

## Commentary

*Features of a Post-Corona World*

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### PANDEMICS AND HISTORY

The time of the current Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic will become one of the key moments and a major factor that divides and characterizes epochs of history. The post-Coronavirus world will be very different than before, or you could say that it will be markedly distinct from it in structure and features. In this sense, the Coronavirus moment resembles—or almost resembles—other major moments in the past, which became reference points from a historical perspective. Accordingly, it is similar to developments such as the Fall of the Roman Empire; the launching of the religious reform movement and the religious wars that ensued; the rise of the capitalist order and its expansion around the world; the French and Bolshevik revolutions; the two World Wars, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Socialist Bloc; and finally the birth of globalization. Similarly, it is a key moment in history by way of which the face of the world will change. It may even have a bigger impact than other major key events that humanity has witnessed in modern times.

The abovementioned major events led to huge changes in the course of history, reshuffled the balance between major players, including states and national groups, and opened new horizons for the development of human and international relations, political and social orders, geopolitical maps, and established foundations and institutions to manage international affairs. Comparable with them, the new Covid-19 pandemic, after its regression and disappearance, will initiate a set of significant changes in all fields and relations, including the dominant economic order in the world and the balance between its major actors and national and regional powers; in international relations and in the foreign policies of states and their alliances; in

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international organizations and their bases of action; in military configurations and the perception of national and international security and the sources of threats directed against them; in the internal policies of states and their strategic priorities in the fields of economic and social development, and security and defense; in the perception of cooperation and mutual dependence strategies in relation—at the same time—with competing strategies; in the programs of scientific research and their position in the higher policies of states . . . and in other fields that cannot be numbered.

If the developments generated by the abovementioned major historical events lead to the change of the immediate past, and appear to rectify a previous course within which incidents occurred within narrow dimensions, whether being national (the French and Russian revolutions, the collapse of the Soviet Union, etc.) or continental (religious reform, the birth of capitalism, the two World Wars, etc.) and if the changes they generated had an impact over a limited period of time—decades or one or two centuries—then what will be generated by the Coronavirus moment could be more comprehensive and long term in the spectrum of time and space as the whole world is affected rather than just some of it.

No doubt the issue of public health, and the questions associated with it, and those related to environmental and scientific research in the field of pandemics, will top the list of the issues that the world will be concerned with after the pandemic recedes. The pandemic experience and its significant subsequent results could be bigger than the impact of world wars in economy, politics and life in general. Hence, confronting these effects, taking preemptive measures against them, and building policies to ward them off will be similar, if not greater than, confronting the probability of wars, taking precautions against them, and warding off their threats. Health security in societies and states might even become a higher priority than any other type of security for without health security—or protection from pandemics—there would be no security of health, economy, defense or any other type of security which have been given higher strategic priority by states in the past.

Today it is hard for the individual to draw up a scheme of expectations or scenarios of how the world of tomorrow will be like, after the regression of the pandemic. All that can be done is to set the hypothesis of upcoming change in the image of the world, its structure, relations, power balances, and policies. There are already patterns of change and features that have started to be depicted in many areas.

## FAILURE OF POLICIES AND THE NEED FOR SOLIDARITY

Among the most important causes that enabled the Coronavirus to generate millions of cases of infection and hundreds of thousands of deaths all around the world, in addition to the damage inflicted on global economies and the livelihoods of millions of people, have been that the policies that were adopted to counter it—in all countries—were wrong either in their starting points and/or in their application. These policies turned out to be flawed because of the huge burden bestowed by the pandemic on everyone. This is related not only to the noted carelessness of world governments with the dangers of the virus, or misjudging the catastrophic results generated by it on the human life, economy, and capabilities, but also to the type of choices that states made with their policies to fight the spread of the pandemic and how they mobilized resources in the battle to control it or limit its negative effects.

