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Coronavirus Will Change the World Permanently. Here's How.

Tom Nichols is a professor at the U.S. Naval War College and author of The Death of Expertise.

44-55 minutes

For many Americans right now, the scale of the coronavirus crisis calls to mind 9/11 or the 2008 financial crisis—events that reshaped society in lasting ways, from how we travel and buy homes, to the level of security and surveillance we're accustomed to, and even to the language we use.

Politico Magazine surveyed more than 30 smart, macro thinkers this week, and they have some news for you: Buckle in. This could be bigger.

A global, novel virus that keeps us contained in our homes—maybe for months—is already reorienting our relationship to government, to the outside world, even to each other. Some changes these experts expect to see in the coming months or years might feel unfamiliar or unsettling: Will nations stay closed? Will touch become taboo? What will become of restaurants?

But crisis moments also present opportunity: more sophisticated and flexible use of technology, less polarization, a revived appreciation for the outdoors and life's other simple pleasures. No one knows exactly what will come, but here is our best stab at a

guide to the unknown ways that society—government, healthcare, the economy, our lifestyles and more—will change.

The personal becomes dangerous.

Deborah Tannen is a professor of linguistics at Georgetown and author, most recently, of *You're the Only One I Can Tell: Inside the Language of Women's Friendships*.

On 9/11, Americans discovered we are vulnerable to calamities we thought only happened in distant lands. The 2008 financial crisis told us we also can suffer the calamities of past eras, like the economic meltdown of the Great Depression. Now, the 1918 flu pandemic is a sudden specter in our lives.

This loss of innocence, or complacency, is a new way of being-in-the-world that we can expect to change our doing-in-the-world. We know now that touching things, being with other people and breathing the air in an enclosed space can be risky. How quickly that awareness recedes will be different for different people, but it can never vanish completely for anyone who lived through this year. It could become second nature to recoil from shaking hands or touching our faces—and we might all find we can't stop washing our hands.

The comfort of being in the presence of others might be replaced by a greater comfort with absence, especially with those we don't know intimately. Instead of asking, "Is there a reason to do this online?" we'll be asking, "Is there any good reason to do this in

person?"—and might need to be reminded and convinced that there is. Unfortunately, if unintendedly, those without easy access to broadband will be further disadvantaged. The paradox of online communication will be ratcheted up: It creates more distance, yes, but also more connection, as we communicate more often with people who are physically farther and farther away—and who feel safer to us because of that distance.

A new kind of patriotism.

Mark Lawrence Schrad is an associate professor of political science and author of the forthcoming *Smashing the Liquor Machine: A Global History of Prohibition.*

America has long equated patriotism with the armed forces. But you can't shoot a virus. Those on the frontlines against coronavirus aren't conscripts, mercenaries or enlisted men; they are our doctors, nurses, pharmacists, teachers, caregivers, store clerks, utility workers, small-business owners and employees. Like Li Wenliang and the doctors of Wuhan, many are suddenly saddled with unfathomable tasks, compounded by an increased risk of contamination and death they never signed up for.

When all is said and done, perhaps we will recognize their sacrifice as true patriotism, saluting our doctors and nurses, genuflecting and saying, "Thank you for your service," as we now do for military veterans. We will give them guaranteed health benefits and corporate discounts, and build statues and have holidays for this new class of people who sacrifice their health and their lives for ours. Perhaps, too, we will finally start to understand patriotism

more as cultivating the health and life of your community, rather than blowing up someone else's community. Maybe the de-militarization of American patriotism and love of community will be one of the benefits to come out of this whole awful mess.

A decline in polarization.

Peter T. Coleman is a professor of psychology at Columbia University who studies intractable conflict. His next book, *The Way Out: How to Overcome Toxic Polarization*, will be released in 2021.

The extraordinary shock(s) to our system that the coronavirus pandemic is bringing has the potential to break America out of the 50-plus year pattern of escalating political and cultural polarization we have been trapped in, and help us to change course toward greater national solidarity and functionality. It might sound idealistic, but there are two reasons to think it can happen.

The first is the "common enemy" scenario, in which people begin to look past their differences when faced with a shared external threat. COVID-19 is presenting us with a formidable enemy that will not distinguish between reds and blues, and might provide us with fusion-like energy and a singularity of purpose to help us reset and regroup. During the Blitz, the 56-day Nazi bombing campaign against the Britain, Winston Churchill's cabinet was amazed and heartened to witness the ascendance of human goodness —altruism, compassion and generosity of spirit and action.

