

Pandemic Simulations: Preparing for a New Era

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SPEAKERS

Paul Schreyer

Paul Schreyer 00:16

Hello, my name is Paul Schreyer. I'm a freelance journalist, author and co-editor of the magazine Multipolar. Today I would like to talk about occurrences connected to the Corona pandemic. The title of my talk, Pandemic Simulation Exercises: Preparations for a New Age indicates that it won't be about the present Corona crisis, but about what has happened before. Indeed, most interesting events have taken place. To be specific pandemics simulations. The situation we are experiencing right now, the fear of a virus and ensuing measures that extremely restrict liberties is exactly the situation that has been repeatedly and intensely trained and rehearsed in the past years, with all kinds of infectious disease simulations. What I am going to present to you now are not speculations but well recorded and documented facts. Why have I chosen the subtitle Preparations for a New Age?

Paul Schreyer 01:14

Well, many people are under the impression that a new era has begun with this crisis, and that it might not be a good era, but one in which democratic structures are dismantled, an age in which liberties are phased out reduced and abolished. With this talk I would like to go some way towards a wider view, a more historical perspective. Let me just briefly say a few words about the Table of Contents. I will begin in the 1990s. Indeed, it was already in the 90s that we had the fight against terror as a political instrument, then I will present several bioterror simulation exercises. After that, we will take a look at the very interesting Lockstep scenario in 2010 and then investigate a few more recent pandemics simulation exercises that were executed during the Trump presidency.

Paul Schreyer 02:05

My final topic are the events at a stock market in September 2019. In my view, this is an interesting a crucial topic, which you do not find in the book that I have written about this subject. So for all of you who have already read my book, this topic probably contains information which might be new for you.

Paul Schreyer 02:25

Yes, a new era is beginning. What is the era that has come to an end? Well, of course, it is the era of the Cold War, which has ended in 1990. Let us briefly recall what kind of age it was. As you all know, it was marked by the two superpowers confronting each other, the Soviet Union on the one side and the US on the other. Or to put it more generally, the Eastern Bloc and the Western bloc facing each other. Both were heavily armed with nuclear weapons, and threatened each other with total annihilation. That was the global situation from approximately 1945 until 1990. It was a situation shaped by a lot of fears and great insecurity. Many people were afraid of the threat of nuclear war, which was an absolutely real possibility. Several times an outbreak of a nuclear war was imminent. In 1962 there was the Cuban missile crisis. In the 80s as well, there were a few highly precarious situations that might readily have escalated into a full scale nuclear war, which was only prevented with a lot of luck at the last moment, at least, that's how we see it today. So when you put the above in a wider historical context, that Cold War period was an absolutely crazy time with the threat so massive and existential. But this period came to a close in 1990 symbolised by the fall of the Berlin Wall. A great sigh of relief was felt all over the world. The Soviet Union was integrated, there was glasnost and perestroika, a process that had already begun in the second half of the 80s when reforms were initiated in Eastern Bloc countries that led to greater liberties. People breathed sighs of relief. With a sense of greater freedom, fears dissipated, not only for the populace of former communist countries, that was basically the attitude towards life from the 1990s onwards. Not all over the world, of course, but in great many parts of it, especially in the Eastern Bloc.

Paul Schreyer 04:26

That period, however, did not please everyone. There were influential groups of people that had a big problem with this kind of development, for example, the military and the entire defence complex, because with the collapse of the USSR, the enemy was gone. How could you now justify to maintain such an immense military budget? Here we have the picture of an American aircraft carrier, which is the symbol par excellence for the security state and the military, the necessity of exercising power all over the world, for which the military Juggernaut and such weapon systems are needed. How could that be justified from now on?

Paul Schreyer 05:08

Well, I found a striking quote of Colin Powell from this period, who at that time was the highest military official of the US and thus the chief military advisor to the president. Later he became Secretary of State. In 1991, he said in a newspaper interview with a slightly sarcastic undertone, but he certainly was serious, "I'm running out of demons. I'm running out of villains. I'm down to Castro and Kim Il-sung. At the time Castro was president of Cuba and Kim Il-sung president of North Korea thus referring to two of the few remaining communist countries that couldn't seriously serve as formidable enemies. These countries were way too insignificant and much too weak in regards to their military force, so how could the US claim in earnest after 1990 that a strong military complex was still needed?

Paul Schreyer 05:58

It was in that context and with that key problem, that the fight against terror began in the 90s. It truly was a historical turning point symbolised by a change of political actors. President George Bush Senior was succeeded by Bill Clinton. Bush had been strongly influenced by the Cold War. It was not only as a CIA director in the 70s, that he could be called a "cold warrior". So that transition of power from Bush to Clinton stirred up hope. Yes, the election of Clinton was a sign of hope for many. He was not at all considered a hawk, but an open minded young president who was inaugurated in January 1993. Just a few weeks later, there was a terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre in New York, with the Twin Towers still erect since this was long before 9/11. The detonation in the underground carpark of the North Tower, here a picture from February 1993, was the greatest-ever terror attack in the history of the USA with 700 injured. The carpark was completely devastated.