The common feature between all state policies was to adopt a local national approach to confront the pandemic. This is how the following sequence ensued: the closing of the national borders of each state (by land, sea, and air); declaring a state of health emergency; mobilizing economic, health, and security state resources against the pandemic; adopting special treatment protocols for the people infected by the virus and imposing them on medical centers; indulging in research and clinical experimentation of the cures on a special and exclusive national level; extending the state of emergency for determined periods; or alleviating health confinement and the gradual lifting of lockdown on a national level. Each state acted according to principles of national sovereignty, and by no means did they link their decisions in fighting the pandemic to other states' decisions. Though safeguarding sovereignty and independent national decisions is something much appreciated and needed, implementing independent policies in a drastic situation such as the Coronavirus pandemic was not the right path to adopt, nor was it appropriate in the light of the great threat and dimensions of the pandemic. This was why the outcomes of those national policies against the pandemic were modest if not weak.

The logic by which states approached the Covid-19 pandemic crisis was as if the virus were a national problem confined within its borders which could be controlled with the available national capabilities and resources and, moreover, that they could defend their borders from the outside world and thus could secure their citizens. The flaw in this logic is that it does not acknowledge the facts that the virus is an international globalized

phenomenon that bypasses borders and sovereignties and threatens the whole world. Thus, it was not possible to confront this international problem across nationalities and countries with specific national policies. The challenge of the pandemic necessitated endorsing another path, which is that of international solidarity, in the complete sense of the word, entailing the formulation of a common program, at the international level, in the field of scientific research to provide the adequate medicines and vaccines, in the exchange of medical expertise and providing aid to countries in need, and in addition to countering the grave social effects of the lockdown which was imposed in all countries.

International organizations should be used more effectively to confront the pandemic. The United Nations (UN) and its institutions concerned with the challenges of the pandemic such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and others could have coordinated plans to confront it, in actions of real and material international solidarity. However, unfortunately, this was not taken into consideration due to the inflated self-centered tendencies of states around the world, especially with the great powers competing for the scoop in discovering a cure and a vaccine and imposing a monopoly over its production and marketing as a profitable product. Even when symbolic initiatives of global solidarity were launched, such as that declared in early 2020 to provide financial resources for joint research work that would result in producing a vaccine, a great power such as the US declared its unwillingness to join the initiative and preferred to work alone.

The pandemic threatens all human life and could be second only to a nuclear threat, and yet the experience of fighting the virus via national policies has proved to be a failure. Awareness has now increased of the necessity of establishing joint international solidarity to fight the pandemic across national borders, and the need to produce international institutional frameworks related to it. This is the only opportunity to protect the right of humanity to life, as it is no longer feasible for each society to close itself down, and this would be the only successful globalized response.

## **HEALTH SYSTEMS AND THE NEED TO RECONSIDER DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES**

Had the health systems in the world had full material, technical, human, and logistical resources and skills, the pandemic would have not had such

consequences. True, it would have directed severe blows and resulted in great losses, similar to previous pandemics such as Swine Flu, Ebola, and AIDS. However, a qualified health system would have been able to quickly curb its blows and control it if it were not able to cure it right away. However, health systems were in a very bad condition and could not accommodate the immense pressure on their medical centers to the extent of being obliged to set priorities in the selection of patients that it would save based on their limited capabilities.

It is noteworthy that the health sector has paid the price for being neglected by good policymaking. Rather, the focus was turned to other fields that were more lucrative and profitable at the financial level. It could be said that the price is reasonable if we think of it in the context of the societal, economic, and productive system which was generated by development and capitalism. It could also be said that the guiding principle of this system is no other than interests determined by the freedom of ownership, initiative, and open competition. It would be a fallacy to look at the mechanism of this system and its effects in a deterministic way. This system might have achieved success in some of its historical phases in rectifying some of its flaws. An example is the way it reformed itself in its Keynesian moment which led to the establishment of the welfare state in the capitalist West. This model adopted policies, including public spending, on vital societal sectors such as health, education, housing, and social security, before revoking them, leaving these sectors subject to fierce competition between those with particular interests who seek to profit from opportunities even if at the expense of the public interest, which is the basis of legitimacy of the modern nation-state.

We should not forget that the primary principle of competition is over truth, which the modern societal system could not discard without risking full destruction. It is the principle that lays down the current bases of relations among states, in today's world striving to achieve their interests and profit. Yet is competition one dimensional? Does it not have other fields, sectors, or opportunities other than the one we hear of or see today? Is competition only allowed in the fields of immediate profit; in the war economy, consumerism, the economy of complacency, in flooding the market with more than demand requires, and rather satisfying instincts and pleasures? Is not investing in health, for example, an investment in life with great benefits for all humanity, to ensure safety, stability, and increased production?

