

Richard Tempest

The World After Covid:
Prospects, Dangers, Temptations

Lecture One

Which Century Are We In?

News of the Week! This morning the Kremlin announced that President Vladimir Putin is self-isolating after several members of his entourage tested positive for Covid-19. In fact, Putin has been living and working in semi-seclusion for months, since before the pandemic erupted



Russia's vaccine diplomacy has targeted African and South American countries, with its Sputnik V vaccine both imported and manufactured locally under license



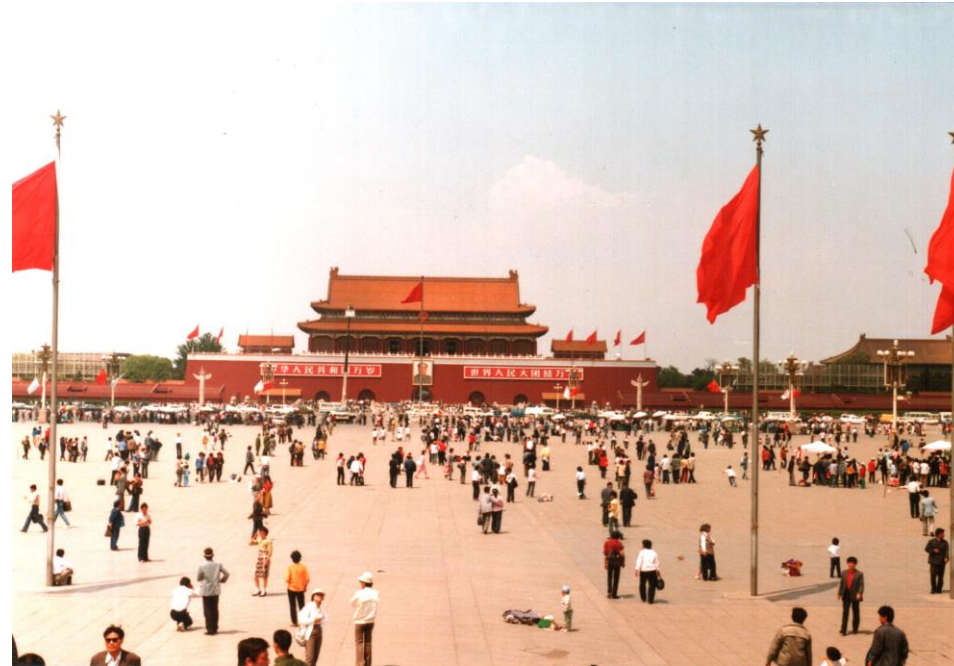
China has pursued a similar policy with its Sinovac vaccine



Russia was the first country to introduce a Covid vaccine, but its success in fighting the pandemic has been at best mediocre. According to Russian government data, 86M doses have been administered, 39.8M people are fully vaccinated = 27.6% of the population. I stress: these are official figures



China: 2.04B doses given, 889M people fully vaccinated = (possibly) 77% of the population. Herd immunity (80%) by the end of the year?



North Korea: no data. Dear Leader Kim Jong-Un, however, has become much more aerodynamically shaped



Germany: doses given 104M, fully vaccinated 51.7M = 62.3%. Angela Merkel, who is retiring later this month, can look upon this achievement with satisfaction



France: 91.5M doses given, 42.6M fully vaccinated = 63.6%. These are impressive numbers in a country with a tradition of health-related conspiracy theories



United Kingdom: 92.5M doses given, 44M fully vaccinated = 66.1%. These figures explain the continuing popularity of Boris Johnson's Conservative government. Earlier today it was announced that booster shots will be offered to all over-50s during the next few months



