Evaluation of the Economic, Cultural, and Political American Response to COVID-19

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Introduction

As COVID-19 ravaged the world, countries' strengths and weaknesses were exposed; the stability of the global economy was tested; and certain nations—especially the United States—tripped over themselves, stumbling towards the road to recovery. Countries went into lockdown, causing unemployment rates to skyrocket, decreasing the exchange of goods and services between countries, and incentivizing the idea of nationalism in the sense of restricting international trade flow and immigration. Globalization was scapegoated for the economic consequence of coronavirus; the interdependence between countries was the global economy's ultimate downfall. Every country's banks and markets were so interconnected with their counterparts in other countries to the point where they collapsed without each other (Fontaine). This collapse of the global economy meant that on a large scale corporations were losing millions of dollars and on a small scale people were losing their jobs or their pay.

On that note, millions of adults filed for unemployment this year and billions of dollars were poured into financial and medical aid packages. But is that enough? The pandemic has highlighted many flaws in American government infrastructure, which were only compounded by the detrimental decisions the US had been making since January 2020 (when the first American cases of coronavirus were detected). The Trump administration constantly downplayed the negative consequences of COVID-19 in an attempt to preserve economic gains—a futile effort that cost thousands of people their lives and livelihoods. The failure to assess the scale of the pandemic led to delays in measures including travel restrictions, social distancing, declaration of states of emergency, the closure of schools and non-essential businesses, and testing distribution ("Policy Responses to COVID19"). For months, public health was disregarded in favor of political and economic benefits. However, this strategy backfired when a national lockdown became inevitable, leading to a halt in the economy; this was followed by poor decisions in capital allotment, markets prioritization, and supply base cultivation (Altman).

Economic

Financial Markets

It is valuable to note that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused disruptions to the economy due to the uncertainty of the economic impact. In terms of the financial market, risk assets have greatly suffered due to this human and health crisis; for example, the equity markets globally have fallen by 30% or more (Adrian & Natalucci). Additionally, volatility, which acts as a risk assessment tool, has shot up—the stock values are fluctuating substantially, leading to destroyed market liquidity. An explanation of this abnormal volatility is the role emotions play in investors' decisions; emotions drive much of the market activities and excessive exuberance, fear, greed, and speculation lead to overbuying and underbuying. Similarly, investments are largely based on instinct and risk evaluation, thus raising concerns about profitability. The phenomenon of irrational exuberance, a term coined by former chairman of the Federal Reserve Alan Greenspan, appears in drastic, short-termed increases in industries, such as the American oil industry. This idea rationalizes unforseen exponential jumps in industries declaring bankruptcy, such as Hertz, Chesapeake Energy, and Chinese real-estate company Fangdd Network Group Ltd. which had sudden, unexplainable increases of 200%, 180%, and 400%

respectively ("NASDAQ COMP", 1). According to the phenomenon, investors' actions are not logic-driven; instead, they are eager to participate in second offerings, etc.

Impact on a Macro Level

This dynamic shift in consumer spending, business investments, and global trade had an extreme impact on the US economy, made clear by the 9.5% decrease in GDP for the second quarter of 2020 (see fig. 1).

