

The Coronavirus Calamity–Shutdown. Reboot!

By [Daniel Mallock](#) (April 2020)



Early Sunday Morning, Edward Hopper, 1930

What does it mean when an era, an age, an epoch—ends?

It is clear in this time of catastrophe that the world is changing, has [changed](#). Never before in world history has an event paralyzed the entire planet, covering humanity with fear and trepidation. In times of war there is always fear and frenetic action and honored sacrifices now there is a stunned

silence in the streets and a palpable panic and fear—and the exceptional response from the medical and support community and government officials involved in mitigation efforts.

Trump *is* a war president, in a sense, because this is a kind of war against, as he correctly says, an “unseen enemy.” The mandated isolation and social distancing now underway raise the tensions and stress because people have no way to react but to shelter in place, day after day. That every casualty is covered in the press, and every celebrity or political leader who tests positive is also covered creates growing panic and fear in the population. Even a trip to the food market is now a stress-filled, almost bizarre, surreal activity passing down aisle after aisle of empty shelves. The shortages and panic buying happening across the country suggest to some that the country itself (and the world, too) is in collapse—which it absolutely is not as of this writing.

The dark core of history—every generation will be challenged.

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From now forward and for future historians everything of the life of civilization will be described in this way—before Coronavirus, and after it. We are not now so lucky to be in a post-Coronavirus world looking back upon the nightmare and almost inconceivable pain, suffering, and damage that it

caused—we're obliged to live through it as best we can.

In the course of this global calamity all those things that one once took for granted as standards of daily life now are open to doubt. There is no question that everything is now "different" and that little will remain unchanged in the aftermath. In this instance we cannot deploy the cliché term "when all is said and done," because most all have the feeling that the impact of this event will mean, among many other things, that most things will never quite be "all said and done" again.

The pre-virus context in which petty arguments, excessive and heated partisan political rhetoric, and failed philosophies were the order of the day is obliterated—yet many in the political elite seem unaware of this obliteration. The rhythm of daily life is now indefinitely paused as nations teeter on the brink, long-held beliefs and habits are challenged and fall, and we look to the national government to do extraordinary things which, when looking back from some future vantage, may be seen to have not been possible though entirely necessary. Those ideological politicians who oppose a rapid fiscal rescue to the people will inevitably be viewed with suspicion and disdain—it is a [war effort](#) now, and all must get on board to defeat the enemy and bring the country to a swift recovery.

Petty partisan bickering must fall to the wayside and ideological differences put aside as the nation goes to war. Joe Biden, the candidate apparent of the party-not-in-power made it a point on March 23rd to criticize Trump's response to the crisis as a way to reinvigorate his [embarrassing, heartless campaign](#)—politicizing a crisis for political gain in

the midst of it is always a reeking fail because it puts partisanship above country. The dysfunctional party-currently-not-in-power is assured to stay that way for the foreseeable future. One of the most vicious, radical, and hateful democrat opponents of the president [complimented](#) his response to the crisis on March 21, writing [via twitter](#), "Politics aside, this is incredible and the right response in this critical time." This unexpected and truly surprising thing could not have happened only two weeks before. On March 24th, a Hollywood actress thanked Trump via twitter for his excellent leadership during the crisis. The intolerant [response](#) from the hyper-tolerant, social media celebrity-watching, utopianist leftists of twitter was exactly as you might expect. Yet even as some radicals temper their tone, and most of the country rallies around the president and his teams, others in the party-not-now-in-power consider the emergency more a political opportunity than anything else. Opportunists, the cynical, and the troubled always try to make gains when others suffer and the country itself is in crisis. "House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D., Calif.) worked to scupper the phase-three coronavirus relief package on Sunday after [Majority Whip James Clyburn](#) (D., S.C.) told caucus members last week that the bill was 'a tremendous opportunity to restructure things to fit our vision.'" While most Americans consider the crisis something to survive as best they can, and look for ways in which they can help-others believe that their revolutionary moment has arrived. Such a viewpoint is cynical and self-serving at best, repellent at worst.