Paul Schreyer 07:08

The intention was to bring down those towers, a scheme that was ultimately accomplished in 2001. The backers of this bombing are said to have been Islamists. The next year, President Clinton announced his National Security Strategy, something that per se was not that unusual. Basically, almost every president releases a NSS report. Clinton he has specified his vision and explained where he intended to set his priorities. I would like to quote from it because it is quite interesting. Clinton said that the Cold War may be over, but the need for American leadership abroad remains as strong as ever. "I am committed to forging a new public consensus to sustain our active engagement abroad". Well, this is so to speak code language. You might be familiar with that kind of wording. Active engagement abroad means nothing other than military interventions abroad or wars, just sugarcoating. The crucial point here is that Clinton expresses the need for public consensus. He makes clear that he desires consensus so that "we can continue to use our military anywhere", which means this consensus did not exist at the time. To the contrary, there were heated debates. People said, we want a peace dividend now, that was the cue. We want the money that for decades was spent for armament, those funds should now be used for building our own national economy. Our society should benefit the defence budget should be reduced. And indeed, in the 1990s, the budget was cut back because of public pressure. So that was 1994 and now we get to 1995, or more specifically, March 95. This is a picture of Joe Biden, now US president who 25 years ago already had an important function as he headed the Senate Judiciary Committee. Here he is pictured in the Senate introducing a law. It was a law that should give more power to the President and in general to the executive branch in case of a major terror attack. That law was met with great resistance at the time. Looking into press archives, we can see that there was a passionate debate on that law. We learned that influential civil liberties groups immediately went to the barricades and expressed that that was going too far! No special powers for the president and the government! Everything should be democratically controlled. We do not want that law! Great resistance.

Paul Schreyer 09:50

A few weeks later, in April 95 another terrorist attack happened. This time it was aimed at a federal building in Oklahoma City. Since this was before 9/11 the attack was again the largest and deadliest single terrorist attack in US history. Around 170 people died and roughly 1000 were injured. We can see that the damage is immense, a truck bomb with two tonnes of explosives. It was a gigantic damage. Public attention on the subject of terrorism skyrocketed with this attack and remained high for

a long time afterwards. This attack on the Federal Building in Oklahoma City truly was a milestone, a divide, a defining moment for the subject of terrorism. Now the danger of terrorism was perceived differently. It attained new meaning.

Paul Schreyer 10:42

Riding this wave, the wave of terrorism so to speak, fears were fueled. This here is a newspaper article from 1997. It was however, not written by journalists, but by politicians, namely the CIA director at the time, James Woolsey, and a very high Pentagon official. The title of the article is "Defend Against the Shadow Enemy". The first sentence directly refers to the two great attacks which I just mentioned, to quote, "The destruction of the Federal Building in Oklahoma City and the bombing of the World Trade Centre in New York shocked Americans". But, and this is the pivotal point, "those tragedies would have been far worse if nuclear, biological or chemical materials had been involved". The authors further on in the article explain that the danger of chemical and biological weapons in the hands of terrorists is real, and would be the most likely physical threat to the US homeland. Great efforts need to be put in to guard against it.

Paul Schreyer 11:50

This article is only one example of the media campaign at that time. A lot of articles were actually published in this fame. Now I would like to present you another example of the same year. William Cohen, then Secretary of Defense, announced during a press conference here at the top on the agenda, that chemical and biological weapons would be likely elements of future warfare, and with that claim he justifies to put one billion dollar more into the defense budget within the next five years. So you can see that from the beginning we are dealing with large sums of money, huge budgets justified by that.

Paul Schreyer 12:35

In the same year, William Cohen appeared before the press and quite a different manner as guest on a morning show. That was not like a press briefing at the Pentagon by the programme where the viewers usually are not confronted with politics. So he sat there on the morning show holding up a five pound bag of sugar. He said if Saddam Hussein sprayed an equivalent amount of anthrax over a city like Washington DC, at least half of the inhabitants would with one breath be sent into writhing death throes and probably die within five days. The hosts of the TV show were speechless and begged him to stop.

Paul Schreyer 13:18

This TV appearance made waves in the press because the example had been so drastic, it is quite clear. I can't help but identify such a statement as fear mongering or scare tactics. It obviously was implied to trigger extreme fears. People were taught into believing that they were in immediate mortal danger. That was the mood. In the second half of the 90s, that kind of gloom was worked up more and more. On the one side a new threat was declared and debated. On the other side, that self same dangerous weaponry was being fabricated by US facilities at one at the same time. This is an interesting fact unbeknownst to me before I did research on this subject.

Paul Schreyer 14:01

In 1997, highly questionable research into biowarfare agents was conducted in the US. There was, for example, the covert CIA project "Clear Vision", an effort to create a bacteria bomb project. "Project Jefferson" of the Pentagon's DIA was aiming to reproduce a genetically modified strain of the anthrax bacterium. These laboratory studies of offensive biological weapons agents were conducted in absolute secrecy without any parliamentary control. It was only in September 2001 that these doings were unveiled in a New York Times article. Thereupon a press conference was convened. The Pentagon claimed that it was mere defensively-minded research, which is of course quite nonsensical when biowarfare agents are created in secret. It's certainly not defensive research.

Paul Schreyer 14:52

At that time this man took centre stage: Colonel Robert Kadlec who had served as UN bioweapons inspector in the Iraq War In 1991. He was one of the leading US bioweapons experts who in 1998 in an internal strategy paper of the Pentagon wrote the following - this quote was pointed out to me by my colleague Dirk Pohlmann - it is remarkable and deserves closer attention: "Using biological weapons under the cover of an endemic or natural disease occurrence provides an attacker the potential for plausible denial. Biological Warfare's potential to create significant economic loss and subsequent political instability, coupled with plausible denial, exceeds the possibilities of any other known weapon."