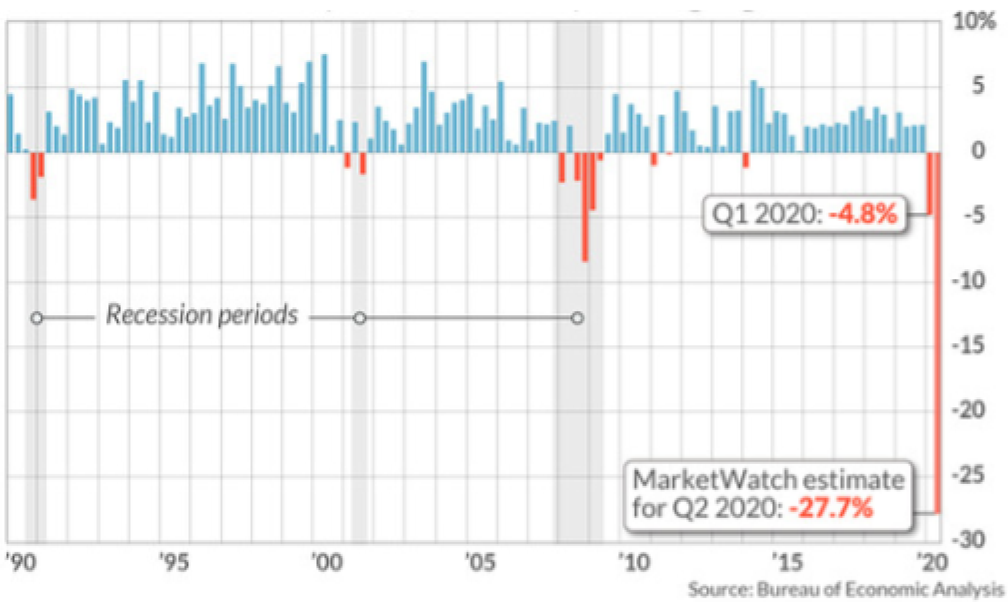

Fig. 1. A graph illustrating the decline of the US Gross Domestic Product.; "Economy posts biggest contraction in 12 years"

This harsh decline demolished nearly five years of economic growth. The US response to be in complete lockdown during May and June in the hope to control the virus was not successful as seen by the later surge in COVID-19 cases and deaths. This has led to a reversal of opening policies and thus a retreat of economic activity, which is portrayed by the freeze on consumer spending and continuation of shutdowns. This sharp spike is twice as large as that of The Great Recession of 2007-2009, and the depth and speed of this decline makes it truly severe.

However, there are certain ramifications made in response to the Great Recession that prevented certain features of the financial system from collapsing; these precautionary measures restrain the US from rapidly transitioning from a recession to a depression.

In the 2008 response to help the failing of huge banks and dwindling of significant industries like the automobile sector, “The Federal Reserve cut interest rates to near zero and launched a quantitative easing programme, which is when the Fed buys investments to increase cash flow” (“US Recession: What Can the 2008 Recession Teach Us about This One?”). However, this did not effectively help individual Americans such as those who had lost their retirement savings; hence, programmes and policies changes were made, which now contribute to the huge role the government is playing to help keep the economy afloat. At the beginning of the pandemic, Congress was quick to pass a $2.3T stimulus package to help small businesses and Americans whose work were disrupted, followed by a second phase of aid distribution. In contrast, the Great Recession was painfully lengthy (almost three years long) and all institutions were slow to act, each hoping the markets would recover themselves. This led to the recession being powered by uncertainty of job security and financial system recovery, which stemmed from poor investment choices similar to those on Wall Street. However, in the case of COVID-19, the uncertainty concerns are biological, implying that there is hope for a rapid

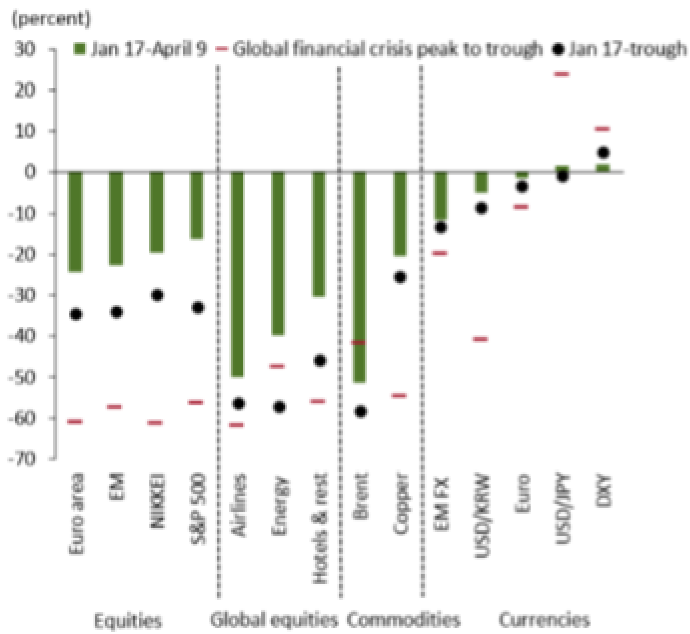

Fig. 2. Graph illustrating the change in prices of risk assets,;"Asset Prices Plummeted"

recovery once a vaccine is developed. Without the fear of rising coronavirus cases, employment, economic activity, and reopening may radically rise.