The second reason is the "political shock wave" scenario. Studies

have shown that strong, enduring relational patterns often become more susceptible to change after some type of major shock destabilizes them. This doesn't necessarily happen right away, but a study of 850 enduring inter-state conflicts that occurred between 1816 to 1992 found that more than 75 percent of them ended within 10 years of a major destabilizing shock. Societal shocks can break different ways, making things better or worse. But given our current levels of tension, this scenario suggests that now is the time to begin to promote more constructive patterns in our cultural and political discourse. The time for change is clearly ripening.

A return to faith in serious experts.

America for several years has become a fundamentally unserious country. This is the luxury afforded us by peace, affluence and high levels of consumer technology. We didn't have to think about the things that once focused our minds—nuclear war, oil shortages, high unemployment, skyrocketing interest rates. Terrorism has receded back to being a kind of notional threat for which we dispatch volunteers in our military to the far corners of the desert as the advance guard of the homeland. We even elevated a reality TV star to the presidency as a populist attack on the bureaucracy and expertise that makes most of the government function on a day to day basis.

The COVID-19 crisis could change this in two ways. First, it has already forced people back to accepting that expertise matters. It was easy to sneer at experts until a pandemic arrived, and then people wanted to hear from medical professionals like Anthony

Fauci. Second, it may—one might hope—return Americans to a new seriousness, or at least move them back toward the idea that government is a matter for serious people. The colossal failure of the Trump administration both to keep Americans healthy and to slow the pandemic-driven implosion of the economy might shock the public enough back to insisting on something from government other than emotional satisfaction.

Less individualism.

Eric Klinenberg is professor of sociology and director of the Institute for Public Knowledge at New York University. He is the author, most recently, of *Palaces for the People: How Social Infrastructure Can Help Fight Inequality, Polarization, and the Decline of Civic Life*.

The coronavirus pandemic marks the end of our romance with market society and hyper-individualism. We could turn toward authoritarianism. Imagine President Donald Trump trying to suspend the November election. Consider the prospect of a military crackdown. The dystopian scenario is real. But I believe we will go in the other direction. We're now seeing the market-based models for social organization fail, catastrophically, as self-seeking behavior (from Trump down) makes this crisis so much more dangerous than it needed to be.

When this ends, we will reorient our politics and make substantial new investments in public goods—for health, especially—and public services. I don't think we will become less communal. Instead, we will be better able to see how our fates are linked. The cheap burger I eat from a restaurant that denies paid sick leave to

its cashiers and kitchen staff makes me more vulnerable to illness, as does the neighbor who refuses to stay home in a pandemic because our public school failed to teach him science or critical thinking skills. The economy—and the social order it helps support—will collapse if the government doesn't guarantee income for the millions of workers who will lose their jobs in a major recession or depression. Young adults will fail to launch if government doesn't help reduce or cancel their student debt. The coronavirus pandemic is going to cause immense pain and suffering. But it will force us to reconsider who we are and what we value, and, in the long run, it could help us rediscover the better version of ourselves.

Religious worship will look different.

Amy Sullivan is director of strategy for Vote Common Good.

We are an Easter people, many Christians are fond of saying, emphasizing the triumph of hope and life over fear. But how do an Easter people observe their holiest day if they cannot rejoice together on Easter morning? How do Jews celebrate their deliverance from bondage when Passover Seders must take place on Zoom, with in-laws left to wonder whether Cousin Joey forgot the Four Questions or the internet connection merely froze? Can Muslim families celebrate Ramadan if they cannot visit local mosques for Tarawih prayers or gather with loved ones to break the fast?

All faiths have dealt with the challenge of keeping faith alive under the adverse conditions of war or diaspora or persecution—but

never all faiths at the same time. Religion in the time of quarantine will challenge conceptions of what it means to minister and to fellowship. But it will also expand the opportunities for those who have no local congregation to sample sermons from afar. Contemplative practices may gain popularity. And maybe—just maybe—the culture war that has branded those who preach about the common good with the epithet "Social Justice Warriors" may ease amid the very present reminder of our interconnected humanity.

New forms of reform.

Jonathan Rauch is a contributing writer at the *Atlantic* and a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution.

One group of Americans has lived through a transformational epidemic in recent memory: gay men. Of course, HIV/AIDS was (and is) different in all kinds of ways from coronavirus, but one lesson is likely to apply: Plagues drive change. Partly because our government failed us, gay Americans mobilized to build organizations, networks and know-how that changed our place in society and have enduring legacies today. The epidemic also revealed deadly flaws in the health care system, and it awakened us to the need for the protection of marriage—revelations which led to landmark reforms. I wouldn't be surprised to see some analogous changes in the wake of coronavirus. People are finding new ways to connect and support each other in adversity; they are sure to demand major changes in the health-care system and maybe also the government; and they'll become newly conscious of

interdependency and community. I can't predict the precise effects, but I'm sure we'll be seeing them for years.

