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Editorial: The politics of the pandemic

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Editorial on the Research Topic [The politics of the pandemic](#)

The post-COVID-19 era brought about unexpected challenges. The politics of the pandemic not only amplified pre-existing societal issues but also altered political attitudes, institutions, and public governance. Against this background, the authors of the articles in this Research Topic, “*The Politics of the Pandemic*,” examine the diverse impacts on political divides and governance structures in the years following the pandemic.

At the heart of this Research Topic lies the analysis of the pandemic’s impact on public opinion. [Foa and Welzel](#) suggest that the global coronavirus pandemic provided a unique opportunity to test Inglehart’s “scarcity hypothesis.” With the use of a quasi-experiment their study finds, a significant increase, in authority demand in Western European societies hit by the pandemic. Their results also indicate that emotions of fear and stress were positively associated with institutional approval during the pandemic. Concurrently, [Nezi](#)’s analysis examines the pact of COVID related policies on affective polarization in Greece. Her study shows that, for the supporters of the governing conservative party, affective polarization appears to be policy-driven, whereas for the supporters of the opposition, a populist left-wing party, it is predominantly ideology-driven.

Remaining on the topic of polarization but shifting focus from the public to their representatives, [Naushirvanov et al.](#) examine how well populist leaders have responded to the COVID-19 pandemic. Their analysis suggests that populism fuels political polarization, and, in countries ruled by populist leaders, this polarization is also associated with higher COVID-19-related mortality rates. Focusing on the impact of the pandemic on electoral outcomes, [Coulbois](#) examines the case of local elections in Madrid to determine whether COVID-19, as a catastrophe, influenced the election results. His findings suggest that, unlike natural disasters, the COVID-19 pandemic did not have a significant impact on the outcome of these elections.

Moving to the topic of government stability [Capati et al.](#) draw on the theories of “coalition life cycle” and “critical events” to examine developments within coalition governments. By using Italy and Israel as case studies their analysis suggests that oversized coalition configurations triggered conflicts among governing parties, which proved unsustainable during the pandemic and ultimately led to the collapse of the governmental coalitions.

To conclude, Karokis-Mavrikos et al. focus on the health policies implemented during the pandemic. Their study shows that the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted pre-existing policy-related weaknesses and emphasized the importance of using scientific knowledge. Their findings indicate that there is a mismatch between what the system aims to do and what its key players believe in. The authors move on to suggest that if this mismatch is not corrected, it could hinder important changes that need to happen within the system.

In conclusion, the articles included in this Research Topic analyse the impact of the politics of the pandemic on public opinion, governments, electoral outcomes, and policies. Consequently, this Research Topic enriches our understanding of the pandemic and its broader implications.

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Conflict of interest

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