

To be Quarantined or Not: A Viewpoint on Comparing Quarantine Policy in China and Iran

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Abstract:- By studying the history of civilization, we can see that human beings can take steps in the development and evolution of their civilization if they consider the collective interest and consider modern moral frameworks in their policies. In this regard, the history of pandemic diseases such as COVID-19 is no exception. In this viewpoint, by examining the most important historical cases similar to epidemics on the one hand and comparing quarantine policies against COVID-19 in China and Iran on the other, we intend to draw on an evidence-based summary of the factors influencing achieve the policies adopted by the government. The choice of China and Iran was made because the authors of this viewpoint had the experience of being present in these two countries during the Coronavirus and this opportunity has led them to express their views from the perspective of a public administration researcher on the subject. As a result of this view, it became clear that the most important effective policy in the face of the Coronavirus is quarantine, which would lead to different economic, political, and cultural conditions for governments and people to implement this policy. Finally, we made our suggestions regarding the implementation of this policy.

Keywords:- Quarantine Policy; Pandemic; COVID-19; Quarantine.

I. KEY POINTS

There are several key points, and we think all of them are important.

- While public health law emphasizes the role of governments, the relationship between government and the people, and public health services and duties, it must always be considered how each country can comply with a control strategy such as quarantine. Moreover, more importantly, can this policy be implemented in that country?
- The first and most important factor in dealing with epidemics and pandemics is to mention the truth. Officials must tell the truth under any circumstances, even if it is annoying. This is because, firstly, it reduces public fear and increases people's trust in the government, and secondly, it creates public agreement, and the government and the people move in the same direction.
- The quarantine strategy in the face of an outbreak must either be done strictly and over a while and principles, or it is better not to do it, because even not doing it right causes damage.

- Currently, the experience of developing countries such as Iran with a pandemic has shown that the quarantine strategy cannot be well implemented in such countries because this strategy requires its own economic, cultural, and political infrastructure.
- The Chinese government is a centralized government that has achieved remarkable economic developments in the past years and dominates many of society's needs. Also, the Chinese people, and East Asia in general, are more culturally and socially obedient, and this has made the difference between the performance of Iran and China in the face of Corona.

II. INTRODUCTION

The first case of the new coronavirus (2019-nCoV) was reported in Wuhan, China, and has reached the worldwide level, as the world health organization, after the spread of the new virus in most countries, called it a pandemic. It has been a shock to the international community, especially health policymakers around the world. Furthermore, this disease affects the medical system as well as other areas of society. The shock caused by the Coronavirus was much broader and stronger than similar cases in previous years. The particular and quick prevalence of Coronavirus demonstrates how a biological and epidemiological can turn into a social, economic, and political problem.

We, Iranian students majoring in public administration in Wuhan, China, had two weeks of quarantine experience in this city. Following the evacuation of Wuhan by the Iranian government on February 4, 2020, and two weeks of quarantine by the Iranian Ministry of Health, the first positive corona case was reported in the city of Qom on February 18, 2020, exactly one day after the end of the quarantine period for Iranian students residing in Wuhan. Therefore, as students of public administration, we have made a comparative viewpoint of the quarantine from the perspective of public policy and management, which has had two different experiences in Wuhan, China, and Tehran, Iran. In fact, why was quarantine relatively successful in China and could control the outbreak, at least inside the country, but not in other countries such as Iran? During the Corona period, one of the most important questions is how to control the rate of coronavirus outbreaks. Is it possible to consider a general method for all countries, or should each country adopt its method of combating the virus?

In this regard, we have reviewed previous research and reports on the strategy for combating pandemics and epidemics, two of which we have included in this perspective. What is clear is that the main approach that has been taken so far to counter the epidemic or pandemic has been the quarantine strategy, but in some countries such as China, it has been done better than in some countries such as Iran. From this perspective, we have tried to examine our point of view on the implementation of the quarantine strategy in Iran compared to China, and also to offer suggestions for improving the implementation of this strategy. It should be noted that all of the above has a rooted but immature view that could create an attitude for other researchers in the future to take this issue more seriously.

III. PAST RESPONSE ACTIVITIES TO THE PANDEMIC

Throughout history, major disease outbreaks and pandemics have posed significant risks to public health and governments. Across the world, we have seen a rise in disease outbreaks in the previous decade. Diseases such as Nipah virus, Ebola, Cholera, Zika, yellow fever, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), H1N1 influenza, and Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS) have been observed pandemically in the past. Thus, it can be said that there are over 5,000 viruses and more than 300,000 species of bacteria that impact humans (Brower & Chalk, 2003). This means that identifying exactly what is causing the illnesses may be difficult. Because an outbreak of disease can occur before anyone is aware of it, governments must become better prepared to address the societal, political, and economic impacts of pandemic disease (Cook & Cohen 2008).