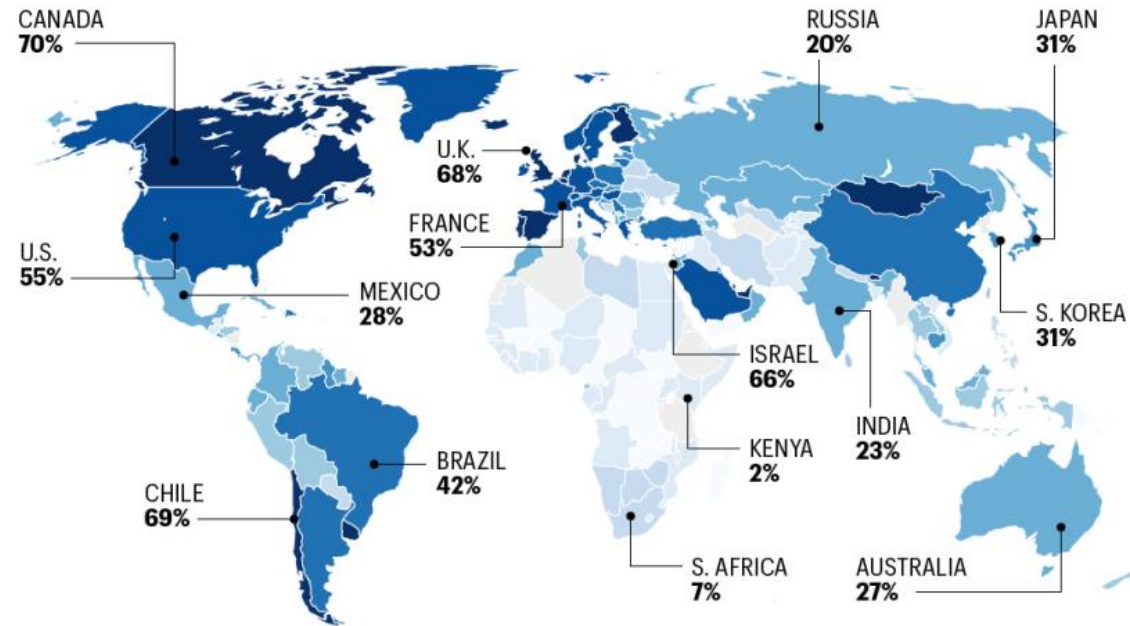
United States: 381 doses given, 179M fully vaccinated = 54.5%. We all know the story...



Worldwide: 5.76B doses given, 2.37B fully vaccinated = 30.4%

COVID-19 GLOBAL VACCINE TRACKER

SHARE OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE RECEIVED AT LEAST ONE DOSE OF COVID-19 VACCINE



SOURCES: OFFICIAL DATA;
OUR WORLD IN DATA

LATEST DATA AVAILABLE, AS OF JULY 13, 2021

FORTUNE

These world leaders' Covid score cards are a work in progress. In our course, we shall focus on the interplay between political power, including power of a highly personalized kind, and the pandemic



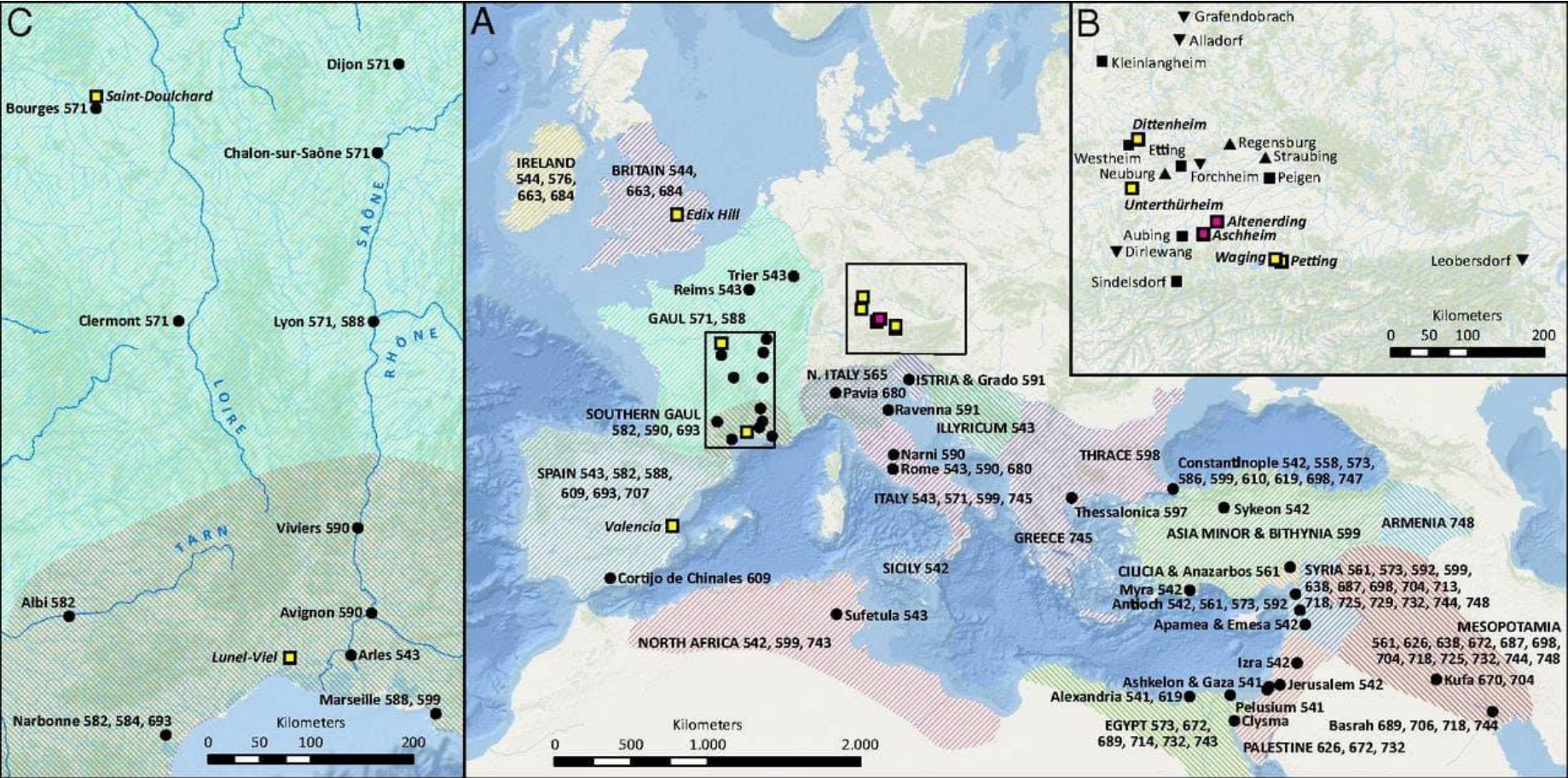
Vaccine passports? Some countries, such as France, are moving in that direction