After this pandemic and after learning its many lessons, humanity will have to engage in new thinking and action. To think about the prevailing

development model that succeeded in satisfying some needs while failing to fulfill others. There should be scrutiny of defected areas and effective alternatives. Work should be done on the establishment of a new production doctrine that aims to build an alternative and beneficial social development model (not just economic) where priorities revolve around the most sacred of all human rights, which is the right to life. In this case, the principle of competition will not be sacrificed. It will still exist and continue as it was, within one community and between nations and states, but it will have to become more ethical and more honest. The ethos of competition alone is the key to reconstruction after the huge devastation that a barbaric Darwinian pattern of “development” and “progress” has led us to.

### US ISOLATIONIST POLICIES AND US-CHINA POLARIZATION

Most probably, the US tendency will reach its peak after the Coronavirus pandemic storm recedes. US tendencies during the pandemic have taken a direction towards changing priorities by stressing, to an extreme extent, internal US national interests, after a long period of time during which American policies focused on the whole world as an arena of its vital interests. During the latter period, the United States was driven towards intervention in every detail of world affair in order to promote its interests. However, the pandemic has curbed this imperial tendency and made the United States' decisionmakers more nationally focused.

This new US regressive tendency is not only related to former President Donald Trump's administration, but it was first expressed during the days of President Barack Obama when he chose to withdraw US troops from various battle fields in the world. Iraq came first, then negotiations started to pull US troops out of Afghanistan, while stressing that the United States will no longer wage wars in regions distant from its territories. This initiated a great change in US strategies, in contrast to the adventurous policies led by the neo-conservatives and the ruling elite during the leadership of George W. Bush (2001–09). During this period, the United States experienced heavy losses, especially with the death of thousands of its soldiers and the injury of tens of thousands more. It also experienced heavy economic losses best epitomized in the 2008 global financial crisis. The damage to US prestige around the world has been substantial as it has been stained by wars and human rights violations at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq and in the Guantanamo Bay Detention Center, Cuba. These have all discredited it as a superpower.

It seems that what has been partially started by Obama was continued by Trump on a wider scale during his term. The Obama administration wanted its withdrawal to rectify a suicidal political path and restore the image of the United States on the international stage to keep protecting its interests. Trump's withdrawal has been more comprehensive and continuous. During his term, the United States withdrew from international military treaties with Russia (nuclear and ballistic); international trade treaties (especially with China) and international UN agencies (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and WHO). It also closed its borders with Mexico, mended the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and replaced it with US–Mexico–Canada Agreement (USMCA) for free trade.

The other facet of US withdrawal, during Trump's administration, damaged relations with his allies in the European Union (EU) and increased the pressure on them by encouraging the Britain to withdraw from the EU (Brexit). It also obstructed EU attempts to correct its relations with Russia or review its sanctions against Moscow, which damaged European interests greatly, obstructing attempts to establish an independent European security apparatus and forcing the EU to remain under the NATO banner while increasing its contribution to its budget, and increasing the tension between France and Germany. Hence, the United States no longer cares about the interests of the West and is promoting its own national interests at the expense of its allies.

US isolationism, which will be magnified after the current pandemic, will not prevent the United States from continuing to protect its interests around the world, which are under threat by the competition of rising superpowers. It will do so not by participating in organizing world affairs and managing its problems and crises through international organizations, but rather it will do so from the perspective of national interests, and protect them from being undermined by rival powers. It will even try to prevent rival powers from acquiring the elements that would enable them to increase their influence around the world, especially in the regions considered to be under exclusive US influence. It is noteworthy that isolationism does not mean reverting to peaceful means with competing powers, for isolationism in itself entails panic and fear, and usually it is those who implement it who can never feel secure and who can never let others feel secure and in peace.

There is no doubt that the international polarization generated by the post-World War II era ended when the Soviet Union and the Socialist Bloc

collapsed. However, it soon regenerated in economic, commercial, scientific, and technological forms between the two major powers, which are the United States and China. This has developed more acutely over the last decade, yet it did not take an adversarial form during the days of the former Obama administration. However, with the accession of Trump to power, the polarization between the United States and China increased. The media became full of warnings against the “Chinese Threat,” especially via Twitter diplomacy. Therefore, when Coronavirus hit the world, the arena of competition was already set for a conflict; as yet nobody knows the extent of its dimensions.

