

Belt & Road Initiative: Challenges and Opportunities Post COVID-19

A Call for a New Multinational Cooperation Mechanism

by Helga Zepp-LaRouche

Zepp-LaRouche, founder and president of the Schiller Institute, gave a speech to the June 12, 2020 Zhejiang Virtual Expo in Digital Service Trade—IT Telecommunication Technologies Services Session, speaking to an audience of representatives from cities in Zhejiang Province, China, and from Eastern and Central Europe. Her speech, “The Belt and Road Initiative in the Post-COVID-19 World: Challenges and Opportunities and a Call for a New Paradigm in International Relations,” was presented as part of the Discussion Panel, “New Mechanism of Cross Countries Cooperation.”

The theme of the session was: “Share the Innovation Achievements of the Global 5G Industry, Grasp the Future Development Trends, Strengthen Cooperation Between Cities in Different Countries, and Quickly Restore the National Economy and Life in the Post COVID-19 Pandemic Era.” This is the edited transcript of Zepp-LaRouche’s speech. Subheads and a footnote have been added.

Allow me to situate one aspect of the role of digital and telecommunication technologies in the present historic moment. The outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic has changed the world in ways very few people would have imagined only half a year ago. Among other things, it has ripped the veil away from the brittleness of a world which was dominated for decades by the financial institutions of the neoliberal monetary system. Very brutally it was exposed, that the privatization of the health system in the trans-Atlantic countries had left these societies unprepared with insufficient supplies of personal protective equipment, ventilators, hospital intensive care units, testing capability, and contact tracing capacity.

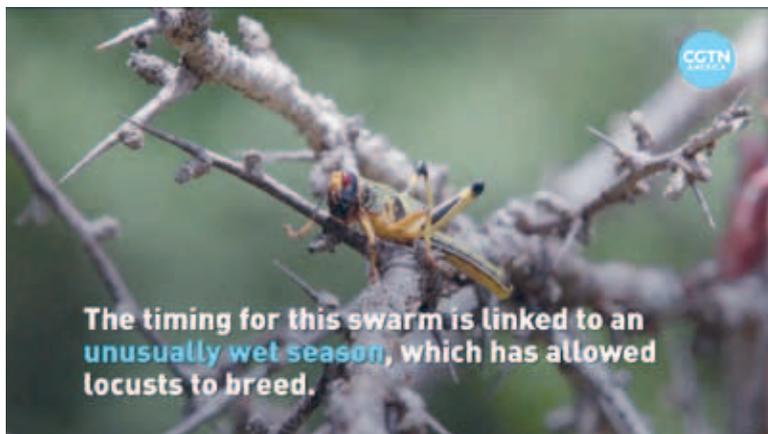
In the developing countries—in which the effects of the pandemic are still expanding—the absence of effective health systems is catastrophic, as we are now witnessing in countries like Brazil and Chile. According to the UN’s International Labor Organization, 60% of the global workforce is deployed in the so-called informal economy—people living from hand to mouth, therefore the economic lockdown imposed as a result of the pan-



Chile has seen a recent spike in new coronavirus cases last week.

CGTN

The absence of effective food and health care delivery systems in the developing countries will have catastrophic consequences. Above: the poor of Santiago, Chile demanding food aid, May 19, 2020. Below: the locust plague threatens millions.



The timing for this swarm is linked to an unusually wet season, which has allowed locusts to breed.

demically immediately threatens the very existence of these people. David Beasley of the UN's World Food Program has warned repeatedly that the crisis in food production has been worsened by the pandemic. Combined with the locust plague now hitting several countries in Africa and Asia, the world will soon be hit with a famine of "Biblical dimension," potentially killing as many as 300,000 people per day, if nothing is done in the short term.

Lack of Industrial Development Caused the Pandemic

It was not the coronavirus which caused the pandemic, it was the lack of real industrial development. As the case of the effective measures implemented by the Chinese government in the city of Wuhan and Hubei Province have demonstrated, the virus was brought under control in China. If every nation on this planet had had a comparable health system, the coronavirus would never have turned into a pandemic, or at least it could have been contained to a very large extent.

As early as 1973, my late husband, the economist Lyndon LaRouche, had set up a biological task force to investigate the impact of the monetarist policies of the IMF and the World Bank on health and life expectancy in the developing sector. This task force produced several large, comprehensive studies in the '70s and '80s, which pointed out that the lowering of the living standard of populations over generations, caused by the conditionalities of the IMF, would inevitably lead to the re-emergence of old diseases and the outbreak of new ones and pandemics.

