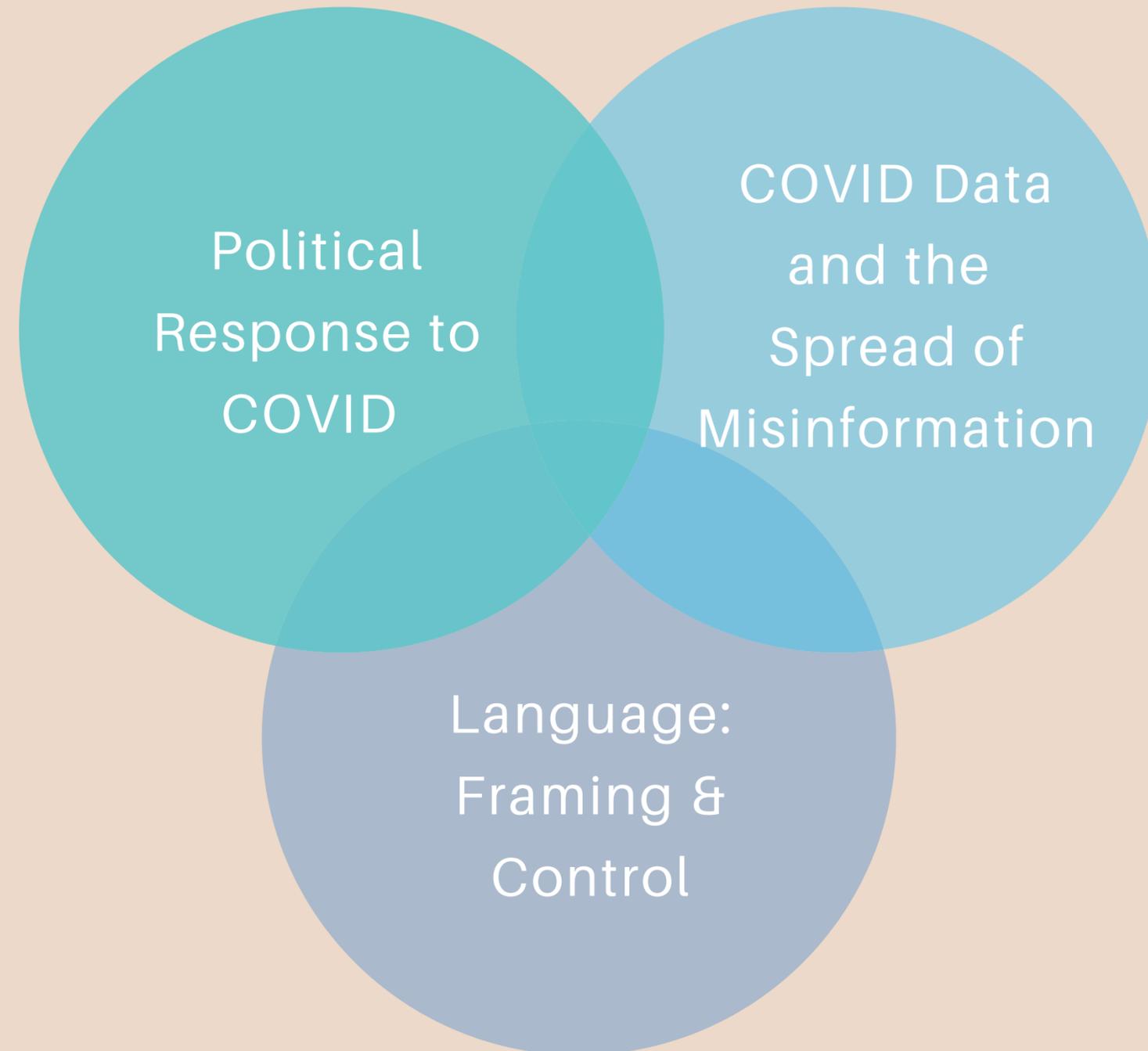


A Case Study on How Crisis Can Embolden Authoritarian Rule



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**Viktor
Orbán**

This is where we stand on the twenty-sixth day of the “state of danger”. We are living through difficult times, but you can see that not a single Hungarian is being left behind. If we look out for one another, we will succeed.



**Benjamin
Netanyahu**

As long as there is no vaccine for the virus, it will return and spread if we are not strict about being cautious. We are all called upon to continue adhering to the rules. When I say ‘we are all’ that includes me, my fellow ministers, MKs and it includes you – dear citizens of Israel.