Faced with a horrific threat of mass casualties such as those now experienced in Italy, Spain, and elsewhere, world leaders must make this decision: destroy the economy of your country, lockdown the population, and bring commerce and the norms of daily life to an almost total standstill or face the end of your country and your society. It is an "end of the world"

scenario that puts leadership in an almost impossible position.

President Trump rightly characterized the extraordinary response of the federal government as necessary to save lives saying that things can be replaced but lives cannot. The crisis leadership shown by the President, Vice President, and their team of top medical experts has been impressive and inspirational. Trump recently correctly described himself as a "[wartime president](#)." That this is a true statement is self-evident.

Late in the drama-heavy month of March, President Trump invoked presidential war powers for the first time in his presidency by signing an executive order stating that he would use the [Defense Production Act](#), if such use became necessary. As of March 24, using this war power authority has not been necessary because the private sector has been more than cooperative to requests from the government, particularly for [ventilators](#) and [masks](#). Additionally, private firms are volunteering support and donating product, thus negating the need to use this war power. But, even with the corporate volunteerism so widely seen, this may not be enough under the present crisis and broken promises result in harsh responses from the White House: on the 27th, President Trump activated the Defense Production Act and [ordered General Motors \(GM\)](#) to quickly make and deliver large numbers of ventilators, just as they had promised they would do and did not, at least fast enough for the president's satisfaction. As the crisis continues this Act is likely to be invoked again.

Trump is wisely [reluctant](#) to use these exceptional presidential emergency powers. "'We're a country not based on

nationalizing our business,' Trump said. 'Call a person over in [Venezuelapainful for some](#). The callousness and shallowness of many individuals will soon be bared for all to see as the intense pressure of the crisis brings people and structures to their breaking points.

As every country on the planet is brought to its knees by Coronavirus some painful truths are now once again reasserted and their opposite exposed as frauds. Some years ago (1974) Ernest Becker published "[The Denial of Death](#)" and won a Pulitzer prize for it. It is a difficult book though exceptional, and now has a new mirror in that while we mainly have difficulty accepting the fact that we all must die eventually, we also cannot accept that we are ultimately all biological creatures. The devastation, death, and economic destruction now underway due to Coronavirus savagely rams the point home of both the limits and [fragility](#) of our lives.

Atheists, perhaps, are reinvigorated by this tragedy—look, they might ask, where is God? You see, we are just [biological machines](#)! But the assertion misses the point because our biology is not *what* we are, it is merely the vessel within which we navigate and experience our sometimes painfully limited existence on this planet.

The Coronavirus is a great humbling event for all of humanity as our biological fragility is both reiterated and cruelly attacked. Governments, systems, and organizations are stretched to their limits and sometimes break, our leaders pressed to the very walls of the great city on the hill, and our people stressed to exhaustion—the hubris of the world ought to melt away. But the political games, bitter, contentious opposition, and the failure to rally behind the

president (and the country itself) by some opposition leaders and their blinkered followers show that, at least in this great country, such has not happened.

The days ahead look dark and ominous. National lockdowns continue [across the world](#) with no one able to speculate as to when it all might end and some level of normality return to daily life; even the president's partial reboot date of Easter, 2020, is speculative. But all seem to know that while there will be an end, nothing will ever be the same.

There are many who seem incapable of comprehending the enormity of the global emergency as they romp at "[spring break](#)" or gather with friends and strangers deluded that the sufferings of others do not involve them as they muddle through their [self-involved and sadly shallow lives](#). These are the outliers, the [skews of the species](#) who, within their dysfunctional community of the self-absorbed, [selfish, and arrogant](#), are outside the family of humanity. One troubled young person recently [publicly apologized](#) for his arrogant selfishness and thoughtless lack of concern for others; [more such mea culpas](#) will follow.

