COVID-19: Socio-Political Transformation and Gadget Slavery

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this research paper is to describe, understand and interpret the experiences of human life during particular situation of COVID-19.

Methodology: It is a study of a phenomenon and explores what people have experienced during COVID-19 crisis. Analytical and observational methods were used for the finding of this research. The data is collected from journals, article and books. The study focused on the formal structure of socio-political institution available and its transformation with acts of intentional consciousness.

Findings: During Covid-19 transformation phenomenon, the leading and influential role was played by mobile phones that are influencing, controlling, guiding and monitoring the lives of individuals all over the world. This interaction, association and relation with the gadget will be established through a new contract theory at global level, and it is not a social contract theory.

Unique contribution to theory, practice and policy: A new contract theory has been presented to describe emerging relationship of people with Gadget (cell phone). Consequently, a new contract, named 'Socio-Gadget Contract' between the Gadgets and the individuals, is an obligation. The current transformation phenomenon has appeared simultaneously all over the world, covering each state. So, it is unique as it has brought a uniform and symmetrical socio-political transformation globally. The physical environment, culture, social and political institutions, all have undergone this phenomenon.

Keywords: *COVID-19, Insecurity, Anxiety, Socio-Political Transformation, Gadget slavery*

Introduction

The aim of this research paper was to probe the new transformation faced by an individual, state and the world due to COVID-19, and to analyze its impact. This research paper also answers certain queries like what are the socio-political complications caused by COVID-19 pandemic? How long the situation will prevail? And what might be the future of the world? Coronavirus has caused poverty, inequality at global level and has created a crisis within the crisis. The impact of this crisis is observable in the form of uncertainty, fear and loss of liberty, home enslavement and decay of state sovereignty. The suffering of the people would escalate and jeopardize the lives in near future. The second decade of 21centry was completed with the beginning of a state crisis (COVID-19) that spilled over into other states, engulfing all parts of the world, and turned into a world disaster. The mankind had not witnessed such a crisis in the last hundred years. It has caused a state of uncertainty, fear, anxiety and death regionally and globally. People were socially isolated from each other and their families. Their mental health was at risk and suffered from stress and depression. Economic instability and unemployment reached at their peak and had consumed the most individuals. People were living in a state of insecurity, uncertainty and chaos that prevailed continuously for almost two years. (Lilleker, Coman, & Gregor, 2021). After that crisis (COVID-19) the situation is more stressful and terrible and the social and political institutions are distorted. People around the globe have lost control over their social mobility and liberty, and have become enslaved to COVID-19 environment. The lives are directed and dimensioned by new technology and electronic devices, mobile phones that are transforming the socio-political structures of society. This transformation is innovative as it is changing the individual, the state and then whole world simultaneously.

Discussion

Social Change and Transformation

What is a Social change? How does a society undergo a social change? A change is a process, an event or appearance (physical and structure) which gives out or produces something different from the previous stage (Merrill, 2004). There are a number of factors involved in a social change within a society. For sociologists like Auguste Comte, Karl Marx, Max Webber, and Talcott Parson, it is difficult to build a consensus on what is a common reason or cause of change in a society. However, to identify a change process, it has to locate or observe how far or to what extent 'the underline structure' of an object, or event or situation is altered over a period of time. In case of human societies, in order to identify a change, we have to observe how far the 'basic institutions or structures' of society has undergone any modification during a specific period. It also involves to account or to show what remains stable as a baseline against this alteration.

The social theorists from the past two centuries are trying to develop a grand theory of social change. And yet no single factor theory has developed to account for diversity of human social development, from hunting and gathering and pastoral societies to traditional civilizations and finally to the highly complex social system of today, 21st century. Pre-modern society can be divided as 'hunting and gathering societies', 'pastoral societies', agrarian societies', and 'traditional states or civilization'. In hunting and gathering societies, as is visible by name, the people gain their food from gathering plant and hunting animals. They do not grow crops or keep livestock. In pastoral society, 1200 BCE to present, people were dependent on domesticated animals for their subsistence. It was marked by distinct inequalities and ruled by chiefs or warrior

kings. Agrarian societies were depended on cultivation of fixed land and were ruled by chiefs. Stronger inequalities prevailed among them than hunting and gathering societies. 'Traditional states or civilizations' were larger, more developed, urban societies, 6000 ACE to 19th century (Kulke & Rothermund, 2004). Economically, major inequalities existed among different classes and political structure was consisted of a government, headed by a king or emperor. Mostly all these traditional states have now disappeared.