The Philippines

I will order you detained and I will release you after this COVID-19 crisis is over. If you are detained, you are on your own when it comes to food.



**Rodrigo
Duterte**

Hungary

Israel



COVID Politics

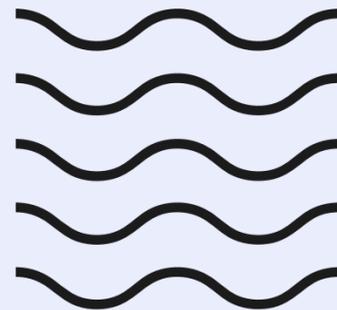




Pre-COVID Context



Israel



External Threats

Between 2019 and early 2020, Israel has had increased tensions and military encounters with Iran and its affiliates, such as Hamas and Hezbollah.

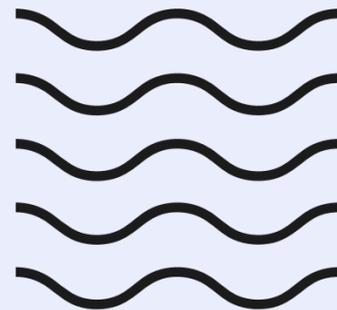
Political divide

In the last decade, Israeli politics have been increasing divided between the right-wing and left-wing. The Israeli identity is also torn between secular and Orthodox Judaism.

Election and Political scandal

Over the past year, there have been four consecutive elections to form a coalition government in the Knesset, Israel's parliament. And Prime Minister Netanyahu and his wife are under investigation for bribery.

Hungary



Corruption and Economic decline

First and only European country to be ranked as only "partly free" by Freedom House and ranks among the most corrupt European countries by Transparency International Index.

Hungary has been experiencing depopulation, brain drain, and unemployment.

Consolidation of Power

Since Orbán's election in 2010, he has packed courts, gerrymandered parliamentary districts, and changed the constitution. Orbán's Fidesz party controls two-thirds of the seats in parliament.

Media and political dissent

According to a Budapest-based scholar Marius Dragomir, 90% of all media in Hungary was owned by either the state or a Fidesz ally since 2017.

Philippines



Internal conflict

Since 2016, the Philippines has been dealing with several armed conflicts and insurgencies. These include a war on drugs, a jihadist insurgency in the Southern regions, and increased communist activity.

Political unrest

Before Covid-19, the economy of the Philippines was hurt by mass unemployment and decreasing growth.

Strong man

Since Duterte came to power in 2016, he has presented himself as a populist and pushed for the elimination of criminal activity and corruption. His record of scandal and human rights violations has led him to attack the media and dissidents.



Immediate Response and Legal action

Israeli Response



- **RESPONDED EARLY**

The Israeli government responded early to the pandemic with all travel from China being suspended by January 20th.

- **NATIONAL MEASURES**

The implementation of the COVID-19 response has been national.

On March 19, it was PM Netanyahu who declared a national state of emergency.

It has been the Knesset passing coronavirus restrictions.

- **STRICT RESTRICTIONS**

Laws limited the various sectors of the economy from public transportation, restaurants, and public space.

- **PUBLIC REACTION**

There was a general disdain for the restrictions, especially from the Haredi (Orthodox) Jewish community.

Opponents to PM Netanyahu believe the COVID-19 restrictions are being misused to silence dissent.



Israel Major Laws

April 14-16

The Ministry of Health enacted a partial national lockdown with Israelis being unable to move from city to city.

July 3

The Knesset authorized the ISA, Israeli Security Agency, or Shabak to use cellphone metadata to contact trace coronavirus infected and their relatives.

September 30

The Knesset passed a special emergency law that prohibits holding large gatherings beyond 1 km from a person's residence.



Israel's use of force

Though the response of Israel was swift and generally worked to contain the spread of the virus, there are cases of abuse of authority.

Netanyahu grants lockdown exceptions to political supporters such as the Haredi community and personal donors.

Police target anti-Netanyahu demonstrators when enforcing Covid restrictions.

Police collect information on demonstrators and create a database to track their activities.

Netanyahu uses the law limiting movement by citizens to a km radius to limit protests against his corruption charges.



Hungary response

- **DENIAL**

Orbán was at first reluctant to acknowledge the threat of COVID-19. Therefore serious action was delayed and not taken until late March.