Additionally, this pandemic has disrupted the international business environment, and the opportunity to expand state power pertinent to the pandemic's control has given rise to an ideological competition. Particularly, the origin of companies and the level of connectedness amongst these countries have become a huge part in maintaining a globalized economy. These decisions further affect global growth patterns, such as those represented by the DHL Global Connectedness Index, which are directly proportional to fast economic growth. In the long term, these decisions would significantly contribute to positive or negative feedback loops in public health, economic growth, and interconnectedness.

As seen in Fig. 2, prices of risk assets, such as equities and commodities, have crashed. However, the currency prices have remained stable as seen by the low decrease in its percentage value. Central banks have played a huge role in preventing this currency crisis; they have mitigated monetary policies by easing policy rates and rebooted effective programs which partially protect the purchases of risky assets (Adrian & Natalucci). Major US banks like JP Morgan have set aside massive amounts of capital for loan loss provisions, which act as a safety net to businesses approaching bankruptcy. Global central banks, such as the International Monetary Fund and German Central Bank play a significant role in protecting the stability of the global financial system and the flow of credit to the economy. Unfortunately, there are dire consequences with providing generous, short-term monetary assistance, which lead to impulsive decisions. The extremely low cost of borrowing led to an unprecedented corporate debt issuance which in turn decelerated the lending offered to indebted corporates ("Economic Outlook 2020"). Emerging markets have seen the heaviest downfall with about $100 billion worth of flow reversal. These issues have shifted the probability of the global growth index exceeding zero to nearly impossible.

When considering recovery for financial markets, fault lines such as weak stress tests and supervised scrutiny on banks have been evident, and they have contributed to a sharp slowdown in economic activity and eventually recovery. Interconnectivity between nations to restore the trade sector will help boost market confidence, an essential component in stabilizing the financial sector. Additionally, banks like the IMF have to support the world's most vulnerable economies first, which would give rise to an eventual global recovery.

Trade & Labor

In addition, in part because of the financial market's instability, the labor force and global supply chains have also been disrupted. As physical restrictions and work stoppage plans are implemented, trade has been slowed due to the decreased amount of available healthy workers, the speed of goods production, global demand, and available jobs.

All countries are feeling the bruising backlash of the pandemic on the labor force. The International Labor Organization (ILO) predicts that global trade will fall around 13-32% in 2020 (“The Effects of COVID-19 on Trade and Global Supply Chains” 2). Lessened demand has also contributed to falling trade. The disappearance of some goods, such as oil and dairy products, seems conceptually obvious since some products are directly connected to conscious consumer decisions during the pandemic, as demonstrated by less people traveling to work resulting in less gas being bought. In fact, crude oil prices plunged by 50% in the period between January and March according to the World Bank (“Most Commodity Prices to Drop in 2020 As Coronavirus Depresses Demand and Disrupts Supply” 1). While lower oil prices may appear attractive to the average consumer’s eye, it has the possibility of severely damaging the United States economy. Since the United States has recently become one of the top oil producers, a decreased demand and price could lead to “economic disruptions”, such as bankruptcies, unemployment, default loans, and a slowing of capital spending according to Moody Analytics’ head economist (Isidore 4). The decrease in goods production, among other trade disruptions, has overwhelming negative implications for the United States economy, slowing trade, thus hurting the country’s GDP and overall wealth.

As a result of the slow trade movement, the future of the labor force has also become bleak. While the success of the lockdown of the United States is questionable for restricting or encouraging the spread of COVID-19, the negative effect on the labor force is undeniable. The Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) predicts that in its member countries, which includes Canada, Mexico, Japan, and the United States, unemployment rates will reach 10% at the end of 2020, which is significantly higher than the 5.3% at the end of 2019. In fact, A National Bureau of Economic Research report estimates that at most half of the job losses in the United States and the United Kingdom were due to lockdowns implemented in response to the COVID-19. While the true outcome of the COVID-19 pandemic is incredibly unpredictable, the present skyward trend of employment rates foreshadows a disagreeable economic future. With millions of citizens experiencing emotional, physical, and financial instability, further unfortunate predictions are extremely troubling, threatening the financial and job security of many.

Considering that ILO notes that 88% of the jobs losses from mid 1880s to the present take place within 12 months of a recession, the United States is currently primed for sky high unemployment rates. In fact, ILO estimates that 165 million United States citizens lost their job in only the first quarter of 2020 ("The Effects of COVID-19 on Trade and Global Supply Chains" 3-4). However, the United States is not the only labor force being negatively affected; the amount of Israelites that applied for Unemployment Insurance prior to the crisis skyrocketed by seven times at the end of April. In addition, the Canadian unemployment rate increased from 5.6% to 13.7% from February to April.