After industrial revolution in Britain in 1769, the development of industrialized societies and expansion of the West led to the conquest of many parts of the world through the process of colonization. It had brought a social change in the long established traditional social and political system and cultures, dividing the world asymmetrically into industrialized and non-industrialized states. From 17th century to the early 20th century, under the process of 'colonization' the West began to make their colonies in many parts of the world through their superior military strength. In these industrialized societies, the economy was based on industrial production and scientific techniques were used to produce food in the industries (Mingst, 2004). Depending upon the pace of industrial development, the world was divided into developed world, consisted of west and USA; and developing world such as China, India and Africa, having a much lower level of industrial development in 1950s. The developing world or non-industrialized world covered large population of the world which was colonized by west. The majority of colonized population worked in agricultural production, which was geared to the world market through west. The natives in these colonies were treated as slaves by the west. The process of 'Decolonization' appeared after World War II and by 1960 almost all the colonized states achieved their independence (Mansbach & Rafferty, 2008). The developing countries are also referred as 'Third World'.

 The term 'The Third World' identifies the presence of three types of social structures established in the early 20th century. The industrialized states of the Europe, the United States, Canada, Australia, Greenland, New Zealand, Japan and South Africa are categorized as 'First World' (Fanon, 1963). Their political structure is consisted of multiparty, parliamentary, or presidential system of government. The Second World societies included Soviet Union, and Eastern Europe. These societies were ruled by centrally planned economies which allowed no room for private property or competitive economy's enterprise. Their political structure was ruled by one party, communist party that dominated the social, political and economic system. For 75 years, the world has faced a global rivalry between communist society of USSR, and capitalist societies of the West. With the disintegration of USSR in 1989 and end of cold war, the Second World has disappeared from the social structure of the world. Thus, process of 'colonization' was central in shaping the social structure of world from 17th to early 20th century. In early twentieth century, there were three main social structures present in the world as First world, Second World and Third World with three forms of social and political systems. This ranking of world as First, Second and Third reflects a value judgment of the 'best' (First) and the 'worst' (Third). Hence, the previous revolutions did not cause a simultaneous variation throughout the world.

The development of social organization and institutions from era of hunting and gathering to modern industrial societies is too diverse and not a single factor, social, cultural, economic, or political, is involved in whole world social change (Merrill, 2004). Thus, social change maybe defined as variation over time of the institutions and culture of a society. So a single factor theory of social change cannot be accounted for it. However, three types of factors can be identified that

have consistently influenced a social change either in one or other part of the world i.e. cultural factor, physical environment, and political organization.

Cultural factor is divided into religion, communication and leadership. Among these particularly, the most important factor that influence the pace of social change is the nature of communication system; communicate to each other through dialectic or language, writings or through means of movement from one place to another, using river, sea routes, land routes or via mountains. The old civilizations usually originated near river areas that were populated with large agricultural land e.g. Aryan civilizations and Indus civilizations (Manz, 1996). The ease of communication across land and availability of sea routes are significant to bring a change in a society. Though, societies or areas that are surrounded by mountain ranges, impassable Jungles or deserts remained unchanged over a long period. In 21st century, means of communication is technology which is used in the electronic devices. This technology and electronic devices have linked all the people (Perloff, 2018), irrespective of where do they live, in North Pole or South Pole of the globe. This communication connectivity has brought a symmetrical, uniform cultural and social change during Covid-19 all over the world.

In socio-political change, human leadership has also played an important role. Leadership is a cultural factor that influences a society. Individual leadership has enormously influenced the world history in the form of religious leadership like Jesus, Gotham Buddha and the Holy Prophet (PBUH) or political and military leaders such as, Julius Cesar, Hazrat Umar Farooq, and Adolf Hitler. We also have to understand the meaning of this word. Who is a leader? A leader is an individual who has ability to pursue dynamic policies and has a mass follower to support his policies. He radically alters pre-existing modes of thought and overturns a previously established order (Laing, 2021). Charismatic leadership is a product of certain physical environment or existing social conditions or chaos makes it possible for an individual to become a leader. After the World War I, the chaos and tension in Germany had made it suited for Adolf Hitler to seize power and become a leader of his nation. Similarly, it is true of Quaid-e-Azam (Wolpert, 1999) and Mahatma Gandhi in Indian continent during the World War II (Sarila, 2010). Both were so effective to secure independence from British rule for their nations. As the war, chaos and critical events had made existing colonial institutions unsettled in India.