Paul Schreyer 15:47

Those sentences must be regarded within the historical context of the late 90s. Robert Kadlec warns that enemies of the USA might use such bio weapons against them. When you read the paper carefully, however, you notice that the author on several occasions stresses the potential for plausible denial. That makes you prick up your ears somewhat.

Paul Schreyer 16:14

Right at that time an institution was founded, which today looms large given our situation. I am referring to what today is called the "Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security". You probably have come across that name within the context of the Corona crisis. This institution has played a major role, since vital data pertaining to corona are being compiled, displayed and analyzed on a global dashboard, which was developed in January 2020. These data are disseminated by media all over the world. The center was founded in 1998 under another name Centre for Civilian Biodefense Strategies. So we can see that name obviously still has a somewhat military ring to it. Later in terms of public image, the emphasis would be on health. The focus though has always been the same.

Paul Schreyer 17:03

This center has organized a few very important and essential simulation exercises in the field of disaster response strategies. I would like to go into this subject more in detail. It started in 1999. The center came into being with the help of the Sloan Foundation, which was established by then president of General Motors Alfred Sloan who has died long since. The Sloan Foundation managers have put many, many millions into these bioterror exercises. So in 1999, just one year after establishing the center, a first conference was organized. Many hundreds of participants from 10 countries met in Arlington, home to the Pentagon, with the capital directly across the Potomac for a national symposium on medical and public health response to bioterrorism. At this conference, problems arising in the wake of a bioterror attack were assessed and discussed. It was a big event that February 99. Here we have

the organizing agency the Johns Hopkins Center for Civilian Biodefense Strategies in collaboration with the Department of Health and various other scientific organizations.

Paul Schreyer 18:19

In the context of this conference, a simulation exercise took place for the first time. It was the real life replication of a smallpox terrorist attack in the US, with a resulting smallpox epidemic and a massive number of victims. How could the situation be effectively addressed? Just picture experts from various fields sitting at the conference desk in a roleplay acting as officials in different functions talking to each other, just as these people would communicate in such a crisis. See them conduct a mock telephone conference coordinating strategic responses. That kind of conference was acted out by who says what, and who should decide what. Where do conflicts and problems arise?

Paul Schreyer 19:04

In the final report on the exercise we find the following quotes: "How far can police go to detain quarantined patients? A consensus must be reached as how to proceed with the vaccinations. Should martial law have been implemented. How to control the message going to the public?" These kinds of questions were discussed there in 1999, questions that remind us obviously a lot of our present time. One of the speakers there was Richard Clarke, a high level counter-terrorism adviser to the US government, who emphasised the fact that, for the first time the Department of Health is part of the national security apparatus of the United States". Indeed at that time a new path was treated and that these public health issues were rendered military problems.

Paul Schreyer 20:00

In that selfsame year 1999 the Pentagon continued its bio weapons research. There was, for example, "Project Bacchus" a covert programme in the desert of Nevada. The goal was to find out whether it was possible for terrorists to construct a small anthrax production facility by just using off-the-shelf equipment. After a few months, the Pentagon specialists did actually succeed in reaching their goal and managed to produce a few pounds of anthrax. It was only several years later that his Pentagon project was disclosed. When we now assume evil purposes, the Pentagon herewith developed the capability to perform a bioterror attack while claiming that it must have been the work of some terrorist, since all necessary ingredients were readily available in the stores. So let us note that this extremely dangerous skill was developed at that time right there on this military base in Nevada, where in former years nuclear weapons were tested. Now in the 1990s, the base was used for bioweapons research far from any settlement.

Paul Schreyer 21:06

The pandemic simulation exercises went on. Already by the next year, the 2nd national symposium on the response to bioterrorism took place at the same conference venue, organized by the same institution. The only difference was that this time the focal problem was not smallpox, but the plague. This year is the original website of the event of the year 2000. By the way, all the documents I have used are generally accessible on the internet. So all quotations are verifiable since they are publicly available. If you would like to investigate the subject yourself, you can find the documents quite easily. It is not whistleblower material.

Paul Schreyer 21:46

Now I would like to quote a few sentences from the documents for this conference in the year 2000: "The sight of an armed military presence in US cities has provoked protests about curtailment of civil liberties... the question is how do we enforce it and to what degree? How much force do we use to keep people in their homes?" So these are the things that have been discussed and debated in these exercises by high-level officials twenty years ago.

Paul Schreyer 22:17

Many of you might remember that at this time there were important presidential elections. President Bush Jr. came into office in January 2001. Here in this picture, you see him with Vice-President Dick Cheney, who was of high influence and that administration. Shortly after the inauguration, the third big bioterrorism exercise took place. It was called "Dark Winter" and again, it was a smallpox scenario. Here this colorful page is the center's original website of 2001. Yes, it is the original one. Websites then were quite a bit more colorful and somewhat messy compared to today. I did find it in an internet archive. Its sponsors are explicitly mentioned. See here, the Sloan Foundation and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. This time the simulation exercise was professionalized. The previous ones took place in conference rooms in hotels. They were quite simple, but in 2001, the venue of this event was a military base, Andrews Air Force Base. It is a large military base just a few miles from Washington DC. So the exercise was upgraded, and was even given a name. "Dark Winter" sounds like the title of a Hollywood movie, it reminds of a marketing campaign for the whole topic. The public relations aspect is visible. It was definitely meant to be made known to the public. Quite a number of articles were published about Dark Winter.