- **CENTRALIZATION**

Coronavirus Act - March 30 - Orbán has the power to "rule by decree," no end date, penalties for speech. Power to implement COVID policy was taken from local leadership.

- **AUTHORITARIAN**

Coronavirus Act - March 30 - Orbán has the power to "rule by decree," no end date, penalties for speech. Power to implement COVID policy was taken from local leadership.

- **PUBLIC REACTION**

Orbán's actions are supported by the public according to opinion polls and are due to the inability of the opposition to safely voice dissent.





Hungary Major Laws

March 30

Hungarian Parliament votes to give Orbán power. Declares indefinite state of emergency that enables him to rule by decree and imprison for up to five years any journalist who disseminates news that is deemed “false.”

April 17

Using COVID as a pretext, ownership of the real-estate within the special economic areas is transferred to the county level from the local municipalities.



Hungary's use of force

The threat of arrest and imprisonment for five years is used to silence media and opposition voices around COVID response.

Police harass and sometimes arrest journalists and opposition leaders, but Orbán's policy relies heavily on threats.



Philippines response



■ **DELAYED RESPONSE**

President Duterte was initially denied the severity of COVID-19, slow to close the border with China out of fear of alienation.

■ **AUTOCRATIC**

The implementation of COVID-19 response has been controlled by Duterte and his party members. He reallocated government funds directly to pandemic response. Emergency powers and extrajudicial force has been used to control and eliminate dissent. Lethal force is a component.

■ **DRACONIAN**

Duterte enacted an 80-day quarantine in some areas responding with live rounds and mass arrests to protests.

■ **PUBLIC REACTION**

Duterte has a 91% approval rate but this could be inflated due to fear from the opposition. There is still frustrated with the response of the President.



Philippine Major laws

March 23



The Congress of the Philippines enacted the Bayanihan to Heal as One Act, which gave the president "temporarily take over or direct the pandemic operations. The budget of almost ₱275 billion (\$5.37 billion) from the estimated ₱438 billion (\$8.55 billion) national budget.

July 3

The Congress of the Philippines passed the Ant-Terrorism Act that allows for warrantless arrests, detention for 24 days, and wiretapping for 90 days.

September 16

Proclamation No. 1021 extends the state of calamity "for a period of one year" or from Sept. 13, 2020, to Sept. 12, 2021, unless lifted or extended.



Phillippines' use of force

President Duterte has given expanded and extrajudicial powers to police forces.

Under the Anti-Terrorism Act, police can conduct warrantless searches and detain individuals as long as 24 days, and surveillance can last 90 days.

Duterte has advocated for police and military to kill Covid protesters if they feel their lives are threatened or the protestors are violent.





Analysis

The common theme of these countries is that cognition and action are disconnected from public influence.

These nations have a history of strife which make crisis like Covid-19 prime opportunity for power growth.



1

The response by all three countries had a high level of response to the crisis. With the power of the state being used to compel obedience to Covid restrictions.

2



Feedback is silenced instead of being used in a cognition cycle. Political divisions in society were exposed to limit community cognition, to gain more power.