Recent studies by the NIH demonstrate that cities implementing containment measures (such as isolation, quarantine, and public separation) rapidly in response to the first cases of disease significantly reduced the spread of the disease as well as the number of casualties (Morens & Fauci, 2007). In this section, we refer to some of the past epidemics, the unique features and histories of diseases, and the strengths and weaknesses of governments in their efforts to address the prevalence of those diseases.

A. Pandemic Influenza

Influenza takes a variety of forms, each with its own characteristics. While some spread relatively easily from person to person, others are less contagious. Thus, some influenza is extremely dangerous while others pose little threat to society (Billings, 2005). The deadliest pandemic influenza in human history is the Spanish flu, which lasted from 1918 to 1920 (Price-Smith, 2009). The unusual feature of this pandemic was that it mostly killed young adults, with 99% of pandemic influenza deaths occurring in people under 65, and more than half in young adults 20 to 40 years old (Simonsen et al. 1998). At that time, people used cloth masks distributed by public health agencies and stayed in their homes to a large extent (Billings, 2005). Considerable activities undertaken by governments were centered around the need to isolate infected people from those that had not been exposed. Governments

prohibited public gatherings and closed schools and educational Centers (Kolata, 2001).

According to Anthony Fauci, MD, NIH, “a primary lesson of the 1918 influenza pandemic is that it is critical to intervene early” A second study found that the timing of lifting the quarantine measures was also an important factor in preventing the disease from being reintroduced into society (Morens & Fauci, 2007).

Although many measures were taken to control the disease, it was challenging to prevent the spread of the disease due to the involvement of countries in the First World War and the lack of facilities for previous training. Among the measures taken during this period, the following can be mentioned:

- Prohibition of public gatherings and school closures;
- Limitation recreational activities;
- General burial ban;
- Distribution of fabric masks by public health agencies;
- Quarantine people at home, hospitals, and military centers in some places (Kolata, 2001; Billings, 2005; Barry, 2004).

All in all, this pandemic led to enormous improvements in public health. Indeed, several strategies, such as health education, isolation, sanitation, and surveillance, improved our knowledge of the transmission of influenza, and are still implemented today to stem the spread of a disease that has a heavy burden (Martini et al, 2019).

B. SARS

Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)) started in November 2002 in China and spread almost all over the world, and continued until August 2003. The World Health Organization confirmed 8422 cases in 32 countries and 919 (11%) deaths as a result of the SARS coronavirus (World Health Organization, 2003). In March, the World Health Organization issued a statement calling SARS a severe threat. The potential for the global spread of SARS was quickly recognized by the World Health Organization (WHO). The Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network were activated to help identify and deploy volunteers from around the world to assist the most severely affected nations, and WHO rapidly issued several recommendations to help nations control outbreaks and prevent spread (LeDuc & Barry 2004).

The virus was so unknown that some thought the death toll could be the same as the Spanish flu. Global success in the fight against SARS has been partly due to the prevalence of SARS-CoV due to its epidemiological and biological characteristics. Understanding transmission patterns and the ability to diagnose and approve infected patients ultimately led to effective screening measures and reduced disease spread rates. Due to the lack of medicine or vaccines, the options for early intervention were limited to public health measures. (Anderson et al., 2004; Yang et al., 2020). Moreover, for a rapidly spreading disease that was not clearly understood and that did not respond to the classic antibiotic and antiviral therapies and for which no vaccines were available, traditional public health interventions, like early case detection, isolation

of cases, contact tracing and quarantine, decreasing social interaction and keeping the public informed were the only options available to contain spread (Ahmad et al., 2009).

The SARS outbreak has shown how, in a closely interconnected and interdependent world, a new and poorly understood infectious disease can have an adverse effect not only on public health, but also on economic growth, trade, tourism, business and industrial performance, and political and social stability (Mackenzie et al., 2004). The economic impact of SARS was significant and provides insight into the effects of a major disease on national economies. The economic impact of the disease was seen in airlines, hotels, trade, and retail markets (Rahman & Sanchanta, 2003; Struck, 2003).

Overall, several important lessons were learned from the SARS outbreak. countries must have the capability and capacity to maintain an effective alert and response system to detect and quickly react to outbreaks of international concern and to share information about such outbreaks rapidly and transparently. Moreover, responding to pandemic threats requires global cooperation and global participation, and a global alert and response network is needed to provide technical assistance when national disease control systems are stressed beyond their capacity (Li et al., 2005).