Regulatory barriers to online tools will fall.

Katherine Mangu-Ward is editor-in-chief of *Reason* magazine.

COVID-19 will sweep away many of the artificial barriers to moving more of our lives online. Not everything can become virtual, of course. But in many areas of our lives, uptake on genuinely useful online tools has been slowed by powerful legacy players, often working in collaboration with overcautious bureaucrats. Medicare allowing billing for telemedicine was a long-overdue change, for instance, as was revisiting HIPAA to permit more medical providers to use the same tools the rest of us use every day to communicate, such as Skype, Facetime and email. The regulatory bureaucracy might well have dragged its feet on this for many more years if not for this crisis. The resistance—led by teachers' unions and the politicians beholden to them—to allowing partial homeschooling or online learning for K-12 kids has been swept away by necessity. It will be near-impossible to put that genie back in the bottle in the fall, with many families finding that they prefer full or partial homeschooling or online homework. For many college students, returning to an expensive dorm room on a depopulated campus will not be appealing, forcing massive changes in a sector that has been ripe for innovation for a long time. And while not every job can be done remotely, many people are learning that the difference between having to put on a tie and commute for an hour or working efficiently at home was always just the ability to download one or two apps plus permission from their boss. Once companies sort out

their remote work dance steps, it will be harder—and more expensive—to deny employees those options. In other words, it turns out, an awful lot of meetings (and doctors' appointments and classes) really could have been an email. And now they will be.

A healthier digital lifestyle.

Sherry Turkle is professor of the social studies of science and technology at MIT, founding director of the MIT Initiative on Technology and Self, and author, most recently, of *Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age*.

Perhaps we can use our time with our devices to rethink the kinds of community we can create through them. In the earliest days of our coronavirus social distancing, we have seen inspirational first examples. Cello master Yo-Yo Ma posts a daily live concert of a song that sustains him. Broadway diva Laura Benanti invites performers from high school musicals who are not going to put on those shows to send their performances to her. She'll be watching; Lin-Manuel Miranda joins the campaign and promises to watch as well. Entrepreneurs offer time to listen to pitches. Master yoga instructors teach free classes. This is a different life on the screen from disappearing into a video game or polishing one's avatar. This is breaking open a medium with human generosity and empathy. This is looking within and asking: "What can I authentically offer? I have a life, a history. What do people need?" If, moving forward, we apply our most human instincts to our devices, that will have been a powerful COVID-19 legacy. Not only alone together, but together alone.

A boon to virtual reality.

Elizabeth Bradley is president of Vassar College and a scholar of global health.

VR allows us to have the experiences we want even if we have to be isolated, quarantined or alone. Maybe that will be how we adapt and stay safe in the next outbreak. I would like to see a VR program that helped with the socialization and mental health of people who had to self-isolate. Imagine putting on glasses, and suddenly you are in a classroom or another communal setting, or even a positive psychology intervention.

The rise of telemedicine.

Ezekiel J. Emanuel is chair of the department of medical ethics and health policy at the University of Pennsylvania.

The pandemic will shift the paradigm of where our healthcare delivery takes place. For years, telemedicine has lingered on the sidelines as a cost-controlling, high convenience system. Out of necessity, remote office visits could skyrocket in popularity as traditional-care settings are overwhelmed by the pandemic. There would also be containment-related benefits to this shift; staying home for a video call keeps you out of the transit system, out of the waiting room and, most importantly, away from patients who need critical care.

An opening for stronger family care.

Ai-Jen Poo is director of the National Domestic Workers Alliance

and Caring Across Generations.

The coronavirus pandemic has revealed gaping holes in our care infrastructure, as millions of American families have been forced to navigate this crisis without a safety net. With loved ones sick and children suddenly home from school indefinitely, they've been forced to make impossible choices among their families, their health and financial ruin. After all, meaningful child care assistance is extremely limited, access to long-term care is piecemeal at best, and too few workers have access to paid family and medical leave, which means that missed work means missed pay.

This crisis should unleash widespread political support for Universal Family Care—a single public federal fund that we all contribute to, that we all benefit from, that helps us take care of our families while we work, from child care and elder care to support for people with disabilities and paid family leave. Coronavirus has put a particular national spotlight on unmet needs of the growing older population in our country, and the tens of millions of overstretched family and professional caregivers they rely on. Care is and always has been a shared responsibility. Yet, our policy has never fully supported it. This moment, challenging as it is, should jolt us into changing that.

Government becomes Big Pharma.