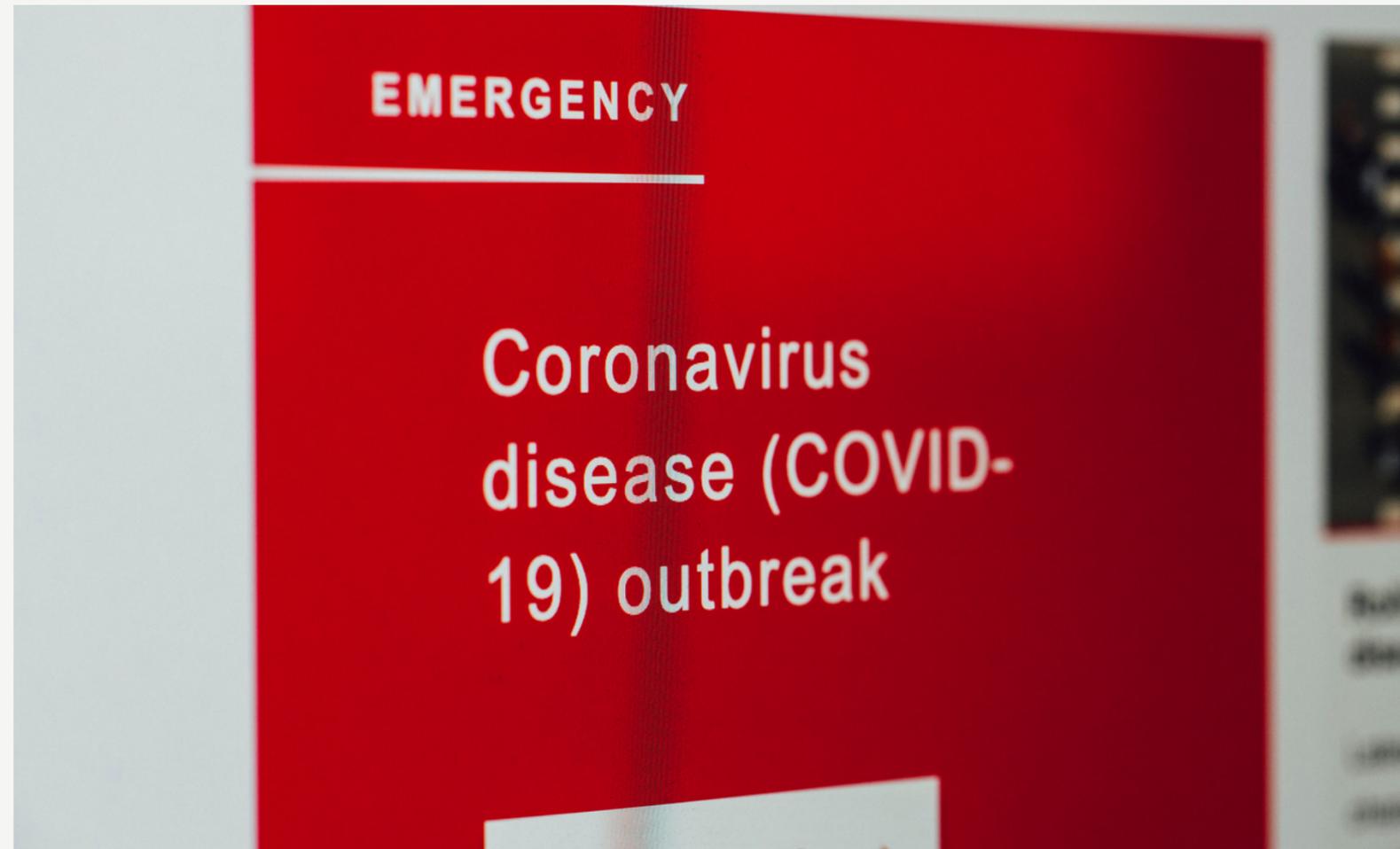
3

Netanyahu's behavior is an outlier because he does not have a solid coalition or unilateral power like the other leaders. That creates a spectrum of authoritarianism going from Israel-Hungary-Philippines.