Paul Schreyer 23:46

So let's take a look at who has taken part in this exercise. Who were the key participants, I could find a list of attendants among the original documents for this major infectious disease simulation exercise. If you are familiar with American politics of that time, many of these names will be known to you. They were senior executives in reasonably high positions of power. Here, for example, the role of the CIA director was played by James Woolsey, who a few years ago had actually held that position. I did mention him before. Here, Frank Keating as governor of Oklahoma, who at the time of that infectious disease simulation actually was serving as governor of Oklahoma. He held that position also, while the mentioned Oklahoma City bombing occurred. Similarly the other positions were occupied by high ranking officials. You can truly say a full scale national emergency was practiced. We are not dealing here with the middle management of authorities, but top-level operatives who discussed strategies for such a scenario. When you look at the documents for this simulation event, you can't but notice the role of the press. The media were a vital part of this exercise and those who participated and played their part were not in any way minor journalists, but nationally known journalists. There, for example we have the well known Judith Miller of The New York Times, an expert on national security affairs. And here are a few representatives of major TV networks NBC, CBS and BBC. This is a photograph from the exercise, we can see a mock press conference. The politicians are announcing a state of emergency because of a bio-terrorism attack on the US. This time the biological warfare agent is smallpox. A press conference is being conducted, the reporters ask questions and politicians respond and note how the press reacts. They develop skills to respond in an appropriate way. So they train the questions and responses thoroughly on a high level and learn their strategic lessons. Isn't that what exercises are for?

It became obvious then that the US were ill prepared for a bioweapons attack. The quantity of vaccine stockpiles was not sufficient. "Forcible constraints on citizens would likely be the only tools available when vaccine stocks were depleted." So the conclusion was that civil liberties have to be restricted. That was in 2001.

Paul Schreyer 24:19

Here we come across Robert Kadlec again, the official who has written the above mentioned Pentagon strategy paper suggesting that biological warfare agents would work well because they could be used under the cover of a natural epidemic and therefore plausible denial would be easy. This Robert Kadlec participated at exercise Dark Winter as an expert on bioterrorism. Here in this picture, we see him appearing on a fictional news channel. You should know that such simulation exercises provide as many details of reality as possible. So on huge screens the participants watch fictional news reports that were produced beforehand. So bioterrorism expert Robert Kadlec appears on screen saying that there was the problem of insufficient stocks of vaccine and he adds that this means that a dark winter could be ahead in America, "a very dark winter", and as you know, this is the name of the exercise. When we now take a look at what became of that man, we see in the year 2020, the year of the Corona crisis, Robert Kadlec resurfaces as one of the most important advisors to the government under Trump.

Paul Schreyer 27:08

In this photo, we see him at the lectern next to Vice- President Mike Pence. But now let's have a look at Joe Biden, who just a few days after major US news outlets had declared him the winner of the presidential election said that the US was facing "a dark winter". He used exactly the same words - coincidence? I can't prove the connection to the exercise. You might call it coincidence, although you could also suspect that his choice of words was related to the exercise.

Paul Schreyer 27:37

Anyway, let's go back to 2001 now. We can read in the final script of the Dark Winter exercise that "Americans can no longer take basic civil liberties such as freedom of assembly or travel for granted" .. So that was the third simulation exercise on the subject within a brief period of time. That was in June 2001 and just a few months later the September 11 attacks happened and the topic of terrorism is again pushed to a higher level. 9/11 was the day the terrorist threat has literally been brought home to everybody in the global community. For years, the topic of terrorist threat has been engaging and informing the entire political debate.

Paul Schreyer 28:22

A little later over the course of several weeks, the so- called 2001 anthrax attacks happened. Letters containing a fine white powder laced with spores of the bacterium bacillus anthracis were sent to several news media offices and to those two Senators Patrick Leahy and Tom Daschle. Daschle served as US Senate Majority Leader and Leahy chaired the Senate Judiciary Committee. Both were critical of the legal changes proposed after the 9/11 attacks. See the controversial Patriot Act, which led to a constitutional infringement on civil liberties by expanding the government surveillance powers. Like for example, the NSA's warrantless wiretapping at home and abroad and using broad 'data mining' systems. They felt it was necessary to discuss and carefully weigh each case of legal change.

Paul Schreyer 29:17

So in this situation, these two senators received anthrax letters. To this day, it is not clear who was responsible for those attacks. First Bin Laden and al Qaeda were the supposed culprits. Then Iraq's Saddam Hussein was blamed. But nothing came of it. Finally, a mentally fragile scientist of a US biodefense laboratory was in the focus. This allegation proved to be wrong, too. Many different stories are circulating. To date doubts exist about the FBI's conclusions. But to come back to the two menaced senators. We can imagine that if you send a letter containing highly dangerous pathogens to a politician, it is clear that the person addressed is not endangered since he or she of course has employees to open the mail, which means that whoever had planned the attack did not intend to kill the politician in question, but only to intimidate. There are other ways to kill inconvenient individuals. This here was just a signal that a certain red line should not be crossed. These two senators were merely meant to be intimidated. I do not know how they assessed the threat, but it is a fact that right after having received those letters, they stopped opposing the disputed legal changes and the laws were passed.

Paul Schreyer 30:34

Something interesting occurred in November 2001, immediately after the anthrax scare. On the initiative of the American government a new international organisation was founded called "Global Health Security Initiative" because it was deemed necessary. The reasoning for founding this organisation was the anthrax scare, which was a major topic all over the world at that time. It was emphasised that every government was in immediate danger. Osama Bin Laden or Saddam Hussein might ship this deadly pathogen in letters to each and every country, We now need to unite and jointly take action. So this organisation was founded in November 2001. The participating countries are symbolised by flags. Here is Canada, the EU, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Great Britain, USA, and finally the WHO as technical adviser.