IV. COMPARISON OF COVID-19 RESPONSE ACTIVITIES IN IRAN AND CHINA

The post-Corona era will be the most difficult in Iran's contemporary economy. Corona destroys a large percentage of Iran's GDP. Corona's damage to Iran's service sector is severe. The share of retail, transportation, and restaurant in the country's GDP is high, accounting for about a quarter of Iran's economy, which has been severely damaged by the Corona. Employees in the services, tourism, retail, transportation, and restaurant sectors are among the lowest-income social groups exposed to unemployment due to Corona. Although Corona acted democratically in terms of affliction and afflicted all sections of society (the poor and the rich), in terms of economic consequences, it has been very class-based. It has acted against the poorest sections of society.

As one of the ways to prevent the outbreak of the disease, quarantine has always been of interest to all developed countries. In Iran, quarantine has been known for a long time, but its principles have never been scientifically, effectively, and efficiently implemented, which can have various reasons. In general, quarantine is divided into two types, compulsory and optional. Compulsory quarantine is carried out by coercion of the government, which depends on several issues. To enforce compulsory quarantine, first of all, a law-abiding society is needed, then support and logistics facilities, as well as a regular and integrated support system, then a paramilitary hierarchy system, and finally a clean system without gaps and decisiveness. All of these are fundamental and authoritarian needs, from high to low. Optional or voluntary quarantine also requires social and cultural items that affect society from low to high. This kind of quarantine requires people to have faith, belief, and faith in the information, health, and support system and to know that they will not be forgotten. If there are this

trust and belief, people will participate in the voluntary quarantine with open arms. It has been a long time since the coronavirus outbreak in Iran. In late January, there were news and rumors among the public about the outbreak of the Coronavirus in Iran. In social media, clips were circulated by people, and in the Persian-language media outside of Iran, there were reports of the spread of this virus. However, the government has not yet provided any information on the spread or non-prevalence of the virus, which has caused concern and anxiety in the community.

After the official confirmation of the outbreak of the Coronavirus in Iran, its exact origin had not yet been determined. The Director General of Public Relations of the Ministry of Health of Iran, said in a speech on Wednesday, March 25, that the outbreak of Corona was probably from Qom and Gilan. After the announcement of the two cities, according to some Iranian polling centers, including the Iranian Student Opinion Polling Center (ISPA 2020), 89.4 % of Iranians agreed to quarantine cities where the Coronavirus was more prevalent. The survey was conducted by the Iranian Student Opinion Polling Center (ISPA, 2020) during a national telephone interview on March 11-15 with a sample size of 1,554 people. Meanwhile, Hassan Rouhani, the president of Iran, reiterated after a joint meeting of the government's economic headquarters and representatives of the country's economic activists focusing on the Coronavirus that "we have nothing called quarantine, neither quarantine nor Nowruz (Iranian New Year), not after and before, and everyone is free in their business and activities." However, after the president's announcement, measures were taken to control the corona outbreak, including banning the passage of non-local vehicles in each city, controlling intercity borders, closing schools and universities, closing high-risk jobs, and closing parks and recreation centers. Also, due to the Iranian New Year and public campaigns to encourage people to stay at home, quarantine was done to some extent, both compulsorily and voluntarily. However, as mentioned, this quarantine was not carried out in a timely and strict manner. Experts say quarantine can prevent the spread of the virus, but only if quarantine is done properly. If for whatever reason, a coherent program is not used in quarantine, it could backfire and take control of the crisis. Professor Lawrence Gostin (2020) has written in the Journal of Health Affairs about the effectiveness of quarantine in preventing the contagion of COVID-19. He has mentioned:

China used draconian social control, armed police, and intrusive electronic surveillance. For example, using a smartphone app, Chinese authorities tracked people's movements, and enforced a strict code of who could, and could not, travel. While Chinese citizens became fearful, even angry, their culture was to abide by government rules.