It is difficult to exaggerate the extreme sufferings occurring now in the world and the damage being done to businesses, industries, economies, nations, families, and individual lives. Prior to the Coronavirus and its attendant lockdowns loneliness and depression were seen as growing problems particularly among younger people. That the effective response to this outbreak depends upon compliance with mandated isolation and "social distancing" is a painful irony. It is clear that the [psychological fallout](#) from the quarantines and the sudden unexpected losses, sacrifices, and the sufferings

will be enormous—it seems almost a redundancy to write the sentence.

The forward momentum of the culture had been to bring more people together, to build closer bridges between individuals and groups to find the commonalities that ought to unite us all. We are all now united in sadness, solitude, horror, grief, and suffering—the bitter [ironies of life](#).

One can speculate about what a post-Coronavirus world and political order will look like but such speculation is of little value while the crisis is underway. The world will be a different place when we come out of this on the other side. *Everything* will be different, and everyone affected in their own way. In the midst of world-changing tragedies such as this, it is difficult to fully comprehend the enormity of the thing.

There are many on the front lines of this fight from delivery drivers, supermarket stockers and cashiers, to EMTs, nurses, and doctors, police, fire, and community and political leaders, and many others. All of these people go about their daily efforts as heroes and we look to them for their fortitude and self-sacrifice as a model for ourselves. Covered by compassion for those afflicted with this disease and full of grief for those who have died and will die we will find our way as a nation to the end of this horrible time.

On March 23rd President Trump at his daily Coronavirus briefing confidently stated that the lockdown of the nation would not last much longer and that the three-month horizon

[mentioned by some](#) was not going to happen. The president [said](#), “we can’t let the cure be worse than the problem itself.”

There is a painful calculus that is required in such a pandemic outbreak and national/international catastrophe—how much economic damage can the country tolerate before it collapses into depression and perhaps worse, as opposed to how many lives will be lost from the virus if the strict quarantines and closures are lifted? It would appear that this is the very issue that President Trump is facing. Perhaps it was the [second failure](#) of Congress to pass the emergency support bill for American families and companies on the 23rd of March that pushed Trump into a [re-think](#) of the national response to the virus?

In order to support the ongoing closures and quarantines the government must swiftly send money to families and businesses to tide them over until the recovery begins. Without this monetary support from the government it is likely that the economic costs of the closures will be catastrophic if not existentially threatening to the country. President Trump’s target date of Easter to re-open some areas of the country other than hot spots is certainly founded on these troubling economic truths.

In the Democrat [additions](#) to the emergency bailout bill were “higher fuel emissions standards for airlines, and expanding wind and solar tax credits.” Such things are partisan leftist items and completely unrelated to the national emergency. Such additions are a failure of congress and a blight upon our representative democracy. House Minority leader Steve Scalise (R-La) [said](#), “Speaker Pelosi unveiled legislation aimed at

exploiting the COVID-19 public health crisis by attempting to force the inclusion of a socialist [wish list of policies](#) that have nothing to do with the public health and economic emergency.” (Note: see the list of Democrat additions to the emergency funding bill [here](#).) On March 23rd, President Trump [said](#), “I canceled the deal last night. I said I’m not going to sign the deal because Nancy Pelosi came in and put a lot of things in the deal that had nothing to do with the workers, that had to do with an agenda that they (ed. have) been trying to get passed for 10 years.” Partisan, ideological gamesmanship in the midst of a national/global catastrophe that delays relief and increases suffering will cost the democrats significantly in the near and far future.

[As the representatives in Congress \(March 25\) debate the rescue bill and delay aid to the American people](#), President Trump suggested in his daily Coronavirus briefing of March 24 that some of his opponents, certainly in the media, [want to see the country remain closed](#) (though such lengthy closure may not be required)—so as to gain political advantage over Trump and hinder his reelection chances in November. The president has good reason to be concerned about such partisan/ideological/personal hate-motivated opposition [driving extended closure of the country](#)