Paul Schreyer 31:39

This group of countries, more or less, are the G8 the most influential industrial nations of the West, complemented by Mexico. From then on senior officials and health ministers of those countries regularly came together or sent high level representatives and discussed the topic of bioterrorism in order to coordinate with each other.

Paul Schreyer 32:02

In 2002, the matter was taken one crucial step further. The group declared that emergency planning for bioterrorism is quite similar to that foreign influenza pandemic. So from 2002 on both scenarios were exercised and prepared for. It must not necessarily be the danger of a bioterror attack, but it could just be a dangerous influenza virus spreading in a natural way. It was concluded that such a case would be just as perilous and needed to be prepared for. The term pandemic preparedness on an international level means being able to globally coordinate the implementation of measures for such a scenario. A strategic planning group for an influenza pandemic was led by Great Britain and the US. From then on this series of exercises were not only taking place in the USA, but were coordinated internationally.

Paul Schreyer 33:03

The first one was called Global Mercury and convened in 2003. This is a chart from the German Robert Koch Institute, taken from the post exercise report. The players are the European Union as an entity and then France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Great Britain, the USA, the WHO, and Canada. See here at the top, the exercise planning group, the director and the higher control staff who had planned and designed the exercise. This time Germany participated too represented by the Robert Koch Institute. It was an elaborate exercise stretching over several days. Many hundreds of people participated. In those years, there was a whole series of such exercises. An important one, convened in the year 2005 was called "Atlantic Storm". Here at the speaker's desk, former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, who played the US president. In the post exercise report, we can read the following key questions. "How should national leaders determine measures such as border closure or quarantine? If actions are taken to restrict the movement of people, for how long would restrictions have to be maintained? How would they be coordinated internationally? And how would the decision be made to lift them?"

Paul Schreyer 34:20

This is exactly the same kind of questions that are being discussed worldwide right now in 2020, and which have already been debated intensely on a very high level during that exercise. I'd like to show you now two of the players who were politicians, Werner Hoyer of the German FDP, a classical-liberal political party, and Bernard Kouchner of France, then Secretary of Health. Later he became Minister of Foreign Affairs. So he was part of the French government. At the time of the exercise, he was a candidate for the position of Director General of the WHO. Thus he was an important senior official in this field at the time. He acted the part of the French president. Next to him Werner Hoyer, a former German Assistant Secretary of Foreign Affairs. He played the role of the Chancellor of Germany.

Paul Schreyer 35:13

So the representatives of these countries were all individuals who have had former governmental responsibility or were currently in key positions. After the exercise Werner Hoyer remarked "For someone who has been around in the security and defence field for many years, this was quite a surprising and breathtaking exercise. This is something I think a very small minority of politicians in Europe are aware of".

Paul Schreyer 35:42

Okay, I have presented you quite a few of these simulation exercises and by now you probably recognise common patterns. So let me at this point draw a brief interim conclusion. The basic premise of every one of these scenarios was a public health emergency, with ensuing questions about the decision making process and competencies. But they also involve declaring a state of emergency implementing authoritarian leadership, bypassing parliament and investing certain federal officials with augmented decision making power, while also suspending fundamental civil rights and effectuating plans to vaccinate the population. What strikes me as particularly noteworthy is the ready suspension of basic human rights when responding to a pandemic or a bioterror attack because that is not necessarily a logical consequence. Observing all of this, the question arises, that maybe such exercises might have served as a cover and testing ground for a state of emergency and checking out how such a political situation could be handled. At least this is my personal impression.

Paul Schreyer 36:58

Well, then soon, the financial crisis of 2007 and 2008 happened and the topic of pandemic exercises was pushed a little to the background on the international stage. Then in the spring of 2009, when its impact had a devastating effect on world economy, another pandemic came around the corner to put it casually. So when the H1N1 flu, also called swine flu emerged and nobody quite knew what could come of it, this gentleman here said something very interesting. He is probably not known to everybody, but in France he's prominent. His name is Jacques Attali, who [for] many decades has had the function of special advisor in French politics, counselling several presidents, most of all Francois Mitterrand, for whom he had also worked as so called 'sherpa' preparing G8 summits. So Attali has moved in the circles of French power elites for a very long time, and has exerted substantial influence as an avantgarde thought leader. He has helped Emmanuel Macron rise to power and says of himself, that he has "discovered" him. This is a relatively credible claim, because of Attali being a visionary networker and his extensive connections.

Paul Schreyer 38:14

So as I said, he wrote something most interesting when the 2009 H1N1 flu came about: "History teaches us that humanity advances in great strides if it is frightened. The pandemic now setting in might trigger one of these fears that cause structural change. Then we will be able to lay the foundation for a world government, something to accomplish much faster than it would have been possible by economic reasons alone." I don't want to comment it. Those are simply Attali's own words from the 2009 H1N1 flu. Actually, what I find striking is the fact that such ideas are usually associated with conspiracy theories. But this is a true quote, It is the utterance of a man of great influence globally.

