

2020 Was Year Like Few in History. Social Isolation, Unemployment, Poverty

Its Effects Will Take Decades to be Reversed

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Theme: [History](#)

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2020 is coming to an end and entering history as one of the most troubled years in recent decades, having caused structural changes in the global geopolitical balance. The “pandemic” of the new coronavirus brought a series of changes in the daily lives of the citizens of large cities worldwide. All over the world, a “new normal” was established – a new unwritten code of coexistence between human beings, which seeks to meet the needs of an era of risk and collective fear.

The new health regulations, focused on establishing a standard of social isolation and infection prevention, forced entire populations to reshape their customs. Obviously, in the event of a proliferation of infectious diseases, stricter health standards must be adopted to manage the risks and prevent deaths, but the consequences of prolonged social isolation have brought serious damage to the social structure of most countries. The productive chain was interrupted as, with fewer people circulating on the streets, the lower the average consumption was, and, consequently, many companies went bankrupt, aggravating social problems such as unemployment and poverty.

In general, the main problem caused by the coronavirus, in economic terms, was the acceleration of the process of extinction of the middle classes at a global level, which further increased the economic power of a small class of billionaires to the detriment of an entire disadvantaged mass. The middle sectors went bankrupt and became closer to the line of misery than to the wealth of the great capitalists. Not even the banking sector escaped the crisis, with the advanced bankruptcy process of some of the largest institutions in this sector, such as Deutsche Bank. The oil sector has experienced its worst days, with drastic declines in global demand for fossil fuels as their use has reached the lowest rates ever with social isolation measures. Financial capitalism itself proved to be on the brink collapse, lacking the resources to manage an unprecedented global crisis.

All of this set a precedent for new narratives and projects. In the face of the bankruptcy of the current system, alternatives appeared to replace it. In the midst of so many speeches, two stood out: a speech in favor of replacing the current global system with a new model, focused on prioritizing major global issues, mainly environmental issues – defending the internationalization of biomes and mass deindustrialization – and a more nationalist and protectionist model, which seeks to regress in the phases of capitalism in favor of a revival of the industrial era. This dispute was visible mainly in the American elections, with Trump representing a populist project of protectionist capitalism and Biden representing the Western Globalists’ agenda, defending the move towards a “green capitalism”.

Still, on the specific topic of the American elections, we can notice many curious facts. For the first time, Washington was the scenario of a possible attempt of colorful revolution. This is what we can think with the violent protests and racial tensions that have spread throughout the country in recent months and have caused immense instability in the Trump administration – a fundamental factor in paving the way towards Biden’s victory. The sharp drop in Trump’s popularity was almost exclusively due to the combined crisis of the rebellions and the pandemic’s health catastrophe, with which his difficulty in dealing was notorious and caused outrage. But even with Biden’s victory, the election results remain uncertain. Although he has already authorized the transition, Trump still does not recognize Biden and rumors are currently circulating about a possible martial law that would allow the American president to establish a state of exception and remain in power. All of this makes the American domestic scenario even more uncertain for 2021.

In parallel with the economic and political effects already mentioned, the pandemic has led to a new era in the arms race of nations, making the pharmaceutical industry acquire a fundamental character in the geopolitical balance. In an era of pandemics, the strongest nation is the one that has the means to immunize its own population. Vaccines and medicines took on a role that was once reserved for nuclear bombs and weapons of mass destruction: guaranteeing the real sovereign power of a state. All the great world powers have invested heavily in the production of vaccines and, so far, no vaccine has reached a preferred status worldwide, which indicates not only that the race will continue, but also that we will possibly have a near future of medical pluralism, with different vaccines being implemented in each country, without a medicine reaching the global level of production and distribution.

Also noteworthy is the recent wave of so-called “peace agreements” between Arabs and Israelis, which reversed the structure of decades of ethnic-religious conflict in the Middle East, bringing the Islamic autocracies and Tel Aviv closer to an alliance against Turkey and Iran, supported mainly by France and US.

With all this troubled and unstable scenario, what to expect in 2021? Nothing more than an exact continuation of this year’s events, without any sudden change in the directions taken by international society in 2020.

Everything indicates that the dispute between a populist speech in favor of closing borders and reindustrialization and a speech in favor of “green globalization” will continue as Trump will remain resistant to accepting Biden’s victory. It is likely that Trump will not break institutional legality and will in fact allow the transition of power, but he and his supporters will start a strong anti-government campaign in search of a viable outcome for their party in 2024. This will make the nationalist discourse continue to grow and compete with globalism. Biden, on the other hand, will recover Washington’s alliance with Western Europe, previously broken by Trump and will increase an interventionist policy in the Middle East – this will happen amid the wave of peace agreements between Arabs and Israelis, which will further isolate Palestine and exclude the possibility of a peaceful coexistence of two States.

In fact, 2020 was a year like few in history. Changes that would have taken decades occurred in months and the effects of this year are unlikely to be reversed in a short time.

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