Steph Sterling is vice president of advocacy and policy at the Roosevelt Institute, and co-author of the forthcoming paper *"In the Public Interest: Democratizing Medicines through Public Ownership."*

The coronavirus has laid bare the failures of our costly, inefficient, market-based system for developing, researching and manufacturing medicines and vaccines. COVID-19 is one of several coronavirus outbreaks we have seen over the past 20 years, yet the logic of our current system—a range of costly government incentives intended to stimulate private-sector development—has resulted in the 18-month window we now anticipate before widespread vaccine availability. Private pharmaceutical firms simply will not prioritize a vaccine or other countermeasure for a future public health emergency until its profitability is assured, and that is far too late to prevent mass disruption. The reality of fragile supply chains for active pharmaceutical ingredients coupled with public outrage over patent abuses that limit the availability of new treatments has led to an emerging, bipartisan consensus that the public sector must take far more active and direct responsibility for the development and manufacture of medicines. That more efficient, far more resilient government approach will replace our failed, 40-year experiment with market-based incentives to meet essential health needs.

Science reigns again.

Sonja Trauss is executive director of YIMBY Law.

Truth and its most popular emissary, science, have been declining in credibility for more than a generation. As Obi-Wan Kenobi told us in *Return of the Jedi*, "You're going to find that many of the truths we cling to depend greatly on our own point of view." In 2005, long before Donald Trump, Stephen Colbert coined the term "truthiness"

to describe the increasingly fact-lite political discourse. The oil and gas industry has been waging a decades-long war against truth and science, following up on the same effort waged by the tobacco industry. Altogether, this led to the situation in which the Republicans could claim that the reports about the coronavirus weren't science at all, but mere politics, and this sounded reasonable to millions of people. Quickly, however, Americans are being reacquainted with scientific concepts like germ theory and exponential growth. Unlike with tobacco use or climate change, science doubters will be able to see the impacts of the coronavirus immediately. At least for the next 35 years, I think we can expect that public respect for expertise in public health and epidemics to be at least partially restored.

Congress can finally go virtual.

Ethan Zuckerman is associate professor of the practice in media arts and sciences at MIT, director of the Center for Civic Media and author of *Digital Cosmopolitans: Why We Think the Internet Connects Us, Why It Doesn't, and How to Rewire It*.

Coronavirus is going to force many institutions to go virtual. One that would greatly benefit from the change is the U.S. Congress. We need Congress to continue working through this crisis, but given advice to limit gatherings to 10 people or fewer, meeting on the floor of the House of Representatives is not an especially wise option right now; at least two members of Congress already have tested positive for the virus.

Instead, this is a great time for congresspeople to return to their

districts and start the process of virtual legislating—permanently. Not only is this move medically necessary at the moment, but it has ancillary benefits. Lawmakers will be closer to the voters they represent and more likely to be sensitive to local perspectives and issues. A virtual Congress is harder to lobby, as the endless parties and receptions that lobbyists throw in Washington will be harder to replicate across the whole nation. Party conformity also might loosen with representatives remembering local loyalties over party ties.

In the long run, a virtualized Congress might help us tackle one of the great problems of the contemporary House of Representatives: reapportionment and expansion. The House has not grown meaningfully in size since the 1920s, which means that a representative, on average, speaks for 770,000 constituents, rather than the 30,000 the Founding Fathers mandated. If we demonstrate that a virtual Congress can do its job as well or better using 21st-century technologies, rather than 18th-century ones, perhaps we could return the house to the 30,000:1 ratio George Washington prescribed.

Big government makes a comeback.

Margaret O'Mara is a professor of history at University of Washington and author of *The Code: Silicon Valley and the Remaking of America*.

The battle against the coronavirus already has made government —federal, state and local—far more visible to Americans than it normally has been. As we tune in to daily briefings from public

health officials, listen for guidance from our governors, and seek help and hope from our national leaders, we are seeing the critical role that "big government" plays in our lives and our health. We also see the deadly consequences of four decades of disinvestment in public infrastructure and dismissal of public expertise. Not only will America need a massive dose of big government to get out of this crisis—as Washington's swift passage of a giant economic bailout package reflects—but we will need big, and wise, government more than ever in its aftermath.

Government service regains its cachet.

Lilliana Mason is an associate professor of government and politics at the University of Maryland, College Park, and author of *Uncivil Agreement: How Politics Became Our Identity.*

The Reagan era is over. The widely accepted idea that government is inherently bad won't persist after coronavirus. This event is global evidence that a functioning government is crucial for a healthy society. It is no longer "terrifying" to hear the words "I'm from the government, and I'm here to help." In fact, that is what most people are desperately hoping to hear right now. We will see a rebirth of the patriotic honor of working for the government.