China was not the only one to lose in the trade war launched by Trump in 2018 when he decided to impose customs duties on Chinese goods worth US\$50 billion. The United States also lost when China responded with force, imposing customs duties on over 120 US products. Thus, the two superpowers entered a phase of acute conflict, especially after the Trump administration took another step by doubling customs tariffs on Chinese goods. The reason for this conflict was that Trump and his administration believed that China was responsible for the trade deficit from which the US economy suffers. China, for its part, understands that the deficit is an expression of a profound transformation in the structure of the US economy which shifted from being a producing country at the beginning of the 20th century to a consumerist country, dependent on foreign products, especially from China.

However, the economic war was not confined to trade, but also entailed competition in the field of technology and technological products. Just as the US trade war on China was a striking violation of the principle of free trade, so the technological war represented an attempt to torpedo the principle of scientific and technological competition. Although the United States almost has a monopoly on the world’s information technology (IT) industry through its major companies operating in this field (Apple, Google, Amazon, Facebook, etc.), it has shown great difficulty in keeping pace with the tremendous technological advance of China. This was the basis for the Trump administration’s decision to ban products from the Chinese company Huawei in the US (in May 2019). There is no doubt that China will not remain idle regarding these US policies which inflict tremendous damage on its technological industry, on which it is counting to become the primary economic power of the world.

The dust of Coronavirus will settle on a more intense conflict between the two countries. This was reinforced by what Trump and the White House



suggested, that is, that China was “responsible” for “concealing information” about the Coronavirus (something that the WHO denied, yet has earned China US punishment). It is also expressed by the growing respect for China in the world, due to its high-level health and technology system and its success in dealing with the Coronavirus. If we add to this the great economic problems of the US economy, due to the pandemic, in addition to the recession and weakness that has resulted from it, then we can conclude that US–Chinese polarization will be further increased.

### **EU FRAGILITY OR EXISTENTIAL TEST**

The EU has never before been subject to an existential test such as the one it is currently faced with in the form of the new Coronavirus pandemic, which has struck the whole world but which has inflicted the biggest losses onto Europe itself. The truth is that the pandemic has not been a major cause of problems between the various member states of the European Union (even if they became more evident due to the spread of the pandemic). The pandemic revealed that the EU is a non-viable project or, at least, a fragile one, subject to relapse or even full collapse. What the Coronavirus pandemic did to the “European Union” was nothing more than accentuate the inherent contradictions that it contained since its inception, and reveal the self-suppressing mechanisms that prevent it from becoming a strong major power, capable of competing with other great powers. Accordingly, the EU’s problem is not expressed by the negative impact of the Coronavirus on the solidarity between member states, but is an existential one in terms of its project, rules, and the foundations upon which it has been based since its inception.

The EU wanted from the very beginning a regional and continental framework for economic, financial, and monetary unity in order to prepare its countries to compete at the international level in the era of globalization. First, it benefitted from the legacy of its contemporary history, including regional cooperation in the framework of the “European Common Market” and the “European Community.” It was also helped by developments such as the reunification of Germany, and the integration of most of the Eastern European countries, which previously belonged to the Socialist Bloc, into the EU after the end of the Cold War. However, economic and financial integration and monetary unity was confronted, from the beginning, with the British refusal to join the Eurozone. The UK’s insistence on preserving its national currency and the independence of its financial system hindered the

ambitions of the EU to be an inclusive framework for European economic integration.

Britain finally defined its fragile relationship with the EU when the majority of its people voted to withdraw from it, and its government began the process of withdrawal after the parliamentary ratification of its program. Yet, the British problem was not the only issue to cause the crisis of European economic integration. Rather, economic integration was hindered by another factor with a much deeper impact, which is the asymmetric relationship between member states of the EU. The EU was based on a flawed system revolving around an epicenter (Germany–France) and the marginalization of other member states. If this imbalance were due to a legacy of disparity in development, then the experience of union and economic integration has not had great success in amending the provisions of this legacy, and in rehabilitating the marginal states so that they benefit from the dynamism of development unleashed by the experience of integration.

