



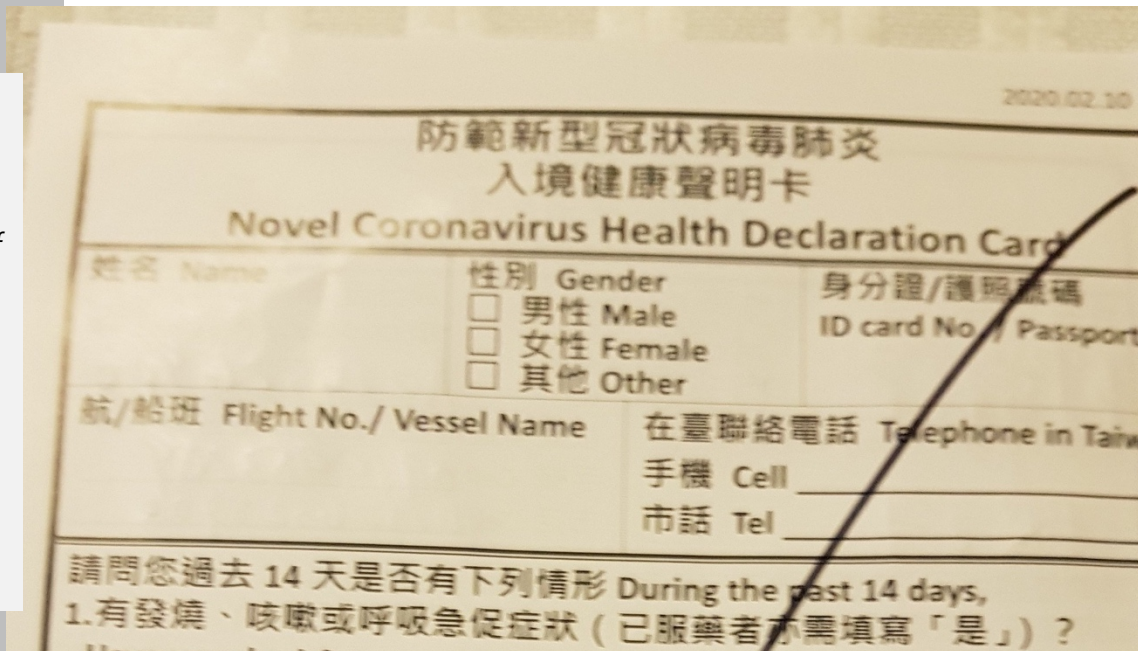
CompCoRe Chronicle

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Featured Photo

This is an early version of a Taiwanese health declaration card used in the beginning of the pandemic. The black marker line indicates that this form is expired, and a newer, updated version has been released.

Submitted by: Shun-Ling Chen (Taiwan team)



UPCOMING EVENTS

Wednesday, Apr 7, 2020
12:00 - 1:30 pm (Eastern time)
Virtual via Zoom

Adam Tooze, Shelby Cullom Davis chair of History at Columbia University and director of the European Institute will give a talk titled: **"Triple Shock: COVID as a crisis of Public Health, Politics and the Economy"**.

This event is co-hosted by Program on Science, Technology & Society at the Harvard Kennedy School and CompCoRe.

Register [here](#).

NOTE FROM LEADERSHIP TEAM

On January 12, Sheila and Steve presented the *CompCoRe Interim Report* at the Schmidt Futures Forum on Preparedness as our first major network product. Thank you all for your heroic work! We are now shifting out of our policy advice gears and moving into the more academic phase of our project.

CompCoRe has accomplished much more than we imagined would be possible over the past seven months. Our collaboration has *collectively* produced a significant policy document that crystallized our findings as promised to NSF and Schmidt Futures. We were also able to disseminate our research to key policy makers, leading academics and thought leaders, and thousands who tuned in. A distinguished interdisciplinary panel reflected on our presentation and the interim report with great enthusiasm. Moreover, our findings framed the conversation throughout the first day of the Forum, and many of our themes were echoed in Barbara Bush's Q&A session with Anthony Fauci, as well as Wendy Schmidt's closing remarks. We now look forward to working together to deepen our insights for our book project.