A new civic federalism.

Archon Fung is professor of citizenship and self-government at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government.

Just as the trauma of fighting World War II laid the foundations for a

stronger American government and national solidarity, the coronavirus crisis might sow the seeds of a new civic federalism, in which states and localities become centers of justice, solidarity and far-sighted democratic problem-solving. Many Americans now bemoan the failure of national leadership in the face of this unprecedented challenge. When we look back, we will see that some communities handled the crisis much better than others. We might well find that success came in states where government, civic and private-sector leaders joined their strengths together in a spirit of self-sacrifice for the common good.

Consider that the virology lab at the University of Washington far surpassed the CDC and others in bringing substantial COVID-19 testing early, when it was most needed. Some governors, mayors, education authorities and employers have led the way by enforcing social distancing, closing campuses and other places, and channeling resources to support the most vulnerable. And the civic fabric of some communities has fostered the responsibility and altruism of millions of ordinary citizens who have stayed home, lost income, kept their kids inside, self-quarantined, refrained from hoarding, supported each other, and even pooled medical supplies and other resources to bolster health workers. The coronavirus is this century's most urgent challenge to humanity. Harnessing a new sense of solidarity, citizens of states and cities will rise to face the enormous challenges ahead such as climate change and transforming our era of historic inequality into one of economic inclusion.

The rules we've lived by won't all apply.

Astra Taylor is a filmmaker and author of *Democracy May Not Exist, but We'll Miss It When It's Gone.*

America's response to coronavirus pandemic has revealed a simple truth: So many policies that our elected officials have long told us were impossible and impractical were eminently possible and practical all along. In 2011, when Occupy Wall Street activists demanded debt cancellation for student loans and medical debt, they were laughed at by many in the mainstream media. In the intervening years, we have continued to push the issue and have consistently been told our demands were unrealistic. Now, we know that the "rules" we have lived under were unnecessary, and simply made society more brittle and unequal.

All along, evictions were avoidable; the homeless could've been housed and sheltered in government buildings; water and electricity didn't need to be turned off for people behind on their bills; paid sick leave could've been a right for all workers; paying your mortgage late didn't need to lead to foreclosure; and debtors could've been granted relief. President Donald Trump has already put a freeze on interest for federal student loans, while New York Governor Andrew Cuomo has paused all medical and student debt owed to New York State. Democrats and Republicans are discussing suspending collection on—or outright canceling—student loans as part of a larger economic stimulus package.

It's clear that in a crisis, the rules don't apply—which makes you wonder why they are rules in the first place. This is an unprecedented opportunity to not just hit the pause button and

temporarily ease the pain, but to permanently change the rules so that untold millions of people aren't so vulnerable to begin with.

Revived trust in institutions.

Michiko Kakutani is author of the 2018 bestseller *The Death of Truth* and former chief book critic of the *New York Times.*

The coronavirus pandemic, one hopes, will jolt Americans into a realization that the institutions and values Donald Trump has spent his presidency assailing are essential to the functioning of a democracy—and to its ability to grapple effectively with a national crisis. A recognition that government institutions—including those entrusted with protecting our health, preserving our liberties and overseeing our national security—need to be staffed with experts (not political loyalists), that decisions need to be made through a reasoned policy process and predicated on evidence-based science and historical and geopolitical knowledge (not on Trump-ian "alternative facts," political expediency or what Thomas Pynchon called, in *Gravity's Rainbow*, "a chaos of peeves, whims, hallucinations and all-round assholery"). Instead of Trump's "America First" foreign policy, we need to return to multilateral diplomacy, and to the understanding that co-operation with allies—and adversaries, too—is especially necessary when it comes to dealing with global problems like climate change and viral pandemics.

Most of all, we need to remember that public trust is crucial to governance—and that trust depends on telling the truth. As the historian John M. Barry wrote in his 2004 book *The Great*

Influenza—a harrowing chronicle of the 1918 flu pandemic, which killed an estimated 50 million people worldwide—the main lesson from that catastrophe is that "those in authority must retain the public's trust" and "the way to do that is to distort nothing, to put the best face on nothing, to try to manipulate no one."

Expect a political uprising.

Cathy O'Neil is founder and CEO of the algorithmic auditing company ORCAA and author of *Weapons of Math Destruction: How Big Data Increases Inequality and Threatens Democracy.*

The aftermath of the coronavirus is likely to include a new political uprising—an Occupy Wall Street 2.0, but this time much more massive and angrier. Once the health emergency is over, we will see the extent to which rich, well-connected and well-resourced communities will have been taken care of, while contingent, poor and stigmatized communities will have been thoroughly destroyed. Moreover, we will have seen how political action is possible —multitrillion dollar bailouts and projects can be mobilized quickly—but only if the cause is considered urgent. This mismatch of long-disregarded populations finally getting the message that their needs are not only chronically unattended, but also chronically dismissed as politically required, will likely have drastic, pitchfork consequences.