Sadly, the blows of job losses are not equally dealt. According to an OECD report, young people, women, and lower educated workers, are suffering the most in the COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, youth employment rates in the United States rose in May over triple what they were in February, which is notably higher than those from older generations. In addition, the report also denotes that the jobs of women, in particular, are being unfairly affected. Canada, the United

States, and the European Union all saw a sharper rise of unemployment rates for women. Although women make up two-thirds of the health workforce in the world, and thus are crucial to COVID-19 recovery, they are more vulnerable to layoffs due to economic insecurity caused by a professional gender gap visible in seniority, working hours, and income (Gurría et. al 7). Moreover, as history viciously accounts with the Black Plague and the Spanish Flu, lower educated people in urban areas tend to bear a disproportionate weight as well. Considering that education levels tend to be associated with income, lower income and lesser educated individuals are impacted more negatively than workers with a high income and education by the losses caused by the pandemic. This is evident even in job connection, with higher educated workers having greater access to job opportunities, a symptom of income inequity that is only exacerbated by recessions like the one created by the pandemic (Fasih et al. 3). Furthermore, race is another factor in unequal unemployment losses. People of color are disproportionately affected by job losses with the highest job losses for Hispanics and African Americans. Since many of the front-line workers, such as workers in health care with physician offices and non-elective services, were African Americans, the demographic was much more susceptible to contracting COVID-19 (Greene 23). In a similar vein, leisure and hospitality occupations, an area that suffered greater than 450,000 job losses, consists mostly of Hispanic, Black, and Asian workers. According to the Labor Department, White people are more likely to be able to work from home. More likely to be unemployed and encounter difficulty working from home, people of color tend to be included in those economically hit the hardest by the pandemic (Kurtzleben 17). In sum, youth, women, lower educated and lower income, and people of color were unequally affected by job losses.

In order to combat the negative trade effects of COVID-19, many countries are offering a financial boost to their businesses, including the United States. For example, the ILO has deployed a research brief outlining suggested phases of economic recovery ("The Effects of COVID-19 on on Trade and Global Supply Chains" 5-6). The ITA and U.S. & Foreign Commercial Service (USFCS) have reduced the cost of exports to encourage US businesses ("The International Trade Administration Granting Relief to U.S. Companies During COVID-19 Response" 3). While the United States focuses on unemployment insurance to support their rockers, other OECD countries focus on job retention efforts, allowing companies to decrease working hours or full work stoppage while maintaining their employees. For example, the European Union has implemented a financial package worth about 2,140.31 billion dollars with a multiannual financial—ensuring that the aid will be provided from 2021-2027—and Next Generation EU, which aims to provide loans and grants through seven for business and workers financially hurt by the pandemic with heavy incentives to keep current workers employed ("A Recovery Plan for Europe" 1). These are all steps towards a brighter, healthier future of economic recovery for labor. Considering the disastrously uncertain future of global trade, it is now more vital than ever that the government offer support to their citizens in this turbulent period.

Cultural Repercussions

Lockdown and Its Impact

The pandemic not only disrupted financial markets, the economy, and international trading, but it also brought upon large cultural shifts around the world. As COVID-19 worked its way around the world, countries enforced lockdowns and adopted social distancing into people's daily routines. Some businesses moved online while others—small businesses, for example—closed down until it is safe to resume in person operations. Schools also moved classes and assignments online, sending students home so that both students and staff can continue working. Despite being a global pandemic, COVID-19 proved to be much more damaging to people who were already economically vulnerable prior to the crisis. For example, "the bottom 10 percent of earners suffered a loss of income two-and-a-half times worse than the richest 10 percent" during the Great Recession (Cheng et al.). Unsurprisingly, the COVID-19 crisis follows a similar trend. Wealthier households have better access to technology, allowing students easy access to remote education and adults to work from home without problems. Meanwhile, low income households cannot afford the same resources, let alone social distance properly. This imbalance has always existed, but it is now more discernible as technology becomes more of a "necessity" in this pandemic.