The chaos, tension and critical events during Covid-19, have brought a socio-political transformation and has replaced human leadership with Technology Leadership. In the new environment after December 2019, the technology leadership or Gadget Leadership has appeared on the world horizon as a charismatic leader for the people. These gadgets have over turn the established order, altered the existing modes of thought overnight and have influenced the minds of the individuals. People all over the world are following cultural protocol of Covid-19 such as social distance, covered mask, wash hands and stay at home (Lilleker, Coman, Gregor, & Novelli, 2021). Their thoughts have changed that if they don't follow the protocols, they would be attacked by Covid-19. The fear of sudden death has made them to follow the rules across the border and the world. These electronic gadgets have assumed a leading role and are influencing the lives of the individuals all over the world.

These electronic gadgets (mobile phones) have got full control over the lives, minds and activities of the people and have enslaved them. Such spyware, like Pegasus software (Agence France-Presse, 2022) are prepared to monitor the activities of an individual. The software is installed in

electronic gadget with zero-click. Its installation does not require clicking the link or attachment received through email. A call from unfamiliar number, two or three times, is enough to install the spy software in the cell phone or gadget, even if the call is left unanswered. The software can mine all data in the electronic device and can monitor the massages and conversation on cell phone. Even it can turn on the cameras and microphone automatically without the consent of the individual (user) and cell phone acts like a pocket spying device. Surveillance of the people through these electronic gadgets is the future of the world. Thus physical environment is the second most effective influence on social change and development of human social organization. Covid-19 has influenced the extreme physical conditions of society and has transformed the baseline of social structure and political organization.

The third strongly influencing factor for social change is political organization or political institution. In hunting and gathering societies, the political institution or organizations did not exist. After that era in all societies, whether traditional or modern, political organization existed in the form of tribe, chiefs, lords, kings and government. Till 16th century, the king had dominated the political institutions and controlled the lives of the people according to Theory of Divine Rights. Then in 16th century, Social Contract Theory emerged that established a civil society with a political structure based on a contract between the people and the government. This theory rejected the Divine right of king to rule over the people and explained that nature has bestowed the people with Natural Rights to life, liberty and property which they enjoyed in the State of Nature. Due to certain reasons, they required a civil society to protect their natural rights so they signed a treaty or contract with the then sovereign (king) and a government was established. The resultant government was the custodian of their natural rights to life, liberty and property, and can be removed or changed if it failed to protect them. The relations between them (people and the government) were maintained and regularized through this social contract (Morrow, 2019). So in 16th century, the political structure for society was established through 'Social Contract Theory' as presented by famous philosophers like Hobbes (Hobbes, 1968), Lock and Rousseau (Sabine & Thorson, 1973).

The successive centuries were dominated by science, technology, industrial revolution, capitalism and socialism theories to describe the change in social and political institutions of west. The social contract theory became buried under the successive waves of modernity in west (social and political transformation) till COVID-19 wave in 21st century, which endangered the natural rights of people to whom the government was made a guardian. The government from 16th and 17th era followed the policy of industrial capitalism which depends on science and technology. It is the most important economic influence on modern social change. Industrial capitalism depends upon and promotes constant innovation and revision of productive technology. Science and technology also affects political factor and in turn are affected by them. The emergence of modern state with its affective form of government is due to science and technology factor. Science and technology has affected the cultural influence like critical and innovative thinking which has challenged tradition and cultural habits.

The technology revolution has also caused 'Glocalization' (Akbar & Ahmad, 2016) and 'Globalization' (Cohn & Hira, 2021) which is an economic phenomenon. It has put together the political economy, the cultural and social factors across the world. The revolutionary advancement in information and communication means (like social media, Facebook, Whats app, YouTube), has strengthened the interaction among the people at regional and global levels. The state,

government and people, all have come close to each other and have adopted a global uniform outlook. The spread of information technology has also influenced economic market, the networks of production and consumption through transnational corporation, TNCS, MNCS. Glocalization and Globalization is transforming the current global order of economic, politics and social relations. This socio-political transformation would be completed with the help of Covid-19 atmosphere.

The whole global order is being transformed and societies are reshaped. This transformation is not only restricted to economic structure rather it is covering political, cultural and individual life, breaking down the established boundaries of internal and external, domestic and international. Individuals are forced to adopt a new order, society, institution, culture and to navigate to new mode of life where the old structures have been broken down. Covid-19 transformation is indifferent to national borders and swept along and cross border. So role of nation state is changing and comes under a question mark. The nation states are unable to cope with such critical situation, the national government and political institutions are incompetent to control the environmental threats that cross their borders.