Josse Lieferinxe, *Saint Sebastian Intercedes for the Plague-Stricken* (1497)



The Plague of Justinian (541-549 AD)



While the Black Death (1346-1353) had a dramatic and quantifiable impact on the course of history, the Spanish Flu pandemic (1918), despite a death rate in the millions, did not have the same decisive effect nationally or globally. As for Covid-19, we just don't know — yet



And so, on to Wuhan



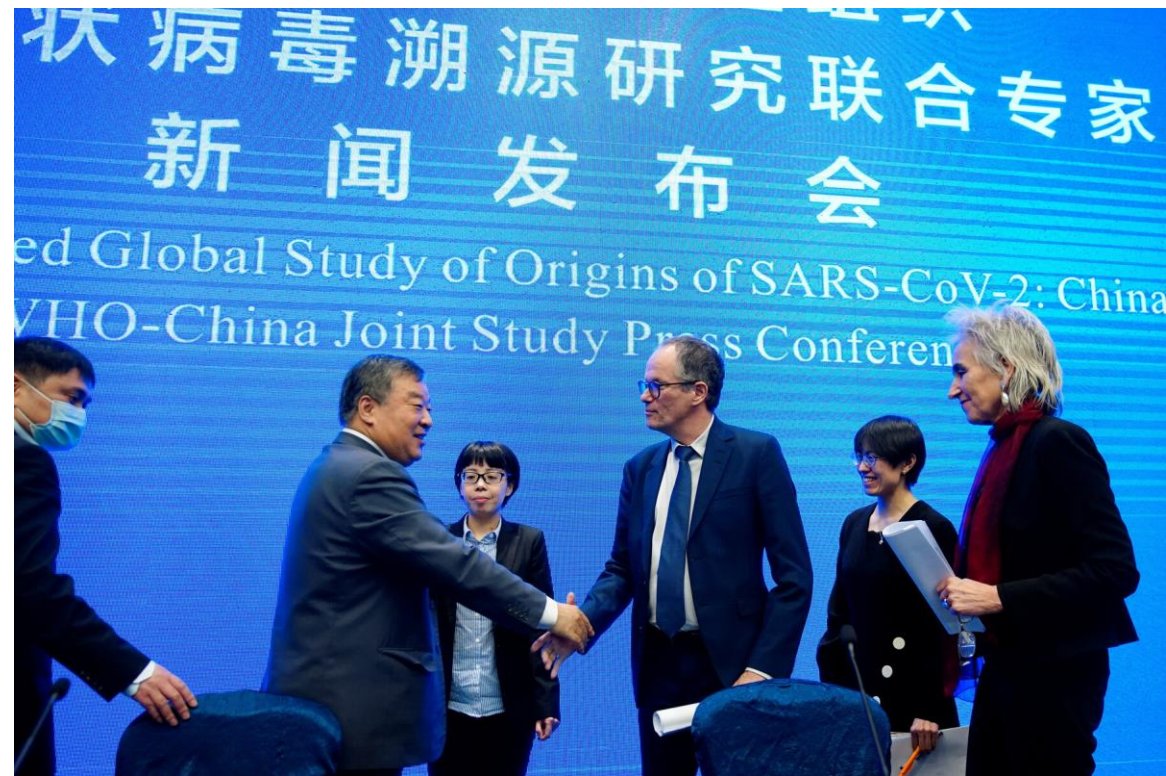
The Wuhan Institute of Virology



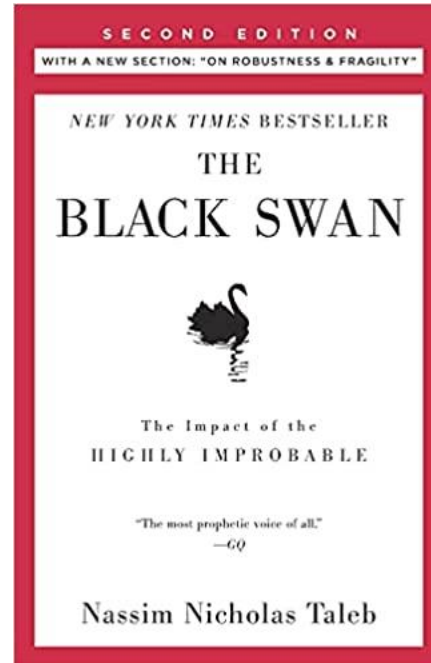
“I don’t believe in coincidences”