Paul Schreyer 39:03

A year later in 2010, a study was published in the USA that goes along the same lines. It is the so called Lock Step scenario. Let me briefly introduce it to you. The title of the study is Scenarios for the Future of Technology and International Development. It sounds a little boring and bureaucratic, quite unspectacular at first glance. You wouldn't expect that the study contained newsworthy information. It was financed with money from the Rockefeller Foundation, see the logo here. That foundation is one of the oldest, wealthiest and most powerful private foundations in the world. The name is derived from the founder David Rockefeller, who 100 years ago was in fact the wealthiest man alive. Even today the Rockefeller Foundation is influential in many fields.

Paul Schreyer 39:52

This study of 2010 has apparently taken scenario planning to an entire new level. A set of four global future scenarios were envisioned in order to explore how societies might develop over the next 15 to 20 years. So in each of the four narratives, the imagined societies are shaped by certain driving forces playing out over time, like, for example, the impact of new technologies and natural catastrophes like deadly diseases. The project designers were required to think outside the box and envision plausible futures. One of these possible scenarios was called "Lock Step" which describes the following: "A deadly flu pandemic is spreading globally and leads to panic. China with its restrictive approach is seen as the paragon of effective crisis management and is widely emulated. Mask wearing becomes mandatory everywhere. Authoritarian control of citizens is imposed and remains in place even after the

pandemic is over. The citizens willingly give up their sovereignty and liberties. It is only after around ten years of top-down rule that people start rebelling."

Paul Schreyer 41:08

It is very odd to read this now in 2020, recognising in that depiction our present reality. You come to realise that the study's underlying objective is to "seed a new strategic conversation among the key public, private and philanthropic stakeholders" so as to "achieve impact" more effectively for a "preferred future". Financed by a very powerful foundation, I guess that quite a few key players have read the study, even though I'm not able to say how it was received and who read it. For further inquiry, just look for it on the internet.

Paul Schreyer 41:53

From 2017 on the topic of emergency response and pandemics simulation exercises gained traction when a new US president moved into the White House, Donald Trump. I suggest a casual relation between the change of government and invigorating the international simulation exercises. Here a picture of outgoing US President Barack Obama in conversation with President Elect Donald Trump in the Oval Office in November 2016. You all remember the days after that election. It was truly a shock affecting the media all over the world. Trump is the new US president, how could that happen? Nobody had deemed it possible that an outsider like Trump, someone who had been expressing himself in such a bold and blunt manner, not caring about how his words would be received by the media, actually won the election. The news of that man becoming president sent shockwaves around the globe.

Paul Schreyer 42:48

You are surely familiar with the World Economic Forum's Annual Meeting every January in Davos and the Munich Security Conference every February. In 2017 at those events, the attendees spoke about little else but the new president of the USA. What would Trump as president mean for the world trade, the financial system and for international diplomacy? Can we keep going like we did in the past. So in February 2017. In his opening remarks in Munich, John McCain said "I refuse to accept the demise of our world order". He was a hardliner and hawk with great influence in the US and in international diplomatic circles, and his address was met with a lot of applause on that conference where high ranking representatives of military, politics and business mainly from NATO member countries get together every year. When you look at the documents and articles from that year, you come to realise that the transatlantic relations were severely challenged at the time. The members of these elite circles worried big time about the future of the Western military alliance and wondered if it might fall apart because of Trump. So in that context, McCain remarked, "I refuse to accept the demise of our world order", followed by loud applause of his peers from Western world countries.

Paul Schreyer 43:46

The next day at the same conference, Bill Gates appears and gives a talk as well, warning that "we ignore the link between health security and international security at our own peril", and adds that it is only a question of time that a dangerous pathogen would spread, be it "by a quirk of nature or by the hand of a terrorist". We need to be prepared with a new "arsenal of weapons". The world needs to prepare for epidemics the way the military prepares for war.

Paul Schreyer 44:40

Right afterwards the pandemic exercises started anew. In May 2017 for the first time in history, the health ministers of the G20 met in Berlin. They were sent by the 20 wealthiest and most powerful industrial nations of the world. China, India and Brazil participated as well. For the first time those health ministers came together as a team in order to organise their response to the threat of a future pandemic,

Paul Schreyer 45:14

So we see here sitting side by side all the health secretaries or health ministers. Here in the front row, the German Health Minister Hermann Grohe, the predecessor of Jens Spahn, next to him his colleague from China, the US, Brazil, Canada, Australia. They all sit there watching a pandemic scenario on the screen. The name of the new dangerous virus was not SARS but MARS, "Mountain Associated Respiratory Syndrome". According to the plot that fictive virus came from a mountain area. Just see them all in unison intently watching the story unfolding. When we look at that picture, we might comprehend a bit better why in today's crisis, all or at least most of the countries are proceeding very coordinately, and why in every country more or less the same is acted out. All these officials and power received the same input a while before the Corona crisis. They were given the same general recipes and procedural instructions that are now being realised in a synchronised way. At least this is how it seems to be.

Paul Schreyer 46:24

Back to our timeline: it is now August 2017. And the German Health Minister Grohe is presenting an international advisory board for the German health policy. Well actually that group will not just be counselling Germany alone because Germany was assigned for leading the way to global health policy. These ladies and gents are to advise the government. This one there in the back, in Germany, we all know him, Christian Drosten, he is a member of that advisory board. To his left we see Ilona Kickbusch, a professor who has done a lot of research about pandemic threats. She has been working in high level positions for the WHO for many years. There is Jorg Hacker, the former director of the Robert Koch Institute. Here the WHO Regional Director for Africa. In my view, however, these two gentlemen at the sides are most important, for they play in a different league altogether. Here to the left is Jeremy Farrar of the Wellcome Trust, that is a British foundation with a remarkable 25 billion dollar endowment. It is an extremely influential charitable foundation in the field of health governance. It is even more powerful in terms of funding than the Rockefeller Foundation or the George Soros Open Society Foundations. So the Wellcome Trust has more funds, and has built a huge network for global health governance. To the right is Christopher Elias of the Gates Foundation. This is in fact an even more important foundation in this field. With roughly 50 billion that foundation is even better connected. The Gates Foundation plays a leading role in global health governance, one can surely say without exaggeration.