We are hoping to target a reputable academic press—University of Chicago Press and MIT Press are top contenders—and we will send out feelers in the coming months. The book could follow a structure roughly similar to the Schmidt Futures report. In that case, the first part would be analytic

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The demands of producing the Interim Report seem only to have spurred our CompCoRe colleagues to reach new milestones, present and publish their research, and seek new funding. Here are a few notable items.

Maximilian Mayer and his colleagues launched a sustainable No-Covid-19 initiative in Germany.

Maximilian has been collaborating with a multidisciplinary group of German academics and clinicians to develop a sustainable Covid-19 elimination strategy for Germany and Europe. The group consists of experts who share CompCoRe's concern that the pandemic must be conceived as three interrelated crises in the arenas of public health, economy, and politics. Members have well-established relationships with policymakers and politicians, including Angela Merkel, and some have been active in policy advice. The group's white paper, *A proactive approach to fight SARS-CoV-2 in Germany and Europe*, details a three-step elimination strategy inspired by the East Asian countries: after rapidly reducing infections to zero, the report advocates establishment of virus-free green zones through local travel restrictions and a rigorous outbreak management system. The editor of *Lancet* endorsed the report's goals in a comment in the journal. Moreover, the media widely covered the initiative in Germany (an interview in English with one group member can be found [here](#)). The authors have brought onboard approximately 50 more experts, including officials and scientists from Australia and New Zealand, who will act as external advisers to develop concrete "toolboxes" to implement their elimination plan.

We encourage you to read their white paper [here](#).

(Note from Leadership continued)

chapters examining the policy responses to the intertwined Covid crises in the arenas of public health, economy, and politics in control, consensus, and chaos countries. The second part would feature individual country chapters, developing the themes we collectively identify. We, therefore, encourage you to help us to define these topics as they occur to you.

In the meantime, we are researching all possible venues and channels to disseminate our findings. We are especially interested in talks, short- and long-form pieces in academic and academic-adjacent publications, and other alternative platforms such as podcasts. We have also decided to organize a speaker series on Covid-19 to broaden our engagement with notable academics, policy makers and other stakeholders. Our first presenter is well-known economic historian Adam Tooze who will join us on April 7 to discuss his research on post-Covid recovery. Register for the event [here](#) and send us your dissemination news and speaker suggestions!

Thank all of you once again for your extraordinary commitment to our project!

Steve, Sheila, Onur, and Margarita

COUNTRY NUGGETS

Brazil's Vaccine Wars

On January 17, the Brazilian Health Regulatory Agency (ANVISA) approved China's Sinovac and the UK's AstraZeneca vaccines for emergency use. News channels broadcast ANVISA's expert panel meeting as experts celebrated the triumph of scientific expertise over public doubt. Subsequently, São Paulo governor João Doria vaccinated the first person in the country. Many perceived this as a political blow to President Bolsonaro, who had previously mocked the Sinovac vaccine's Chinese origin and lower than expected efficacy (about 50%). Competing simultaneous live interviews captured the standoff between federal and state authorities in anticipation of future electoral disputes. Now, as both China and India delay the delivery of critical raw materials, the consequences of Bolsonaro's defeat in municipal elections over the summer is likely to become even more serious. Undoubtedly, the opposition will frame the looming standstill in the mass vaccination program as Bolsonaro's diplomatic failure. This blame game will only raise the political temperature.

Read more [here](#).

Singapore's Covid Panopticon Goes Live

Singapore entered 2021 with a renewed controversy over its contact tracing app TraceTogether. In June, the minister-in-charge of the Smart Nation Programme, Vivian Balakrishnan, reassured Singaporeans that the

(Accomplishments continued)

The Brazilian team published a 4Sonline blog post on the politics of vaccines in Brazil.