COVID Related Data and the Opportunistic Use of Science

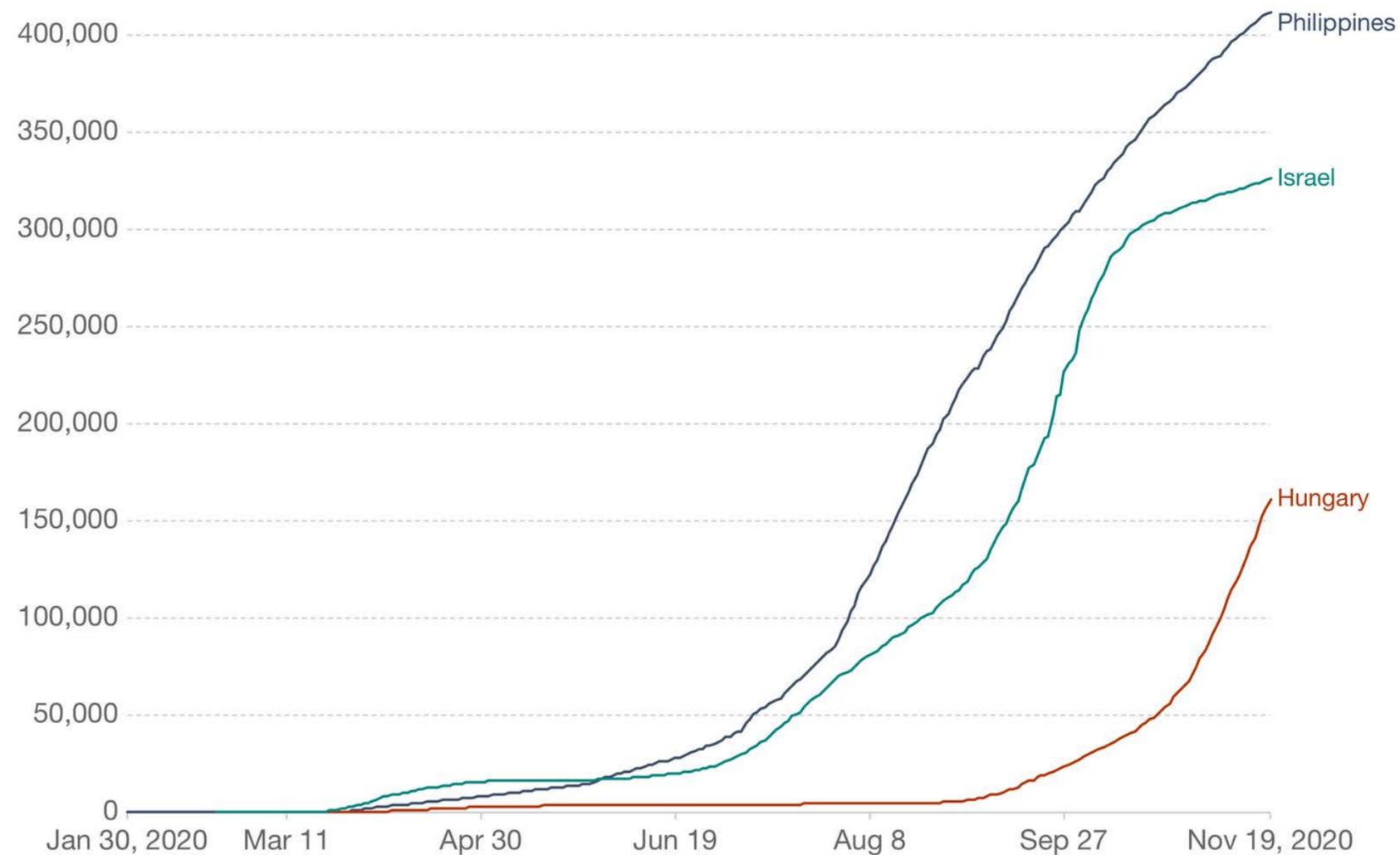
COVID-19 Data



Cumulative confirmed COVID-19 cases

The number of confirmed cases is lower than the number of actual cases; the main reason for that is limited testing.

Our World
in Data



Source: European CDC – Situation Update Worldwide – Last updated 19 November, 10:06 (London time)

CC BY

Currently, the Philippines has the highest number of confirmed cases among these three countries, and Hungary has the lowest number of confirmed cases as of November 19.

At one point, Israel had the highest rate of daily new infections in the world.

Daily new confirmed COVID-19 cases

Shown is the rolling 7-day average. The number of confirmed cases is lower than the number of actual cases; the main reason for that is limited testing.

Our World
in Data



Source: European CDC – Situation Update Worldwide – Last updated 19 November, 10:06 (London time)

CC BY

Though the Philippines has the highest number of confirmed cases compared to the other two, it has a lower number of daily new confirmed COVID-19 cases than Hungary. Hungary, who has the lowest number of confirmed cases also has the highest number of daily new confirmed cases.

The accuracy of this data is questionable due to limited testing in these countries and the inconsistencies in testing.

The Vaccine



The Philippines

Duterte has repeatedly told Filipino citizens that a vaccine is the only way to stamp out COVID-19 and he has urged the public not to listen to members of the opposition who are calling for the government to improve its pandemic response.

Israel

Netanyahu has stated that the exit from coronavirus is the development of a vaccine. He also ordered an enterprise for the permanent production of vaccines be established.

Hungary

Orbán told the Hungarian people that he is in talks to purchase vaccines from China and Russia and that Hungary would have access to 2-3 different vaccines by the spring. He also states that "it's likely that in April [Hungary will] be rid of the epidemic and can declare victory over it."

All three leaders are pushing for the development of a vaccine, creating this idea that the virus cannot be contained without it. Duterte and Netanyahu's emphasis on the vaccine as the sole solution to COVID-19 disregards the previous and ongoing need for better crisis management and better control of the spread of the virus. The initial mismanagement and lack of testing highly contributed to the current situation, and these leaders have yet to mention this. Instead, they continue to talk about their efforts to acquire a vaccine.