Electronic voting goes mainstream.

Joe Brotherton is chairman of Democracy Live, a startup that provides electronic ballots.

One victim of COVID-19 will be the old model of limiting voting to polling places where people must gather in close proximity for an extended period of time. We have been gradually moving away from this model since 2010, when Congress passed a law requiring electronic balloting for military and overseas voters, and some states now require accessible at-home voting for blind and disabled voters. Over the long term, as election officials grapple with how to allow for safe voting in the midst of a pandemic, the adoption of more advanced technology—including secure, transparent, cost-effective voting from our mobile devices—is more likely. In the near-term, a hybrid model—mobile-phone voting with paper ballots for tabulation—is emerging in the 2020 election cycle in certain jurisdictions. We should expect that option to become more widespread. To be clear, proven technologies now exist that offer mobile, at-home voting while still generating paper ballots. This system is not an idea; it is a reality that has been used in more than 1,000 elections for nearly a decade by our overseas military and disabled voters. This should be the new normal.

Election Day will become Election Month.

Lee Drutman is a senior fellow at New America and author of *Breaking the Two-Party Doom Loop: The Case for Multiparty Democracy in America.*

How do we hold an election in the time of coronavirus? By making it easier to vote when citizens want and where they want, so that Election Day doesn't become a health risk of big crowds and long lines. The change will come through expanded early voting and no-

excuse mail-in balloting, effectively turning Election Day into Election Month (or maybe months, depending on the closeness of the election and the leniency for late-arriving ballots postmarked on Election Day). This transition requires considerable thought and planning to ensure that all communities are treated equally, and to prevent fraud. But facing the prospect of crowded polling places staffed by at-risk poll workers (who tend to be older), states will come under tremendous pressure to develop plans so that the election can go on regardless. This will mark a permanent change. Once citizens experience the convenience of early voting and/or voting by mail, they won't want to give it up. More convenience will generate higher voter turnout, potentially transforming partisan competition in America.

Voting by mail will become the norm.

Kevin R. Kosar is vice president of research partnerships at the R Street Institute.

To date, five states—Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland and Ohio—have postponed their presidential primaries. More states may well follow. But these elections cannot be put off indefinitely. Parties need to hold their conventions and select a presidential nominee before the autumn general election. The coronavirus might, according to some reports, continue to menace Americans through June or even the end of summer. In most states, this means elections policy is inviting an electoral train wreck. The clock is ticking.

Fortunately, there is a time-tested means for the country to escape

the choice between protecting public health and allowing voters to exercise their right to vote: voting by mail. Military members overseas have voted by mail for decades. Some states, such as Washington, Oregon and Utah, already let everyone vote at home. They send every voter a ballot and then let them choose to cast it either via mail or at a polling place. Unfortunately, most states have set the toggle to voting in-person and requiring individuals to request to vote by mail. Voters already receive registration cards and elections guides by mail. Why not ballots? Given the risks that in-person voting poses, states now have urgent cause to move immediately to modernize their hidebound systems—and we should soon expect them to.

Dale Ho is director of the Voting Rights Project at the American Civil Liberties Union.

The COVID-19 pandemic poses an unprecedented threat to the way that most people vote: in person on Election Day. But there are several obvious steps we can take to ensure that no one has to choose between their health and their right to vote.

First, every eligible voter should be mailed a ballot and a self-sealing return envelope with prepaid postage. All ballots postmarked by Election Day should be accepted and counted. Ballots cast by mail should not be discarded based on errors or technicalities without first notifying voters of any defects and giving them an opportunity to correct them. At the same time, states can preserve in-person voting opportunities for people who need them—such as voters with disabilities, with limited English

proficiency, with limited postal access or who register after mail-in ballots have been sent out.

Elections administrators should receive extra resources to recruit younger poll workers, to ensure their and in-person voters' health and safety, and to expand capacity to quickly and accurately process what will likely be an unprecedented volume of mail-in votes. Moreover, states should eliminate restrictions prohibiting elections officials from processing mail-in ballots until Election Day (15 states currently have such restrictions). And the media should help set public expectations that, in an environment with record levels of mail-in voting, tabulating results and forecasting winners may take longer than we have grown accustomed to.

If a state cannot do all of the above, it should take as many of these steps as possible. The current crisis makes these changes all the more necessary—and all the more likely to happen.