In "The politics of COVID-19 vaccines in Brazil," Alberto Urbinatti, Marko Monteiro, Ione Mendes, Gabriela Di Giulio, and Phil Macnaghten show how domestic and international fractures can not only disrupt mass vaccination programs, but also fuel already existing tendencies toward vaccine hesitancy within the citizenry.

You can read their post [here](#).

Sheila Jasanoff published an article in *Cahiers Droit, Sciences & Technologies*, titled "Pathologies of Liberty: Public Health Sovereignty and the Political Subject in the Covid-19 Crisis".

The piece examines the diverse grounds on which litigation during the Covid-19 pandemic tested the nature and limits of power in the US public health system. It shows how governmental power in modernity has come to be divided into distinct regimes of control over the physical (biomedical) and political subjects. The article provides a starting point for future comparative research by asking how different legal traditions have struck the balance between claims of personal liberty and the demands of public health.

Read the full article [here](#).

Steve Hilgartner joined a panel on "Experts, Publics, and Trust during the Pandemic".

On October 29, Steve participated in a panel on "Experts, Publics and Trust during the Pandemic" as part of the Mellon-Sawyer Seminar on Trust and Mistrust of Science and Experts at Columbia University. Gil Eyal, professor of sociology, organized and moderated the panel, and Rogers Brubaker, Andrew Lakoff, and Zeynep

(Country Nuggets continued)

app would not compromise user privacy, since the data collected would be used "purely for contact tracing; period." On January 4, however, the government conceded that because Singapore's Criminal Procedure Code allowed the police to "order production of any document" when salient to an investigation, the police could obtain TraceTogether data. What's more, the government acknowledged that it had already done so for a murder investigation. The government initially tried to downplay this breach as a simple slip-up and defended its policies as necessary for public safety. Yet, under concerted public pressure, the government passed a law specifying a limited number of serious offences for which contact tracing data can be obtained (e.g., murder, terrorism).

Read more [here](#).

Mind the Gap: Brexiting in the Middle of a Pandemic

When clocks showed 24:00 CET on December 31, millions of Europeans celebrated the end of a year that has been nothing short of a nightmare. In the United Kingdom, however, this moment marked the completion of the Brexit process, which had begun in 2016. In the ongoing debate, populist politicians cast scientists and academics, mostly anti-Brexit, as elitist technocrats. During the Brexit campaign Michael Gove, Justice Secretary at the time, let slip a half-thought that "Britain has had enough of experts," and by the time Covid hit the UK, Brexit had already exposed a gap between the country's self-image and its actual abilities. Members of the government were mostly chosen for their Brexit loyalty. Assumptions of British exceptionalism led Boris Johnson's government to ignore important lessons from overseas. Notwithstanding some important contributions from British university scientists, by year's end the UK had earned a worldwide reputation for responding in the wrong ways to the pandemic. The start of 2021 also saw the emergence of the B.1.1.7 variant, first in London and the south-east, before it swept the entire country. Echoing Trump's "China virus," B.1.1.7 quickly became known across the rest of Europe as the "British variant," or the "British mutation." The UK finally achieved the exceptionalism its political leaders craved!

STS in the White House!

In more optimistic news, President Biden nominated an STS scholar, Alondra Nelson of Princeton University and the Social Science Research Council, to be deputy director for science and society of the Office of Science and Technology Policy at the White House. This move is consistent with a wish Sheila expressed in a brief [note](#) for the Kennedy School magazine earlier in January.

Watch Alondra's acceptance speech [here](#).



Tüfekçi were the other participants. In his talk, Steve explored the limits of the "failure narrative" for the US Covid-19 response and the politics of risk and reassurance. You can view the recording of the panel [here](#).

