considered from the point of view of internal political struggle. Thus, a study by Béland et al. [38] indicated that the strategies of both President Trump and Bolsonaro were based on emphasising the economic threats posed by the public health response to COVID-19 but downplaying the public health threat itself.

Today we can say that political factors made it possible to determine the trajectory of the pandemic. It directly depended on the measures taken by the government, including providing financial support to the population. Thus, according to a Pew Research Center survey of more than 14,000 adults across 14 advanced economies in Europe, Asia, North America and Australia, 73% supported their state policy of tackling the coronavirus outbreak [39]. In general, the approval of the policy by the population is one of the critical factors in ensuring stability in society.

Governments have a vital role in developing and executing policies and procedures to limit the spread of the illness, protect public health, and control its economic and social effects. State-level policies, first of all, included medical measures. Thus, governments developed quarantine and treatment protocols. Moreover, governments were responsible for providing vaccines and personal protective equipment. Unfortunately, many countries, especially low-income ones, cannot produce vaccines. Therefore, ensuring access to them for the population was not a medical but rather a political task. That leads us "to take an envelope view" as considering the response to the pandemic on a global scale is an even more complex issue.

The pandemic, being a global phenomenon, requires an equally global level of cooperation between representatives of political leaders to share data, medicines and vaccines to help lower-income countries. However, as Wenham [Wenham, 2021] notes, political factors have influenced the "trajectory of the pandemic".

Now that the pandemic is over, the consideration of many issues is perceived differently. If, at the beginning of the pandemic, there was inevitable chaos and the growth of geopolitical contradictions, the growth of nationalism and protectionism, then gradually, many issues were resolved. Unfortunately, this does not cancel the emergence of new conflicts and geopolitical tensions.

The pandemic has been dramatically affected by political factors. The actions of governments, the degree of political division in various nations, and the economic situation have all influenced the spread of the virus and how individuals have

reacted to it. Therefore, Stocking et al. [40], analysing pandemic governance in the context of the possible new pandemic convention, agreement, or other instruments currently under consideration, note that there is a “need for cross-government, multisectoral engagement, and leadership by heads of state and governments at both national and global levels”.

Conclusion. Epidemics, particularly those of substantial magnitudes, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, serve as compelling evidence for the universality of health as a fundamental societal concern. The disease disregards distinctions based on nationality or territorial borders. Consequently, it is imperative to conduct comprehensive research on global health to formulate international strategies and mechanisms to prevent and effectively eradicate such diseases.

COVID-19 reminded us of the importance of political attention to the political determinants of health and global health issues. The pandemic also highlighted the significant influence of political processes on the interplay between states in health matters.

At the global level, the intricacies of health issues become further compounded, involving diverse and occasionally conflicting interests. Therefore, these complexities necessitate careful consideration when formulating a state's international policy. That consideration has led health scientists and policymakers to emphasise the global dimensions of public health. Consequently, novel avenues of research and development are being pursued to address these emerging concerns, which highly depend on political factors. Political actions and decisions can impact social, economic, and environmental factors determining health conditions. The significance of politics in global health governance lies in its ability to determine the allocation of power and resources across various levels – global and national; therefore, impacting health outcomes.

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Роль політики в глобалізованому світі: приклад глобального здоров'я та COVID-19

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Метою цієї роботи є дослідження питань, пов'язаних з політикою у світі, що глобалізується. Проблематика розглядається крізь призму дослідження проблем сфери охорони здоров'я та їх рефлексії на політичні процеси. Аналіз здійснюється в контексті глобальної політики. По-перше, подано короткий огляд процесів глобалізації після пандемії коронавірусу (COVID-19). На основі аналізу процесів глобалізації зроблено спробу розглянути глобалізацію політики, тобто політичних процесів. Важливість питань, пов'язаних із темою охорони здоров'я населення, оцінюється на основі розуміння «політичних детермінант здоров'я» та їх ролі в Глобальному управлінні охороною здоров'я. На тлі пандемії коронавірусу відбулося багато політичних процесів, в результаті чого виник новий напрямок досліджень – «пандемічна політика», який також вивчається в рамках цієї роботи.

Метод дослідження. Ця робота базується на нарративному огляді літератури з політології та пов'язаних з об'єктом дослідження напрямів. Джерела вибрано на основі кількісних підходів дослідження.

Новизна дослідження. Ця робота є інноваційною в контексті розгляду політики як основи для аналізу процесів, що відбуваються на глобальному рівні. В азербайджанській науковій літературі не знайдено детальних робіт про політичні детермінанти здоров'я та пандемічної політики в контексті глобалізації.

Висновки. аналіз показав, що такі пандемії, як COVID-19, підкреслюють універсальну важливість глобального здоров'я. COVID-19 нагадує нам про роль політики в здоров'ї та її вплив на міжнародну динаміку. Такі глобальні проблеми охорони здоров'я вимагають ретельного політичного розгляду. Цей наголос на глобальному здоров'ї стимулює дослідження під впливом політики, оскільки політичні рішення впливають на здоров'я в різних вимірах. Політика формує глобальне управління охороною здоров'я, впливаючи на стан здоров'я в усьому світі. Враховуючи зростаючу політичну важливість проблем глобальної охорони здоров'я, пропонується активізувати дослідження в цій сфері через призму політології.

Ключові слова: глобальна політика, міжнародні відносини, глобалізація, COVID-19, пандемічна політика, глобальне здоров'я, політичні детермінанти здоров'я.