More restraints on mass consumption.

Sonia Shah is author of *Pandemic: Tracking Contagions From Cholera to Ebola and Beyond* and the forthcoming *The Next Great Migration: The Beauty and Terror of Life on the Move.*

In the best-case scenario, the trauma of the pandemic will force society to accept restraints on mass consumer culture as a reasonable price to pay to defend ourselves against future contagions and climate disasters alike. For decades, we've sated our outsized appetites by encroaching on an ever-expanding swath

of the planet with our industrial activities, forcing wild species to cram into remaining fragments of habitat in closer proximity to ours. That's what has allowed animal microbes such as SARS-COV2—not to mention hundreds of others from Ebola to Zika—to cross over into human bodies, causing epidemics. In theory, we could decide to shrink our industrial footprint and conserve wildlife habitat, so that animal microbes stay in animals' bodies, instead. More likely, we'll see less directly relevant transformations. Universal basic income and mandatory paid sick leave will move from the margins to the center of policy debates. The end of mass quarantine will unleash pent-up demand for intimacy and a mini baby-boom. The hype around online education will be abandoned, as a generation of young people forced into seclusion will reshape the culture around a contrarian appreciation for communal life.

Stronger domestic supply chains.

Todd N. Tucker is director of Governance Studies at the Roosevelt Institute.

In the ancient days of 2018, the Trump administration was panned by experts for imposing tariffs on imported steel on a global basis for national security reasons. As the president tweeted at the time, "IF YOU DON'T HAVE STEEL, YOU DON'T HAVE A COUNTRY!" But to most economists, China was the real reason for disruptions in the metal market, and imposing tariffs additionally on U.S. allies was nonsensical, the argument went: After all, even if America lost its steel industry altogether, we would still be able to count on supplies from allies in North America and Europe.

Fast forward to 2020. Just this week, U.S. allies are considering substantial border restrictions, including shutting down ports and restricting exports. While there's no indication that the coronavirus per se is being transmitted through commerce, one can imagine a perfect storm in which deep recessions plus mounting geopolitical tensions limit America's access to its normal supply chains and the lack of homegrown capacity in various product markets limits the government's ability to respond nimbly to threats. Reasonable people can differ over whether Trump's steel tariffs were the right response at the right time. In the years ahead, however, expect to see more support from Democrats, Republicans, academics and diplomats for the notion that government has a much bigger role to play in creating adequate redundancy in supply chains—resilient even to trade shocks from allies. This will be a substantial reorientation from even the very recent past.

Dambisa Moyo is an economist and author.

The coronavirus pandemic will create pressure on corporations to weigh the efficiency and costs/benefits of a globalized supply chain system against the robustness of a domestic-based supply chain. Switching to a more robust domestic supply chain would reduce dependence on an increasingly fractured global supply system. But while this would better ensure that people get the goods they need, this shift would likely also increase costs to corporations and consumers.

The inequality gap will widen.

Theda Skocpol is professor of government and sociology at

Harvard.

Discussions of inequality in America often focus on the growing gap between the bottom 99 percent and the top 1 percent. But the other gap that has grown is between the top fifth and all the rest—and that gap will be exacerbated by this crisis.

The wealthiest fifth of Americans have made greater income gains than those below them in the income hierarchy in recent decades. They are more often members of married, highly educated couples. As high-salary professionals or managers, they live in Internet-ready homes that will accommodate telecommuting—and where children have their own bedrooms and aren't as disruptive to a work-from-home schedule. In this crisis, most will earn steady incomes while having necessities delivered to their front doors.

The other 80 percent of Americans lack that financial cushion. Some will be OK, but many will struggle with job losses and family burdens. They are more likely to be single parents or single-income households. They're less able to work from home, and more likely employed in the service or delivery sectors, in jobs that put them at greater danger of coming into contact with the coronavirus. In many cases, their children will not gain educationally at home, because parents will not be able to teach them, or their households might lack access to the high-speed Internet that enables remote instruction.

A hunger for diversion.

Mary Frances Berry is professor of American social thought, history and Africana Studies at the University of Pennsylvania.

Some trends already underway will probably accelerate—for example, using voice technology to control entryways, security and the like. In the short term, universities will add courses on pandemics, and scientists will devise research projects to improve forecasting, treatment and diagnosis. But history suggests another outcome, as well. After the disastrous 1918-19 Spanish flu and the end of World War I, many Americans sought carefree entertainment, which the introduction of cars and the radio facilitated. Young women newly able to vote under the 19th Amendment bobbed their hair, frequented speakeasies and danced the Charleston. The economy quickly rebounded and flourished for about 10 years, until irrational investment tilted the United States and the world into the Great Depression. Probably, given past behavior, when this pandemic is over, human beings will respond with the same sense of relief and a search for community, relief from stress and pleasure.