Margarita Rayzberg and Onur Özgöde presented the CompCoRe Interim Report at the Culture and Society Workshop in the Sociology Department at Northwestern University.

A lively discussion focused on the state and science as sources of authority and how to best capture the temporal dynamics of policy responses within and between countries.

Please send us notes about your Covid-related accomplishments! It would be great to distribute this work collectively.

RESEARCH NOTE

In December, we sent out a "Quick but Urgent Question:" *Did the head of state or any high-ranking government official in your country use war discourse in response to the pandemic, and can you please send an example?* We received a flurry of fascinating responses, examples, and quotations from all of you and would like to share them with the group.

Indonesia and Sweden are the only countries whose leaders apparently did not use the war metaphor. In Austria, Australia, Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands, politicians and other high-ranking officials rarely employed war discourse. Leaders in Brazil, China, France, India, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, the UK, and the US frequently enlisted war discourse but toward different ends.

In Austria, Australia, and France, a parallel metadiscourse also took shape. Newspapers and magazines criticized the belligerent use of war metaphors by leaders in other countries, such as Emanuel Macron in France and Donald Trump in the US. In Austria, a widely read and circulated essay denounced the metaphor's use as highly problematic. Similarly, in Australia, analysts published [articles](#) about the negative implications of the war discourse. In France, media outlets collated critiques of Macron's early speeches in which he explicitly referenced war (e.g., "we are at war" or *nous sommes en guerre*).

"But in the fog of war, it is not possible always to make the perfect decisions. Yet we have to decide and move. We cannot afford to wait."

- Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loog, Singapore

In European countries that fell into the "rarely used" category, leaders typically referenced World War II as a moment of comparable mobilization and crisis. In Austria, for example, Chancellor Sebastian Kurz characterized the Covid-19 pandemic as the biggest crisis since the war. This focus on collective mobilization was paralleled in Germany where Chancellor Angela Merkel [used](#) war rhetoric to appeal for solidarity, a moment of shared fate, and a recognition of the current state of exception (e.g. "this is the biggest challenge for Germany since WWII"). This pattern is unsurprising, the Germany team wrote, given that German politics had gone to great lengths to avoid war rhetoric over the past 75 years. In the Netherlands, too, Prime Minister Mark Rutte was cautious in using war metaphors. The Netherlands is a small trading nation rather than a warring nation, Rob Hagendijk underscored. "The war" refers to German occupation, which the Dutch weathered but did not actively fight against. Consequently, the war metaphor does not poll well with Dutch citizens, and the head of state did not use it to unite and mobilize the country against the pandemic. In Italy, where some government officials and regional governors used expressions such as "we are at war" (*siamo in guerra*) and "this is a war" (*questa è una guerra*), Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte largely avoided such language. The Italy team suggested at least one important reason for Conte's caution: To declare the state of emergency, the government used the code of civil protection (where there is no mention of war) rather than the Article 78 of the constitution (which gives the parliament the authority to declare war and the government extraordinary emergency powers).

In most of our study countries, public officials used the war metaphor directly and frequently, and the discourse permeated the public record. However, the nature of that discourse varied. In South Korea, elected officials wielded the war metaphor to elevate the pandemic to national and global status. The Brazilian defense minister **stated** that military involvement rendered the pandemic a war, and journalists nicknamed Brazil's pandemic response budget "the War Budget." Japanese Prime Minister Shinzō Abe limited war discourse to common war-related expressions like "battle against the virus" and "defeat the virus." Leading medical experts in Japan followed advice from risk communication experts, including our own colleague Mikihiro Tanaka, and avoided the war discourse.

Some political figures from the countries that employed war discourse imbued it with cultural and historical significance. In China, the government referred to the crisis as a "people's war against the virus" and deemed Party-affiliated health workers the heroes of the war. Social media users pushed alternative narratives, especially when President Xi toured the country with the official narrative that China will win a "People's War". In India, Prime Minister Modi **referred** to an epic war from Hindu mythology that lasted three weeks, suggesting he would swiftly win the war against the virus.