Spread of Misinformation



The Philippines

- In July, Duterte shared with the Filipino public that gasoline can be used as alternative to alcohol to disinfect masks. Later, the presidential spokesperson, Harry Roque corrected him and said Duterte was joking.
This alarmed many scientists. There is no proof that gasoline can be used as a disinfectant.
- When the virus first hit, he stated that the virus would "die a natural death."
This would soon be disproven as the number of cases and COVID-related deaths increased.





Hungary

- Orbán initially responded with a mixture of soft denial and external scapegoating. The government claimed that "COVID-19 looks like a seasonal flu." Orbán called the virus the "foreign virus" and linked the spread of the virus to foreigners.
- Many people associated the spread of the virus with migration, leading to an increase in discrimination against migrants and anti-immigrant sentiment.

Israel

- Netanyahu is the outlier among these three leaders. He has made an effort to be more responsible about the information he is sharing with the Israeli public.
- He only occasionally downplays the number of deaths when compared to WHO measurements.





Language Control & Framing

"This is where we stand on the twenty-sixth day of the "state of danger". We are living through difficult times, but you can see that not a single Hungarian is being left behind. If we look out for one another, we will succeed."

"We are extending the duration of the restrictions on free movement. We are extending their duration indefinitely, and we shall assess the situation on a weekly basis and thereby decide on any further extensions."

**What Orbán
says...**

“Our responsibility as public leaders is also to continue to call on the public to follow the rules, especially wearing masks and keeping distance.”

“As long as there is no vaccine for the virus, it will return and spread if we are not strict about being cautious. We are all called upon to continue adhering to the rules. When I say ‘we are all’ that includes me, my fellow ministers, MKs and it includes you – dear citizens of Israel.”

**What
Netanyahu
says...**

"No nation on earth was really prepared for COVID. No amount of preparation because that kind of microbe visits about once every 100 years"

"I will order you detained and I will release you after this COVID-19 crisis is over...If you are detained, you are on your own when it comes to food."

**What
Duterte
says...**

Common Language Usage

Framing to Exert Control

FRAMING: FEAR

- Questioning of authority not tolerated.
- Varying degrees of forceful responses to instill fear.

FRAMING: BLAME

- Foreigners are to blame for virus.
- Opposition is to blame for slow response.

FRAMING: SOLUTION

- Adherence to laws and policies without question.
- Promise of vaccine as solution.

FRAMING: SAVIOR

- Leadership will save the people. You must follow.
- Trust that the government is putting its people first.

■ ISRAEL/ CORRUPT LEADER

Though PM Netanyahu has taken significant steps to reduce the spread of the virus, his selective enforcement of policies has alienated the Israeli public. He has used his office to maintain his loosening grip on power, which limits the effectiveness of the national response.

■ HUNGARY / AUTHORITARIAN LEADER

Orbán uses the crisis to increase his party's control over the people and to gain an advantage over the opposition, currently has the highest approval rating since taking office, but virus numbers soaring, and protesters increasingly more vocal about mismanagement of pandemic response and corruption in Orbán's Fidesz party.

■ PHILIPPINES / DESPOTIC LEADER

Duterte continues to maintain his power and influence and has used the pandemic to further his agenda to suppress all forms of opposition. It has been an opportunity for him to justify the use of force behind the facade of protecting the Filipino people.

Leaders on a Spectrum

Corrupt - acting with an intent to give some advantage inconsistent with official duty and the rights of other.

Authoritarian - use of a strong central power to preserve the political status quo, and reductions in the rule of law, separation of powers, and democratic voting.

Despotic - acting as a single entity ruler with absolute power.

■ POWER GRAB

Corrupt and authoritarian leaders will use crises like COVID-19 to consolidate power and suppress political rivals.

■ SELECTIVE USE OF SCIENCE

Leaders will use science when it supports their political goals but ignore it when it impedes progress toward advancing their own agendas. They desire quick solutions like a vaccine.

■ PERCEPTION IS REALITY

More authoritarian leaders are much more concerned with controlling the panic of virus than reducing its spread. Especially if mitigation policy affects their powerbase.

Principles...

Authoritarian leaders use COVID crisis to consolidate power.

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