Paul Schreyer 48:05

So from 2017, these two weighty gentlemen have been counselling the German government and have sat at a table with Christian Drosten and the German health minister. It could possibly help to know this.

Paul Schreyer 48:23

Let's move on to the year 2018. Again, there is a major bioterrorism simulation exercise in the USA. This time, however, without international scope. You see very high level officials and politicians representing the US National Security Council in Washington. They are all people in high functions who act as if they were members of the National Security Council and are now coping with that emergency situation. It is interesting from different angles. There on the screen in the middle, a pre produced TV programme is playing. Those two women talking to each other are well known TV hosts in the United States. If that event had taken place in Germany, we would see for example, Sandra Maischberger and Maybrit Illner conversing with each other about the bioterrorism attack that had just occurred. Those who had planned the exercise had applied a lot of effort to make it as realistic as possible, so that the trainees would experience the situation as real.

Paul Schreyer 49:26

The plot of the exercise was as follows: a fictional elitist cult had financed the creation of a nasty virus in a biolab in Zurich. It was eventually let loose, so that a global pandemic has arisen. The aim of that cult had been to reduce the global population, indeed a demonic ambition. So that was the scenario of this exercise, which was called Clade X. It was once more organised by the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security.

Paul Schreyer 49:59

Here are old acquaintance Tom Daschle to the right. I have mentioned him before as one of the addressees of the anthrax letters, who in the meantime has been employed as a lobbyist for the healthcare industry, here now participating in this exercise. To his left biosecurity expert Tara O'Toole, who has written a number of scripts for such simulation exercises, among them the "Dark Winter" scenario. Later, she played an important role in government. In fact, she's one of the key figures in the field of disaster response strategies

Paul Schreyer 50:35

Now we are fast approaching the present time. But before I tell you about the latest simulation exercise Event 201 in October 2019, allow me at this point to pose the question of why the corona pandemic did happen in January 2020? You could of course say, that happened because the virus just came up then. Sticking with the official explanation: it originated in Wuhan, China and spread from one person to the next from one country to the other naturally. If you however, assume that the Corona pandemic did not occur so fatefully, but was masterminded by some circles, it might not be uninteresting to get straight what has happened in September 2019. Many people, me included, didn't fully realise that in mid September 2019, stock markets were in panic. It was a liquidity crisis called the "cash crunch of September 2019" or "repo crisis 2019". At that time, I had not noticed the unusual liquidity problem of US banks. As I said at the beginning of today's talk, this money markets' crisis is not mentioned in my book. I had only become aware of that extraordinary moment when working on this talk.

Paul Schreyer 51:52

Now I would like to show you a news report from German weekly Zeit Online of 2 October 2019 titled, "Black out in the Financial System". "The Fed tries to prevent a breakdown of the cash market by injecting billions of dollars into the financial system. How alarming is the situation." Here a few excerpts: The crisis came overnight. Banks were running short of cash. The Fed was intervening with massive

amounts of dollars to prevent the worst. This sounds like the climax of the global financial crisis eleven years ago, but in fact, it only describes the Monday of the week before last when an important part of the global financial system was on the verge of collapse and the general public noticed practically nothing."

Paul Schreyer 52:37

So what had happened? "In the night of 17 September 2019, a certain interest rate unexpectedly spiked on an overnight loan market. It was the rate for short term credits that are normally borrowed by banks at an interest rate of about 2%. But suddenly lenders were demanding 10% The last time the Fed had to intervene was after the bankruptcy of the investment bank Lehman Brothers in 2008. The fall of that large bank prompted a crisis in that part of the financial system that almost led to the collapse of world economy. That development held my attention. I have looked at the monetary policy principles and practice of the US Federal Reserve System, the US central bank and checked the data on its website. There you can find this graph. Now for everyone who isn't at home in the subject of numbers and finance, don't be scared now. It's not rocket science. It's not as complicated as it looks at first glance. I will try to explain what the chart is showing.

Paul Schreyer 53:45

It's the balance sheet of the Fed depicting its total assets. It shows how much money the Fed is pumping into American economy by buying treasury and corporate bonds to offset the fact that banks have stopped lending money to each other. In short, the Fed actively participates in the economy by creating money and injecting it into the domestic banking system in order to compensate for the fact that the interbank lending market has dried up because banks have lost confidence and hold on to their reserves. So it is basically the "fever chart" of US economy. Here to the left, that's 2008 before the global financial crisis, when the Fed owned assets of almost a trillion dollars, that's 1000 Billions. This amount doubled within a few weeks in the fall of 2008. Why? The Fed's total assets doubled because the confidence was gone. The banks had stopped lending money to one another. So the Federal Reserve had to fill in, otherwise the system would have blown up. That's what happened in 2008. It's striking, though, that the Fed's bonds purchases were not cut back, but continued in 2010 and 11. The amount was even increased in 2012 13 and 14, further rises then from 2015 to the end of 2017. The intervention plateaued at the high level of 4 trillion, which was roughly four times the amount compared to before the crisis of 2008. When you look at that, from today's perspective, you realise that the bubble was gigantic, and it becomes clear that this practice couldn't be kept up, you either had to deflate it, or it would eventually burst. Actually, that was tried by the Federal Reserve at the end of 2017, when it was decided to slowly but deliberately deflate that bubble in a steady manner, sell assets and thus effectively take money out of the system. For two years that went pretty well between the end of 2017 and the end of 2019. You see it here in this chart month by month, the Federal Reserve had worked on reducing the immense bubble and the markets were okay with it. Investors accepted the measures.