The Taiwanese CDC also referred to medical officers as warriors and soldiers. In Singapore, leaders used the war metaphor to describe conditions in which critical decision-making was taking place. To minimize the significance of his errors, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong **called** the uncertain climate of action as a "fog of war."

SUMMARY TABLE

Did the head of state or any high-ranking government official in your country use war discourse in response to the pandemic?			
	No	Rarely	Yes
Austria		x	
Australia		x	
Brazil			x
China			x
France			x
Germany		x	
India			x
Indonesia	x		
Italy		x	
Japan			x
Netherlands		x	
Singapore			x
South Korea			x
Sweden	x		
Taiwan			x
UK			x
US			x

"I view it as, in a sense, a **wartime** president. I mean, that's what we are fighting".

- Former President Donald Trump, US

The United Kingdom and the United States saw some of the most frequent and intense use of the war discourse, coupled to ideas of winning. In the UK, prime minister Boris Johnson's fascination with Churchill and his love of World War II rhetoric led him to refer to himself as head of "a wartime government" and the lockdown as "a nuclear deterrent". In the US, Donald Trump considered the country to be on a wartime footing and himself a wartime president, often referring to the virus as an "invisible enemy," although he also often downplayed its threat. The war metaphor was also connected to legal discourse about how to achieve an effective pandemic response. It was used to argue for and justify fighting the pandemic by invoking the Defense Production Act, which authorizes the president to command private industry to meet mobilization demands during a war emergency.

PAST EVENTS: SCHMIDT FUTURES FORUM

In January, the Schmidt Futures Forum on Preparedness brought together pioneering academics and policy makers in a series of talks, panels, and interviews. The first [session](#) on Day 1 featured Sheila and Steve, who introduced our analysis and presented its conceptual and discursive elements. Our South African colleagues on the project, Wilmot James and Lyal White, also presented their research on five African countries. This session formed the core of the day's proceedings. It followed a series of opening remarks by [Eric Braverman](#), CEO of Schmidt Futures, and [Alondra Nelson](#), President of the Social Science Research Council. WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus also gave a [keynote](#) address in which he commended our study. Sheila also joined Thomas Bollyky, Esther Duflo, Jim Yonh Kim, Danielle Allen, Wilmot James, and Fareed Zakaria for an in-depth [discussion](#) of the report.

Presenters, moderators, and media correspondents enthusiastically embraced the proposition that the pandemic “exploited pre-existing conditions” in the body politic. People also used the Control, Consensus, and Chaos categories to pose comparative questions. Moreover, a panel on addressing the pandemic policy and vulnerable populations--as well as Barbara Bush's interview with Dr. Anthony Fauci--delved into how “pre-existing conditions” in the U.S. amplified the impact of the pandemic and hampered effective responses. The embrace of our analytical language suggests that forum participants found the interim report credible, relevant, timely, and creative.

The [New York Times](#) and the [Cornell Chronicle](#) covered the event. You may also enjoy reading the [write-up](#) of the event on DevEx.com, a media platform for the international development community. This article is based on interviews with Sheila, Steve, and Chris Kirchhoff of Schmidt Futures.

ABOUT COMPCORE



The Comparative Covid Response: Crisis, Knowledge, Policy (CompCoRe) [project](#) is a comparative study of regional, national, and local responses to the COVID19 pandemic from a science and technology studies (STS) perspective. Led by co-PIs Stephen Hilgartner (Cornell University) and Sheila Jasanoff (Harvard University), the group comprises researchers from

sixteen countries on five continents: Australia, Austria, Brazil, China, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Singapore, South Korea, Sweden, Taiwan, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Indonesia, Peru, and a five-country African research team are included in the project as Affiliates. The project is funded by grants from the U.S. National Science Foundation and Schmidt Futures. [Follow](#) us on Twitter.