But the biggest problem is the EU's inability to achieve political unity that protects its economic unity. First it was unable to adopt a European constitution that had already been agreed upon in Brussels (June 18, 2004), with its first draft signed on October 29, 2004, and was supposed to come into force in 2006. The Europeans themselves were the ones who dropped the draft constitution and with it European political unity as the French voted against it in May 2005, and the Dutch in June 2005. These sentiments of national independence in the European countries hindered the transformation of the EU into something more than an economic bloc.

It goes without saying that the fragility of the EU's structure was born out of the effect of a profound reality that globalization could not erase or change the actuality of the nation-state, and with it, nationalist feelings in disparate European countries. It is the same factor that led Britain to leave the EU. However, its ruling elites did not understand or learn the lesson well, and blamed the failure on the rise of the extreme right and the spread of its chauvinist national ideas. This should be examined, and the people's openness to these chauvinist ideas should be tested.

With the Coronavirus pandemic, the fragility of the EU has reached its peak. It is not a trivial matter that some member states, such as Italy and Spain, were left on their own, and that the borders between member states were closed, and that there was no single European policy to confront the pandemic, and that each state turned in on itself. The bonds and ties between

the “partners” have been torn apart, and it may be difficult and perhaps impossible to revive the EU after the Coronavirus experience.

## **GLOBALIZATION FOR HUMANS AND THEIR DIGNITY**

Globalization will end due to the Coronavirus pandemic, and neither will it be derailed due to the rise of nationalist trends. This might be considered a probability based on some signs. No doubt it is the hope of people who are critical of globalization and consider it responsible for many economic, social, and even military disasters around the world, especially in the Third World in the past thirty years. Although any decent person cannot argue against the validity of this criticism of globalization, yet there is a big difference between criticizing globalization and declaring its demise. In addition, globalization, as an historical development, did not originate from a conspiracy but from development mechanisms in modern history. Its problem does not lie in its tendency to unify the world inasmuch as in the policies adopted and used, which have caused injustices and real damage to a large number of people and nations. Globalization has been portrayed as responsible for this rather than the dominant powers that used these policies.

To be precise, in response to the aforementioned hypothesis, one form of globalization may break down, but globalization itself—as a system of driving mechanisms and interactions between states, as well as between international agglomerations—will continue to develop. It would be difficult to imagine how, suddenly, economic, productive, and commercial institutions and international banks could wither away as if they had never existed; or the flow of money could be stalled alongside the movement of capital and information across borders and become confined one more time to national spheres. In addition, it would be hard to imagine that major global companies would suddenly collapse and break up into smaller national companies. It would also be difficult to imagine a world devoid of internet services, cell phones, satellites, satellite television channels, etc. All these are the toolkits and products of globalization, and every assumption that globalization is on the demise predicts all this technology will tomorrow become mere scrap that can be dispensed of.

The current version of globalization may become obsolete because the problems are with globalization. This version has dominated the scene for the past three decades. It is globalization based on hegemony and the forced subjugation of the weak by the powerful. Weak countries and people have

been oppressed by superpowers which stripped them of their rights and ignored their aspirations. This version of globalization has ended—or is about to end—since the doctrine of power, arrogance, and hegemony has led the world into a dead end. This version of globalization has been faced by various forms of rejection that heralded the transformation of the entire world into a theater of uncontrollable and uncontainable conflicts. It has ended since marginal countries acquired central roles while old centers of power started to lose their leading roles. It also ended with the breaking up of the monopoly over wealth and power, and the gains of globalization became available to all mankind. There is, at this point, a rapid rise of a new humanist discourse, generated by the ascent of new international powers that are not tainted by a colonial or racist past because they are countries of the Global South that were previously victims of colonialism during the time of their weakness.

This current destructive version of globalization is likely to wither away, particularly due to the Coronavirus pandemic. Humanity will thereafter wait in anticipation of a globalization of its own choice. It will be a globalization for humans and their dignity. It will be a just globalization based on equal rights rather than on hegemony and exploitation. It might be said that this vision of a new utopia is not based on historical evidence. This might be true in the short run, but there will be strong evidence for it in the near future, within a decade from now.