Paul Schreyer 55:51

In September 19, however, something happened, I cannot say what exactly, but obviously the confidence on the repo market was reduced to nothing in mid September 2019, which means that the Fed had to completely alter its course, reversing the policy it had been pursuing for two years. So, it was again buying government securities, thereby providing liquidity for the markets. What a turn and

now you see the significant rise here. It has nothing to do with Corona that is January 2020. But this year in March 2020, this is the sharp increase in the shadow of Corona. But see October, November, December 2019, the graph indicates ever increasing cash injections that have nothing to do with Corona. After March 2020 it's the same upward movement just much more pronounced.

Paul Schreyer 56:43

And now I would like to show you a report from 16 January 2020, a few weeks before Corona became the major media topic. It is a report by Norbert Haring, a German economics journalist writing about the Fed's massive bond purchases: "The Fed explained its interventions with the less than convincing reason of temporary miscalculations, saying it was out of the question that the banks didn't trust each other. The alleged miscalculations apparently seem to be rather persistent. Four months later, the Fed's emergency lending is still perpetuated in unrestrained amounts. An end not in sight. The names of the companies receiving loans are kept secret so that their reputation won't suffer. It might be that the financial market boom fueled by central banks is in its final phase before collapsing."

Paul Schreyer 57:32

I would like to put that into a wider chronological context. I found the chart depicting the historical view of the Fed's balance sheet over a period of not only 10 years, but 100 years. That's how long it already exists. Here we can basically see to what extent the Fed was actively participated in US economy related to GDP. We see that it peaks in 2008 during the global financial crisis. The value was comparable to the Great Depression 1930, rising continually until 1940, only to decrease slowly after World War II. The level of the Fed's interventions is similarly high during the crisis of 2008, and again in September 2019. We are experiencing the same large scale dimensions of financial intervention.

Paul Schreyer 58:18

In October 2019, the next simulation exercise took place at that hotel, an exceptionally luxurious venue for such an exercise on Fifth Avenue in Manhattan. Central Park is right across and when you walk a few blocks south on Fifth Avenue, you come to the Trump Tower, so this part of Manhattan is the most expensive. The Hotel Pierre was opened in 1930 during the Great Depression, financed by some big Wall Street bankers. That roof and the architecture are reminiscent of the Royal Chapel of Versailles, the Baroque grandeur of Louis XIV.

Paul Schreyer 58:58

The Wall Street bankers whose money made it possible, obviously like to live in that kind of pomp and splendor. They saw themselves on that level. The hotel still exists and right there in New York, the exercise called Event 201 was hosted. Sure enough, it was a Corona virus pandemic that was being responded to. I'd like to present you briefly who is sitting there at the conference table. This is the host from the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security next to him Christopher Elias of the Gates Foundation. I have brought him to your attention before since he is a member of the advisory board on Global Health for the German government. To his right, the director of American Centre for Disease Control. There is the director of the Chinese Centre for Disease Control, who was also part of that group of global senior leaders. There the vice president Global Public Health at Johnson & Johnson, by market value the largest pharma corporation in the world. Here the former deputy director of the CIA,

and there in the front, the Global Chief Operating Officer at Edelman, the world's largest public relations and communications firm.

Paul Schreyer 1:00:10

As I have mentioned, this time a Corona virus pandemic was simulated with an eye towards public relation. It says here, "Governments will need to partner with traditional and social media companies to research and develop nimble approaches to countering misinformation. This will require developing the ability to flood media with fast, accurate and consistent information. For their part, media companies should commit to ensuring that authoritative messages are prioritised, and that false messages are suppressed, including through the use of technology." That is basically just what is happening at this very moment.

Paul Schreyer 1:01:02

Here another picture of that conference. This is Anita Cicero, the deputy director of the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security. She was assigned to co-organise the event. She's a lawyer who before joining the centre had worked as pharma lobbyist in the management of a Washington DC law firm responsible for about 300 employees, advocating on the behalf of the pharma industry, with members of Congress likewise constructively engaging with members of the European Commission. Finally, she became Deputy Director of that Centre for Health Security.

Paul Schreyer 1:01:39

These infographics there I find very interesting. The significant data of the fictive crisis of Event 201 are being presented in charts, maps and tables, showing the mounting numbers of cases and there on the map, you see what countries are impacted and to what degree. There we are informed about the performance of financial markets. Here we have the projection of how the death rate will develop within the next month. This is exactly the same kind of infographics that we are now getting from the Johns Hopkins University. It is the info we are being fed by all mainstream media outlets. It's just that same graphic visualisation of numbers and cases that is our reality now, and the present censorship by social media giants like YouTube and Google has been expressly advised on that Event 201 just a few months before today's Corona crisis. What had been planned then is now reality.

Paul Schreyer 1:02:36

I suppose all that information taken together provides a crucial backdrop for you to form your own opinion about what is happening at the moment. Thank you for your attention.