The WHO report, *The Origins of the SARS-CoV-2 Virus*, dated March 30, 2021, may be downloaded from that organization's website: <https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus/origins-of-the-virus>. This document, however, raises more questions than it answers



One of those phrases that get bandied about a good deal...



Nassim Nicholas Taleb, who coined the term “black swan,” denies that Covid-19 qualifies as such an event, because in his opinion it was wholly predictable. For more, see Bernard Avishai, “The Pandemic Isn’t a Black Swan But a Portent of a More Fragile Global System,” *The New Yorker*, April 21, 2020



The uses and abuses of Ockham's razor: the key is the word "equal"



“All things being equal, the simplest solution tends to be the best one.”

William of Ockham

In history, positive- or negative-outcome fortuity is common



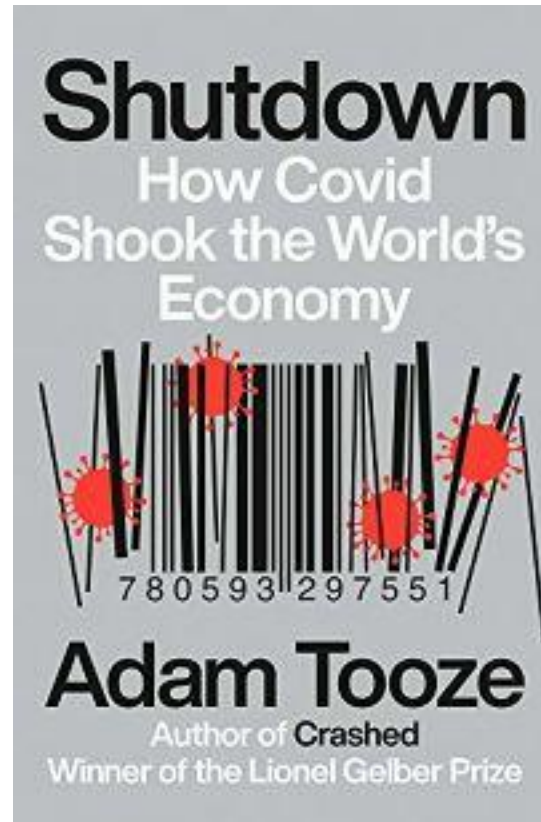
Ophthalmologist Dr. Li Wenliang, Wuhan Central Hospital, raised the alarm about Covid-19 and was persecuted by the communist authorities. He died on February 7, 2020 of the disease



The Covid market crash of March 11, 2020



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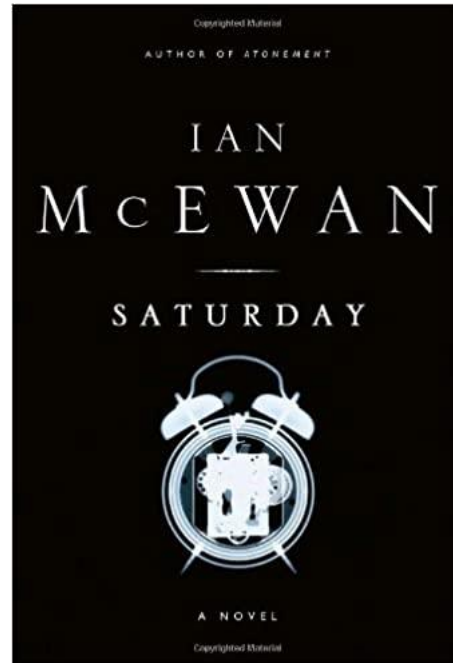
The Jackson Hole Economic Symposium, “Macroeconomic Policy in an Uneven Economy,” August 26-28, brought together central bankers, economists, and policymakers to work out a global consensus on when to tighten monetary policy under ongoing conditions of high inflation and persistent unemployment



Emotional eavesdropping



Ian McEwan wrote in his novel *Saturday* (2005), “Everyone agrees, airliners look different in the skies ... predatory or doomed.” Years from now, will the sight of masked people make the same sinister déjà vu impression?



People wearing masks...



9/11: the dawn of the true twenty-first century?



The long nineteenth, short twentieth, and [fill in the blank] twenty-first centuries

1789-1914

1914-1989

1989-?