Economic disparity is not just a problem within the U.S., but it also persists in and between other countries. Access to technology has been difficult to obtain and moving digitally may not be possible at all for labor-oriented jobs. A report from the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) states that 86.6% of those living in developed countries have internet access compared to only 19.1% of people in least developed countries (Bogdan-Martin 2). Even in developed countries, the percentage of people with and without internet access is astonishing. Despite being a developed country, the United States still has a wide digital divide between high and low income households. According to a Pew Research Center study, among parents with children whose schools have been closed, 36% say that their child will "not be able to complete their schoolwork because they do not have access to a computer at home" compared to 14% of middle income families and 4% of upper income families (Vogels et al. 1).

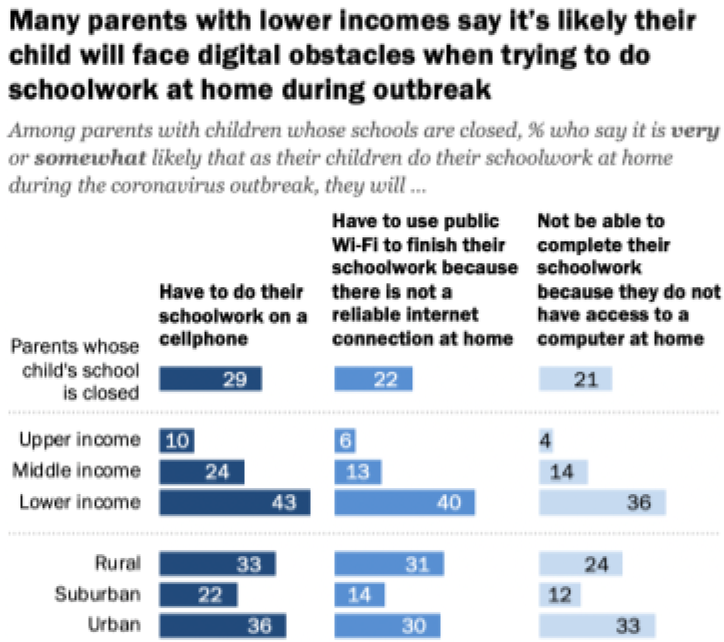

Fig. 3 Graph illustrating a larger percentage of lower income families having to face digital obstacles than upper and middle income families; "Many parents with lower incomes say it's likely their child will face digital obstacles when trying to do schoolwork at home during outbreak"

With the pandemic pushing companies and schools online, low income families have been taking the blunt of the blow, leaving them almost no options about what to do. The matter is worse in less developed countries. Those who have jobs that cannot be moved online still have to support their families. At the same time, they also have to stay cautious of COVID-19 and whether they are aiding its spread. This difference and shift to a technology-reliant society makes it significantly harder for less developed countries to combat the pandemic and maintain their economies at the same time.

Even moving away from a technological standpoint, developing nations are especially vulnerable amidst this crisis: "Already a fifth of the population in sub-Saharan Africa suffers from malnutrition" (Walker). COVID-19 unveiled the clear disparity between the rich and the poor and poses the question of what responsibilities developed nations have in aiding communities that have high urban density and are susceptible to famine and disease. For starters, the IMF agreed to provide relief from the burden of debt interest and to cover payment dues from 25 countries, mostly in Africa (Walker). However, despite aid from several other multilateral organizations payments, developing countries are still disproportionately suffering during this pandemic.

Environmental Impacts

The environment, however, has been looking better in larger metropolitan cities around the world. For example, as a result of lockdowns, online work, and limits in economic activity, scientists have noticed a significant decrease in air pollution. Large metropolitan cities, previously filled with smog, saw the clear sky for the first time (Gardiner).