In dealing with the Coronavirus, the conditions of each country, the demographic situation, and the economic situation of the states will be the determining factors of that country's strategy in the face of the outbreak. According to Professor Gostin (2020), another important condition that must be met along with quarantine is the economic facilities needed by the people who are to be imprisoned for a significant period in a

geographical area. In this regard, China was able to provide a general mobilization for food, medicine, hospital, and other necessary resources for the residents of Wuhan, and this was a very significant case in the success of the quarantine strategy in China. Still, in Iran, the situation is quite different. In Iran, due to heavy economic sanctions and high inflation, people normally endure a lot of economic pressure despite working full-time. Most Iranians cannot assume that they will not work for a few months, because, as mentioned, their incoming resources do not normally cover their expenses, and the balance between the two is not stable for the majority of people. For example, in Iran, there is a large number of day and seasonal workers whose expenses depend on their work, and there is no other way for them to cover their expenses than to work full time. Also, the lack of government support for people is another significant factor. Things like proper internet packages or food items or helping to donate taxes and support the classes that have suffered during this period. As a result, all of these factors make it harder to implement a quarantine strategy. In response to the question of why a similar approach to China was not put on the agenda by the Iranian government at the time of the confrontation with Corona, the head of the Iran-China Chamber of Commerce said:

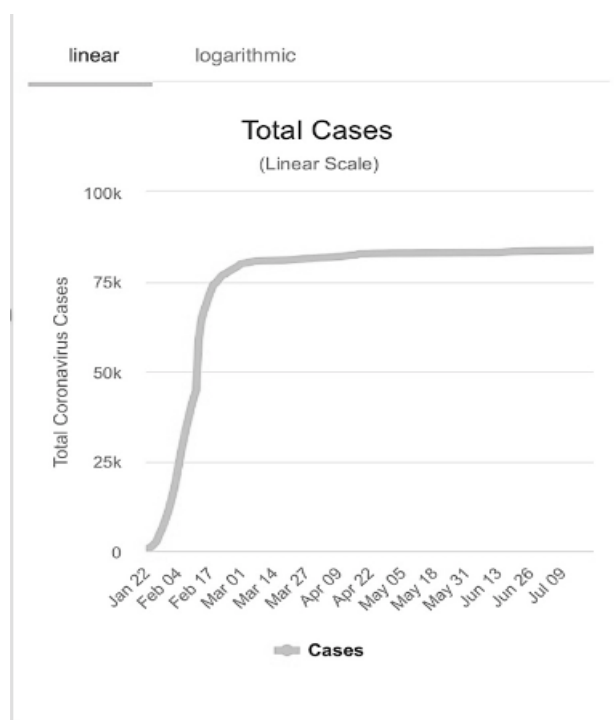
We have to accept that Iran's economic situation is not comparable to China's. On the other hand, our people are culturally less obedient, and the combination of these factors makes it difficult to conclude that Iran will act exactly like China. For example, one of the main concerns during the quarantine period is to provide for the needs of people living in their homes. In Iran's economy, many people have small businesses and live on their daily income. If these strata are to be forced into a quarantine house, their needs must be met every day in their homes, which is very difficult given Iran's economic situation.

The rapid contagion of the Coronavirus, which has suddenly turned Iran into an epidemic hub in the region, has once again raised fundamental questions about the deep Cultural duality that Iranians have been involved in for the past two centuries. The warning of experts and the strategies of the medical community, which has a vital role in preventing the spread of the disease, has been ignored by some officials and neglected by some sections of society. In exceptional circumstances where society more than ever needs public solidarity, national trust, and confidence in the expertise and transparency of government officials, the concealment, secrecy, and conspiracy of government officials have cast a dark shadow over the government. On the other hand, people's distrust, skepticism about the government, and deep cultural conflict have become more widespread in society. This has further disrupted the country's crisis management work. Nevertheless, compared to China, an important feature that prompted the government to respond to curfews was the general culture of the Chinese people. Professor Gostin (2020) says that although Chinese citizens have become terrified and even angry because of these actions, their public culture is to abide by government laws in all circumstances. However, in Iran, there are no tools to create such restrictions, and even if they do, the government can hardly form a public partnership with such measures. In Iran, we are witnessing the non-

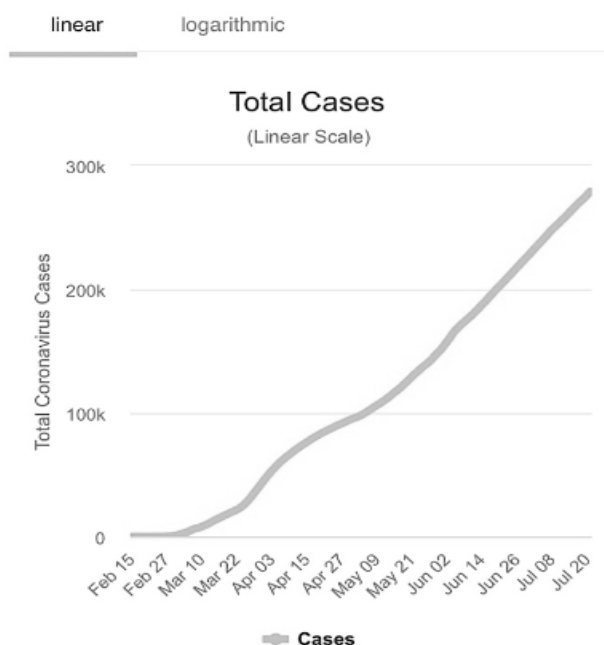
functioning of the political and governing system. For instance, the president gives an order, the governor of the province speaks differently, or the president of the University of Medical Sciences and the field of treatment gives a separate order. Graham Fuller (1991) points to some of the moods and manifestations of the political culture of the Iranian people that are well visible these days at the height of the Corona crisis. He mentions:

The Iranian people believe that if the order of things always contributes to the instability of life, then whenever an opportunity arises, one should seize the opportunity, which is a kind of wicked sense of opportunism. For Iranians, if the social system is considered unfair or the tool of the hands of opportunistic or foreign forces, the observance of personal morality in it is considered stupid, meaningless, and irrational. In a system where there is no direction, one must pursue one's interests.

As Graham Fuller (1991) rightly points out, the persistence of insecurity and instability in living conditions, the unfairness of the social system, and the notion that the administration of some institutions has fallen into the hands of opportunists have led Iranians to exhibit these behaviors in the different historical sections. In such a situation, the efficiency of the speeches of university professors, preachers, and moral teachers in inviting people to honesty and ethics will be reduced, and the national media's propaganda efforts to set an example will not go anywhere. However, such behaviors cannot be attributed to the entire Iranian nation. In the face of lucrative attitudes, we have witnessed the selfless and moral behaviors of people and marketers in donating masks and disinfectants to other compatriots. However, the repetition of some unhealthy moods, which also have a great impact on the psychological atmosphere of the society and the living conditions of the people, is a matter of consideration and requires careful and meticulous research. Hence, instead of complaining about the behavior of the people (which in some cases is annoying) and taking propaganda gestures to deal with this problem, government officials, other political and judicial officials, and the media should try to find the root of this problem. In addition to dealing with offenders, they can form a special body of psychologists, sociologists, and political elites to try to eliminate the conditions for such behaviors. Government officials need to hear the voice of the nation behind the black humor published on social media to Take steps to rebuild the cracked wall of public trust. They must plan and redefine the mechanisms of the political system in such a way that there are no unclean hands and greedy eyes in the public treasury. Moreover, its goal is only to feed the people and their security and lasting well-being. Just as feelings of insecurity, injustice, and mistrust have led some sections of the population toward profiteering and individualism, it is expected that the security and sustainable stability, justice, transparency, and compassionate efforts of the officials for the national interest will be able to lead them to morality and the collective interest. Here is the comparison graph of total coronavirus cases in Iran and China from February to June as shown in fig. 1 and fig. 2:



* Source: Adapted from World meter Website
Fig. 1. Total Coronavirus Cases in China



* Source: Adapted from World meter Website
Fig. 2. - Total Coronavirus Cases in Ira

V. SUGGESTIONS

- In the event of a pandemic, it is better to shut down the country's activities for a few weeks and declare public quarantine, keeping only the production and distribution units that supply food and medicine and the immediate service institutions active. It is also possible to use the

National Fund's reserves to provide damaged businesses with free and non-repayable facilities, as well as to pay a few salaries to the lower deciles of society. Then it can be said that the public confronts the least financial damage, and the pandemic is controlled in less time.

- Before resorting to compulsory quarantine, it is possible to use methods that eliminate the need for quarantine. Two critical steps can be taken to achieve this goal. First, provide the public with credible information that people can trust. Second, it enables people to follow precautionary recommendations without incurring high financial or personal costs.
- Achieving unity of opinion and integrated decision-making in the government in the face of the outbreak of a disease requires the integration of all the various organs in the country. If different institutions fail to work together, it will be tough to manage crises and cause concerns at the community level.
- Non-governmental organizations in the field of health, along with all activities, can focus more on the topic of epidemics and pandemics. Because although an epidemic may occur every few years, it is clear that the damage will continue for years to come.
- The World Health Organization can set up a committee for developing or underdeveloped countries that has political powers. Until global crises such as COVID-19 occur, this committee has the authority and influence to enforce safety principles and take action to slow the spread of the disease.
- Given the multiplicity of epidemics that have occurred throughout history and the importance of controlling this problem, the World Health Organization can, with the help of governments, work harder to educate the people of developing countries. This training can be in the context of courses appropriate to the culture of that community.

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