Less communal dining—but maybe more cooking.

Paul Freedman is a history professor at Yale and author, most recently, of *American Cuisine: And How It Got This Way.*

For the past few years, Americans have spent more money on food prepared outside the home than on buying and making their meals. But, now, with restaurants mostly closed and as isolation increases, many people will learn or relearn how to cook over the next weeks. Maybe they will fall back in love with cooking, though I won't hold

my breath, or perhaps delivery will triumph over everything else. Sit-down restaurants also could close permanently as people frequent them less; it is likely there will be many fewer sit-down restaurants in Europe and the United States. We will be less communal at least for a while.

A revival of parks.

Alexandra Lange is the architecture critic at Curbed.

People often see parks as a destination for something specific, like soccer fields, barbecues or playgrounds, and all of those functions must now be avoided. But that doesn't make the parks any less valuable. I'm sheltering in place in Brooklyn with my family, and every day, the one time we go outside is to walk a loop north through Brooklyn Bridge Park and south down the Brooklyn Heights Promenade. I'm seeing people asking Golden Gate Park to close the roads so there's even more space for people. In Britain, the National Trust is trying to open more gardens and parks for free. Urban parks—in which most major cities have made significant investments over the past decade—are big enough to accommodate both crowds *and* social distancing. It helps that it is spring in the northern hemisphere.

Society might come out of the pandemic valuing these big spaces even more, not only as the backdrop to major events and active uses, but as an opportunity to be together visually. I've been writing a book about shopping malls, and I would certainly not recommend a visit right now (all those virus-carrying surfaces). But, in suburban communities, malls have historically served the same function:

somewhere to go, somewhere to be together. What we have right now is parks. After this is all over, I would love to see more public investment in open, accessible, all-weather places to gather, even after we no longer need to stay six feet apart.

A change in our understanding of 'change.'

Matthew Continetti is a resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute.

"Paradigm shift" is among the most overused phrases in journalism. Yet the coronavirus pandemic may be one case where it applies. American society is familiar with a specific model of change, operating within the existing parameters of our liberal democratic institutions, mostly free market and society of expressive individualism. But the coronavirus doesn't just attack the immune system. Like the Civil War, Great Depression and World War II, it has the potential to infect the foundations of free society. State and local government are moving at varying and sometimes contrary speeds to address a crisis of profound dimensions. The global economy has entered the opening stages of a recession that has the potential to become a depression. Already, large parts of America have shut down entirely. Americans have said goodbye to a society of frivolity and ceaseless activity in a flash, and the federal government is taking steps more often seen during wartime. Our collective notions of the possible have changed already. If the danger the coronavirus poses both to individual health and to public health capacity persists, we will be forced to revise our very conception of "change." The paradigm will shift.

The tyranny of habit no more.

Virginia Heffernan is author of *Magic and Loss: The Internet as Art.*

Humans are not generally disposed to radical departures from their daily rounds. But the recent fantasy of "optimizing" a life—for peak performance, productivity, efficiency—has created a cottage industry that tries to make the dreariest possible lives sound heroic. Jordan Peterson has been commanding lost male souls to make their beds for years now. The Four-Hour Workweek, The Power of Habit and Atomic Habits urge readers to automate certain behaviors to keep them dutifully overworking and under-eating.

But COVID-19 suggests that Peterson (or any other habit-preaching martinet) is not the leader for our time. Instead, consider Albert Camus, who, in *The Plague*, blames the obliteration of a fictional Algerian town by an epidemic on one thing: consistency. "The truth is," Camus writes of the crushingly dull port town, "everyone is bored, and devotes himself to cultivating habits." The habit-bound townspeople lack imagination. It takes them far too long to take in that death is stalking them, and it's past time to stop taking the streetcar, working for money, bowling and going to the movies.

Maybe, as in Camus' time, it will take the dual specters of autocracy and disease to get us to listen to our common sense, our imaginations, our eccentricities—and not our programming. A more expansive and braver approach to everyday existence is now crucial so that we don't fall in line with Trump-like tyrannies, cant and orthodoxy, and environmentally and physiologically devastating

behaviors (including our favorites: driving cars, eating meat, burning electricity). This current plague time might see a recharged commitment to a closer-to-the-bone worldview that recognizes we have a short time on earth, the Doomsday Clock is a minute from midnight, and living peacefully and meaningfully together is going to take much more than bed-making and canny investments. The Power of No Habits.