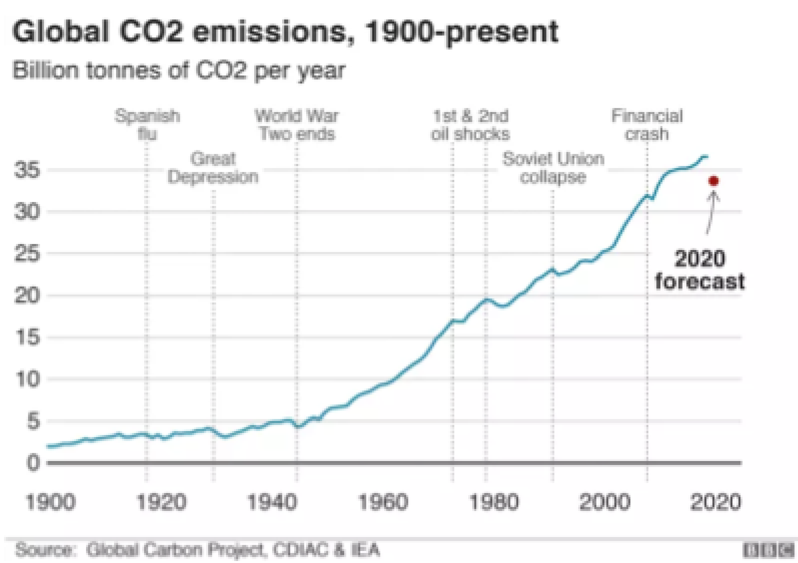

Fig. 4 Graph illustrating global CO2 emissions forecast significantly lower in 2020; "Global CO2 emissions, 1900-present"

Experts at the Global Carbon Project predict that "carbon dioxide emissions could fall by the largest amount since the Second World War due to the impact of COVID-19 on economic activity" (Larkin). In the figure above, the carbon output forecast for 2020 could fall by more than 5%, the first dip since a 1.4% reduction after the 2008 financial crisis. However, this prediction assumes people will continue to work online, so the reduction may only be temporary. For countries to effectively reduce CO2 emissions and turn to a sustainable economy, countries must enforce policies to lower their CO2 emissions, exploring methods such as switching from oils, gasses, and fossil fuels to renewable energy. Before the pandemic even started, countries have been working against issues such as global warming and climate change—setting up policies and making changes to existing ones. With the pandemic, however, these efforts have been pushed to the side. Countries moved their focuses into containing the pandemic, helping its people, and trying to keep the economy from falling apart. Policy decisions that support the citizens of a country during this crisis, however, take importance and are more needed now than ever.

Post Crisis Policy Implications

Three trends emerge when examining successful government responses to previous crises including epidemics, natural disasters, and economic recessions. First, the most effective recovery proposals occur when the government responds in the earliest stages of the calamity. Second, the policies enacted must prioritize the citizens. Lastly, governments analyze pre-existing market trends to plan for long-term economic recovery (Cheng et al. 3). These themes are reflected most notably in President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal to combat the ramifications of the Great Depression. The series of programs provided immediate relief, recovery, and reform. A few weeks following his inauguration, Roosevelt signed into law projects like the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and the Works Progress Administration (WPA), creating both short and long term employment for the most vulnerable citizens (Mattingly 3). The modern day Green New Deal models Roosevelt's New Deal by providing new jobs and higher wages to combat mass unemployment, while addressing the climate change crisis and environmental injustices. Following Roosevelt's relief, recovery, and reform model is beneficial in mitigating the challenges set by COVID-19 because it has proven to successfully prevent the nation from crumbling under economic downfalls. Many governments like the U.S. have already provided short-term relief for citizens and businesses, but the responses would have been more effective if the government reacted promptly at the onset of the crisis.

Under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES Act), the U.S. government spent an estimated $2.3 trillion: $293 billion on stimulus payments, $268 billion on extending unemployment benefits, $25 billion on providing a food safety, $510 billion on preventing corporate bankruptcy, and more ("Policy Responses to COVID19"). The CARES Act was intended to provide aid to the millions of unemployed Americans and those who were most vulnerable during the earlier stages of the pandemic. Four months since signing the CARES Act into law, a new relief package is being negotiated. The Health, Economic Assistance, Liability Protections and Schools Act (HEALS Act) would provide $1 trillion in providing direct assistance to Americans, including a second stimulus package.

However, as with many federal aid programs, these acts were not without flaws. The U.S. government has not only failed to fulfill the promises made in the CARES Act, but also has waited nearly four months since the CARES Act to negotiate a new relief package. Successful government responses to epidemics must be quick; the slow response of Congress and the Trump Administration slows down the country's transition from relief to recovery. There are many other deficits in these aid packages, such as the Paycheck Protection Program under the CARES Act, as previously mentioned, and its lack of support for small businesses (Grotto et al.). Many citizens have also reported a significant delay in receiving stimulus checks and Pandemic-EBT, not to mention that a singular $1,200 check is not enough to pay for multiple months of rent, water, food, and other essential expenses.