Covid-19 transformation has spread across the border, influencing the social and political structures. It is transforming the government, power and world politics. As the states and government are incapable to cope with this socio-political transformation issues, so a new form of e-global governance is required to address it in a global way. This rapidly occurring socio-political transformation would be the greatest challenge in 21st century. It is moving towards the transformation of a global culture to use the electronic devices, gadgets and we have to see would we be free to do what we want or just would be surrounded by choices.

Conclusion

Covid-19 has transformed the way, the humans lived. Every individual has made to use e-commerce, e-banking and online-shopping for his needs. The educational institutions, offices and business markets were locked down during COVID-19 wave and has transformed to digital age of electronic devices and internet to continue their respective activities. People were forced to use electronic gadgets, devices, and cell phones. This phenomenon would not stop and be continued throughout 21st century. The pattern of human behavior has transformed from "Traditional Human Behavior" to "Modern Machine Behavior" or 'Traditional Associational Behavior to Machine Associational Behavior' due to Covid-19 environment. People have to obey the orders issued by E-Global governing body to secure their lives and have become enslaved in their homes. The E-Global governing body will be responsible to provide security to them. People have become indulged in Gadget Addiction and are becoming gadget slaves eagerly. The E- global governing body will become custodian of their natural rights in near future and will provide security to them.

The three leading factors which influenced a social change in a society are, cultural factor, physical environment, and political organization. So far as political organization is concerned, leadership plays an important role and in this case, human leadership has been replaced by 'Gadget Leadership'. During Covid-19 transformation phenomenon, the leading and influential role is played by Gadgets that are influencing, controlling, guiding and monitoring the lives of individuals all over the world.

Recommendations

This interaction, association and relation with the Gadget-Cell Phone will be established through a new contract theory at global level, and it is not a social contract theory. The self-determination, autonomy and sovereignty of nation state are also at stake. The power of national government has weakened its importance and influence. With a decline of national government, previously established social contract between government and people has become obsolete, as government has failed to provide security to the people. Consequently, a new contract, named 'Socio- Gadget' contract between the Gadgets and the individuals, is required in 21st century. As a custodian, people will hand over the right to secure their lives to these gadgets happily with their consent. The contract is irrevocable. People will give the consent for enslavement to these gadgets, in order to get relief from the prevailing state of uncertainty, fear, insecurity and death. In pursuance of security, they will hand over their rights to life, liberty and property (e-commerce, digital banking) to these gadget leaders.

The relation of individual with the Gadget necessities a new contract comprised of

1. E- Government, as the role of a sovereign state will be abolished and it will be no more the custodian of lives and security to people.

2. This contract will be signed between the people and Gadget Government (Electronic Devices, Mobile phones etc.) at global level.

3. After the contract, the Gadget will provide security to the people. Every individual has to sign this contract, willingly or unwillingly, to come out of this situation of fear, sudden death, and uncertainty of life, insecurity and social isolation. It will end fear, anxiety, and insecurity among the individuals.

4. The political structure of sovereign nation state will transform into a 'Unified E-State or Global state'. It will control the lives of the people with full authority to issue orders and to enforce it upon them. The people will have to obey them and pledge their liberty, consciously or unconsciously, to end this state of uncertain life and fear of sudden death.

Covid-19 socio-political transformation can't be stopped and is mandatory. It has ended the "Clash of Civilization" and a mono-culture has emerged in the world. The cultural war has ended and has transformed into "War of Co-existence of Humans" who are suffering from fear of death, uncertainty, insecurity and freedom. This transformation is different from previous history as it has brought a symmetrical change in socio-political structures and institutions throughout the world. The previous revolutions have originated and brought change either in one part or the other part of the world. It has not engulfed the whole world at the same time. The current transformation phenomenon has appeared simultaneously all over the world, covering each state. So it is unique as it has brought a uniform socio-political transformation globally. The physical environment, culture, social and political institutions, all have undergone this phenomenon, irrespective of East, West, North or South.

The greatest challenge of COVID-19 to Humanity is that of Gadget Addiction which is moving very fast towards Gadget Slavery. And this process would be completed with the coming expected waves of Covid-19 in future. It is an automation of life. It is an automation of humans and we have

to live with this speedy Gadget. It has raised two questions; 1. How much can we go with this environment? 2. How long can we live with it? And there is a dire need to give it a thought.

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