Now "The Big One" is here, and we have the simultaneous crises of the pandemic, major dislocation and bankruptcies in agriculture, a looming famine, and last but not least, another crisis of the financial system that threatens to become much larger than the crisis of 2008. It should be clear, that a continuation of politics as it has been, can only lead to chaos—potentially a global catastrophe and a plunge into a new dark century worse than the 14th Century in Europe.

When it became obvious that China was not only able to contain the virus much better than the West, but also was able to restart its economic development much

more quickly, the existing efforts to try to contain the rise of China became more desperate. Representatives of British Intelligence, such as the former head of MI6, Sir Richard Dearlove, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, and others, started to spread the lie that China deliberately spread the virus in order to weaken the West.

There is even a debate in certain quarters over whether to decouple the economies of the U.S. and China completely, and enormous pressure is being applied to Europe and other countries around the world, to disengage from cooperation with China. The pressure to prevent countries from cooperation with Huawei and its 5G technology is only one expression of these efforts. A lot of American and other companies however realize, that



Sixty percent of global labor works in the informal economy, living hand-to-mouth. The economic lockdown imposed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic threatens their very existence. Shown are street vendors in Pilibhit City, Uttar Pradesh, India.

such a decoupling would only penalize them, condemning the countries that refuse to participate in mutually beneficial cooperation with China to irrelevance.

There Is an Alternative!

There is an alternative perspective! The crisis of all of human society is so enormous, that only a top down solution can work. I have called since the beginning of this year for a summit of the leaders of the four most important countries, China, Russia, India, and the United States. The world needs a solution that addresses all the problems mentioned above in establishing a completely new paradigm of relations among nations.

The first step, obviously, should be to address the

looming danger of a financial collapse by establishing a new credit system in the tradition of the Bretton Woods System as it was intended by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, namely to provide large, long-term credits for the industrialization of the developing sector.

To fight the pandemic, the first step must be the construction of a national health system in every single nation of the planet, because unless the underlying cause of under-development is remedied, there is no guarantee that there will not be very soon new virus outbreaks leading to new pandemics, famines and plagues. The construction of such a health system in every country can be the first step to create 1.5 billion new productive jobs.¹

This means, that if one applies the standard of the Hill-Burton Act of the U.S. health care system, that is, 4.5 hospital beds per 1,000 persons, the world needs circa 35,000 new modern hospitals with about 35 million beds, especially in Africa, Latin America and Asia. With that, one needs the construction of water systems for clean drinking water, sanitation systems, parts of which can be initially mass produced in advanced countries and then transported to crisis areas.

The same approach can be taken for the emergency production of energy, which then can be complemented by permanent investments in energy production and distribution, communication systems and all aspects of basic infrastructure. Various means for the production of new fresh water—the tapping of aquifers or by the desalination of large quantities of ocean water through nuclear energy—must be developed. In the beginning, international emergency aid teams must be brought in, coordinating with the UN, the WHO, and the sovereign governments of the host countries, to build up these facilities and train large numbers of local medical personnel.

With such an integrated approach for remedying the structural causes of the health crisis, one can plan from the beginning to apply the lessons learned from fighting COVID-19 by bringing in the most modern internet, data processing, and telecommunication technologies. These technologies will make it possible to collect anonymized patient data from every country. The data will



CG/Rosie.Andre

Telemedicine will be a key component in a truly equitable global health care system. Shown: new telecommunications equipment for nurses and doctors at Health Sciences North/Horizon Santé-Nord (HSN), Sudbury, Ontario, Canada.

only be used for the purposes of constructing a health “weather map,” and will not be traced back to the individual patient. Smart thermometers, contact tracing systems, and visualization of illness levels, will all be made available on a permanent basis, so when the next virus hits, it can be contained from the very beginning, without losing valuable time costing many peoples’ lives, were such a system not installed until after the breakout of a new disease.

In order to establish a truly equitable health care system for every nation and every person on this planet, it will be necessary to perfect telemedicine such as teleoperated medical robotic systems, which will connect advanced health care centers with all remote areas to allow procedures such as diagnosis, treatment and surgeries to be carried out across short and long distances. These can be connected using wired or wireless communication networks. Telemedicine in general will provide specialized health care to everyone by eliminating the necessity that the doctor and the patient be in the same location, and therefore allow for the most advanced medical care in the developing nations, or areas of natural catastrophes.

A summit between President Xi, President Trump, President Putin, and Prime Minister Modi could adopt such a health emergency plan, a Health Silk Road, and with that respond to the urgent need of all of humanity and introduce a new era of cooperation in the history of Mankind.

1. Read *The LaRouche Plan to Reopen the U.S. Economy: The World Needs 1.5 Billion New, Productive Jobs*.