One obstacle to instituting extended financial aid to unemployed people is the notion that people will not seek work if they can earn a living wage from the government; however, there are many reasons for Americans to continue searching for jobs, and there is evidence that they have done so since the stimulus package was passed in March 2020. According to The Economist, many workers rely on their jobs to provide healthcare and retirement savings—benefits that they currently cannot receive from the CARES Act. Thus, unemployed Americans are still applying for jobs with benefits and those employed have no incentive to lose "potentially lifetime benefits" in exchange for "a few more [unemployment-insurance] cheques" ("Generous Unemployment Benefits" 3). Studies have shown that the stimulus payments have not dampered the labor-market recovery by causing a high number of job vacancies, rather the number of job vacancies in April was the lowest since 2014 ("Generous Unemployment Benefits" 4). That being so, it is heavily implied that the current mass unemployment is caused by a job shortage instead of an unwillingness to work, only furthering the need to support unemployed citizens until there is an increase in job openings ("Generous Unemployment Benefits" 6).

On the other hand, countries such as Canada have been providing ongoing financial support rather than one-time payments. The Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) supplies eligible Canadians with $2000 CAD (roughly equivalent to 1400 USD) for a 4-week period up to 24 weeks, extended from the original span of 16 weeks ("Government of Canada"). CTANews.ca reports that most Canadians are using the CERB payments to cover basic necessities including housing, groceries, and medicine (MacLeod). With ongoing financial support, Canadians feel more secure about their future, so they are able to use the CERB payments for purchasing goods and stimulating the economy. Meanwhile, many Americans chose to put the one time payment they received from the CARES Act into savings rather than stimulating the economy. Citizens with lower incomes are more likely to spend it for necessities such as food and utilities; thus stimulating the economy. On the contrary, middle to upper class citizens who are able to survive the pandemic without government assistance are more likely to put their stimulus payments into savings. Personal savings remained at a constant low level of

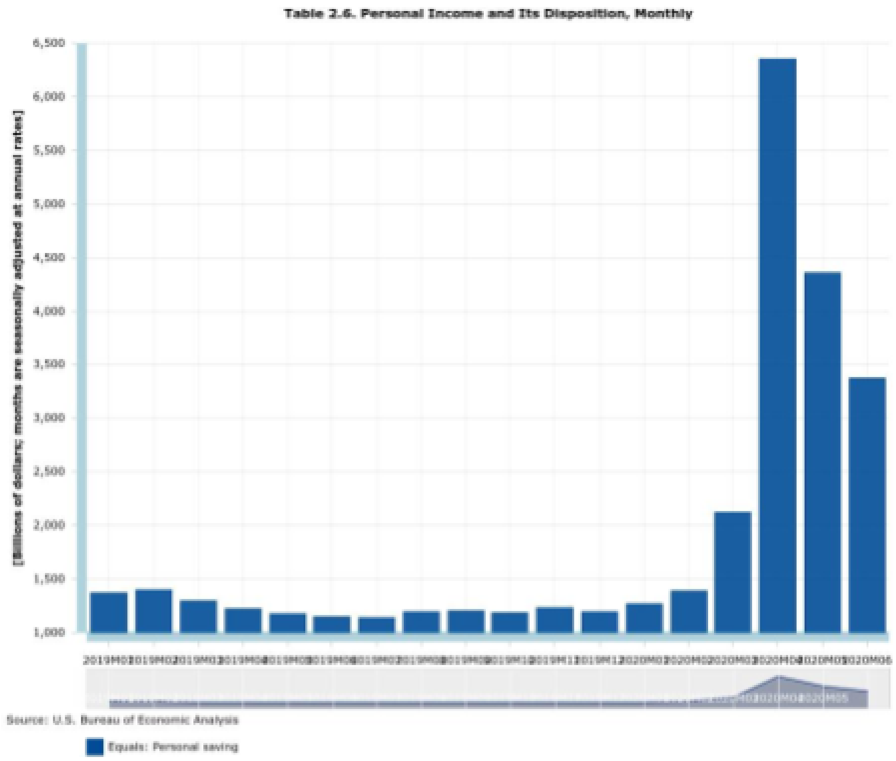

Fig. 5. Graph illustrating the increase in personal savings; "Table 2.6. Personal Income and Its Disposition, Monthly"

approximately $1 trillion to $1.5 trillion prior to the pandemic and CARES Act (see fig. 5). According to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA), personal savings peaked at $6.15 trillion in April. It is unsurprising that Americans would save the money from the stimulus check as a security measure. In order for the money to actually help the economy recover from COVID-19, the U.S. government must consider providing ongoing financial assistance directly to citizens who are most vulnerable like the Canadian government has.

