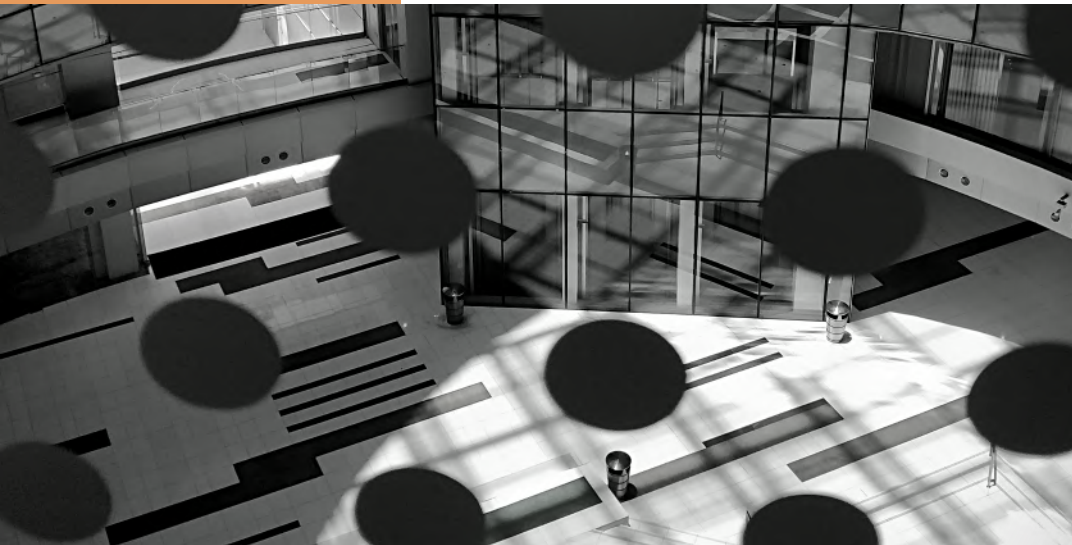


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# RSOG INSIGHT

MOVEMENT CONTROL ORDER EDITION



## IN THIS ISSUE

*With the COVID-19 impacting countries at various stages, everyone is trying to understand what is required to protect themselves and their communities.*

*We spoke to some of our friends around the world on how it has affected them and their views of the situation.*

## ABOUT OUR GUEST

Dr Kevin Croke is an assistant professor of global health in the Department of Global Health and Population at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health (HSPH). Previously, he was an economist in the World Bank Development Impact Evaluation (DIME) group. He received his PhD from the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) in 2011, and BA from the College of William and Mary in 2001. His work focuses on two main areas – using qualitative methods to study the political economy of health systems in developing countries and using empirical methods, including experimental approaches, to study political economy and public service delivery in developing countries. One of his publications relating to Malaysia is [“The political economy of health financing reform in Malaysia”](#) published in 2019.

## VIEWS FROM THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

*In this edition, we spoke to Dr Kevin Croke who is currently Assistant Professor of Global Health at the Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health, Harvard University. He was part of the Research Team from Harvard for the Malaysia Health Systems Research (MHSR). MHSR was a collaboration between Government of Malaysia and Harvard University, which Razak School of Government was involved in the Political Economy and Institutional Analysis project.*

**RSOG:** How has the pandemic affected your daily life?

**Dr Kevin Croke:** Like many people, I am now working from home every day, which is a big change, and I have become a part-time elementary school teacher, which is an even bigger change. Teaching students in my public health classes via Zoom is a challenge, but trying to teach 7, 5, and 3-year-old kids is even harder! On the positive side, it is not hard to motivate students of public health these days – everyone can now see how critical their work is, and will continue to be.

**RSOG:** In your opinion what would be the top three leadership lesson out of this global pandemic?

**Dr Kevin Croke:** The first leadership lesson that I see is the importance of trusting in expertise and scientific advisors. We have seen extremely poor performance against COVID-19 by populist leaders who discount scientific advice, from Donald Trump in my own country to President Bolsonaro in Brazil to President Magufuli in Tanzania. This doesn't mean that scientific advice should be taken uncritically: with a totally new disease, scientific understanding is evolving rapidly, and leaders need to make sure that they are getting sound advice. But leaders who assume that their instincts are better than the advice of scientists are failing badly, and the consequences for their people are very serious.

A second related lesson is that you have to invest in preparedness before a crisis hits. So many infectious disease specialists warned of a pandemic with exactly these properties, but because it was hard for political leaders to really imagine the scale of disruption (despite these warnings), many governments did not adequately prepare. Many other challenges, including climate change, are similar.

A third lesson is that state capacity is critical. Many of the countries that have responded well to COVID-19 have made long term investments in independent, meritocratically-run government ministries and agencies, and have resisted the temptation to politicise their operations. They are reaping the benefits of these decisions.

**RSOG:** Any messages you would like to share with our alumni, and everyone involved, whether directly and indirectly in curbing the COVID-19?

**Dr Kevin Croke:** I would just thank all of those directly involved in the COVID-19 response – we need a strong global response because the disease will reappear if it is not addressed adequately everywhere. Crises like this make it clear how important public policymaking and implementation is, and I'm sure many alumni are using their skills in Malaysia and elsewhere to make the COVID-19 response stronger.

**Disclaimer:** Views expressed in the article are of their own and do not reflect the opinion of Razak School of Government.

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