Aside from providing direct relief to citizens and assisting small businesses, the US government must focus on revitalizing the economy by introducing long-term, sustainable infrastructure. This infrastructure must ensure that even the most marginalized groups—whether gender, race, or age—are not excluded from participating in economic processes. An inclusive economy ensures that citizens are not only consumers and workers, but they are also stakeholders in economic, social, and political institutions (Murawski). The U.S. government must address the economic disparities between the middle to upper class citizens and the more vulnerable population by implementing new policies such as a federal minimum wage of $15 per hour or universal healthcare. This new economy must also resolve the current mass unemployment through the creation of millions of new jobs with living wages. The Green New Deal is one set of policies that works to create those jobs, while moving towards a more sustainable economy.

As mentioned previously, the shift to remote activities has given the global environment a chance to recover from air pollution among other climate issues; to maintain these low carbon levels, governments should implement policies proposed in the Green New Deal pushing for a switch from fossil fuels to renewable energy. Coal-fired power plants contribute the greatest to CO_2 emissions, yet governments still provide billions in financial support to these enterprises (Barbier 9). The record low prices of oil and natural gas during COVID-19 as well as the low demand make it convenient to remove consumer subsidies from fossil fuel producers, accelerating the transition to a sustainable economy. Instead of maintaining subsidies, governments should employ carbon taxes on industries emitting the most carbon. By shifting to a sustainable, low carbon economy, the U.S. would not have to rely on oil industries and fear an economic collapse in future pandemics.

The Green New Deal also tackles the problem of mass unemployment. During the Great Recession, “clean-energy related stimulus programs, most notably energy efficiency, were responsible for 900,000 job-years (full-time jobs over one year) and the training of over 30,000 students for solar careers" (Barbier 7). Similarly, the Green New Deal will first create millions of new jobs and retraining programs focused on deconstructing oil pipelines and fracking wells, so current workers from the nonrenewable energy industries need not fear unemployment. These opportunities will also assist citizens permanently laid off from their jobs due to COVID-19, while also taking into account the health and safety of the workers. Rather than inhaling toxic chemicals from mining sites along with other hazards, occupations in the clean energy industry are significantly safer. The wages are much more equitable as well, illustrating how the Green New Deal also promotes a more inclusive economy.

When considering a more inclusive society, a new infrastructure must also take into account other disparities revealed during the past months such as the aforementioned severe disparities in digital equity. Considering that the private sector has insufficiently provided fast, reliable broadband service to all communities in the United States, the burden falls upon federal, state and local governments to provide internet access to Americans. Multiple small communities across the country have already instituted "municipal broadband"—wired home broadband service provided by community-owned networks—which has proven to be less expensive while providing the same "service offered by a private competitor" (Talbot et al. 6). However, there are several policies that prevent or outlaw municipal broadband throughout the United States, such as Virginia's financial barriers and North Carolina's array of legal requirements (Kienbaum). Considering how the American society has increasingly become reliant on technology—especially since the beginning of the pandemic—it is more urgent than ever to ensure that all Americans have fast, reliable internet access by repealing these policies.

Overall, the United States needs a set of policies like the Green New Deal to build a more inclusive and sustainable economy to ensure not only that it can effectively recover from this pandemic, but also so that the US will be better prepared if faced with another global crisis in the future.

Conclusion

Programs from the Great Recession teach economists that a more sustainable economy is feasible, but there is often a lack of momentum for clean energy post crisis because workers revert to relying on the same, environmentally-detrimental jobs. Therefore, legislation from the Green New Deal must be enacted immediately while this crisis is still going on—coupled with additional pricing reform such as removing oil subsidies and carbon pricing—in order for carbon levels to permanently decline. Rebuilding the economy to flourish under renewable energy is entirely achievable so long as the government prioritizes reforming the economy as much as providing relief and pursuing recovery.

When looking towards the future, many aspects impact the feasibility of action. However, there is no doubt that steps toward a more inclusive and sustainable future must be ensured. Repealing policies that inhibit widespread internet access, policies that invest in nonrenewable energy, and policies that provide insufficient financial support to unemployed and low-income individuals is the bare minimum that the U.S. government must execute. As a self-proclaimed first world country, the United States should take grander steps towards a more inclusive and sustainable future, encouraging economic growth and environmental responsibility at home and abroad.

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