#### **BRINGING THE STATE BACK IN**

The Coronavirus pandemic will not pass before it sets the basis for the resurrection of the nation-state from underneath the rubble. It is noteworthy that the pandemic came at the same time as the “end” of rhetoric, that is, the end of the state, sovereignty, ideology, etc. This rhetoric predicted doomsday without revealing what the world would be like in the aftermath. When Coronavirus invaded the world, humanity seemed on the verge of what was predicted, seeking refuge in society and community, the state, sovereignty, and national identity. Consequently, many beliefs and established ideas, institutions, and agencies all evaporated.

The truth is that the state had begun to wither away before the storm of the pandemic, and it started to be susceptible to many internal flaws, and flaws magnified by globalization which undermined nation-states and their legal and legislative systems. With time and the effect of globalization, the

state must limit the exercise of its exclusive jurisdiction within the scope of its geopolitical borders. This did not happen by choice, but was imposed on it after it witnessed an erosion of its sovereignty at the political, jurisdictional, economic, commercial, financial, cultural, and IT levels. This made those who wanted the nation-state wither away (globalists and civil rights activists) think that this might be realized and that the state will really be a thing of the past.

As the pandemic created victims, the state started to rehabilitate itself and gradually it awoke from its hibernation to take on its responsibilities in protecting society from danger. Throughout the period during which the Coronavirus spread, there was no other hero than the state, which was the one to engineer medical and societal programs to confront the pandemic by dedicating its hospitals, laboratories, and financial and economic resources to support disadvantaged groups to confront the pandemic, while mobilizing its administrative and security agencies to impose lockdowns. Had the state not done that, the pandemic would have caused much higher death rates. In reality, what the state did and spent during the pandemic was much higher than what it did in years before the spread of the pandemic.

There is no doubt that this revival of the state is not accidental or temporary and could fade out. The lengthy training to which the state and its agencies was subject to during the pandemic will earn it many benefits, because it will strengthen its structure and imbue it with vitality and efficiency, and, moreover, it will boost its moral and material credentials among the people. Hence, it will increase its legitimacy and spread a universal feeling of need for its care. This will improve its performance in the face of disasters and crises based on the acquired experience from fighting the pandemic. In reality, states throughout history were built during big crises such as wars, disasters, and pandemics like the Coronavirus. As a result, we will emerge from the pandemic crisis with a greater gain which is that of a strong and capable state.

What would have been the destiny of the world's people during this pandemic had it not been for the state? It is hard to imagine. Who could have been capable of bearing the huge pressures that the pandemic bestowed on health, daily life, and security? Few societies would have been able to do so without the help of state infrastructure.

## ARAB LESSONS

What is the lesson that Arab societies and countries could draw from the bitter Coronavirus experience? And what is the right approach of states

around the world towards the pandemic, as well as inter-state relations during the pandemic? And would they have benefited from flaws and failures to adopt constructive alternatives, different from the ones that were adopted while being tied to their international partnerships?

The answer is that the most important lesson that can be drawn is on self-reliance being the best option to meet challenges for many reasons. First, there is the pandemic experience and the states' attitude towards it and towards each other, and the damage endured by the principle of solidarity and cooperation in the context of that flawed behavior which indicates the type of dominant mindset among ruling elites in the world, especially in the West. Those who are accustomed of relying on development programs and building on their "friendships" and relations with the US and the countries of the European Union should not forget that these powers have closed their borders to each other. The US was the first to rush to close its borders to Europe, Canada, and Mexico, which are its partners in a regional system of free exchange. The countries of the European Union followed suit, closing their borders on some states that are members of the EU, hence directing a severe blow to the basis of regional partnership. Thus, countries in the EU (e.g., Spain, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands) were left vulnerable to the spread of the pandemic which ravaged their citizens and their economies.

Second, the choice to rely on themselves is normal during big crises, when states were left on their own. How many states had to rely on their own capabilities when they were subjected to a long siege by superpowers for political reasons? What we are living now is a similar case to those extreme crises which cannot be overcome except by relying on oneself. Did Italy or France confront the pandemic with the money and aid of the EU and the United States, or with its own means and national resources?

Third, no state has ever boosted its development except by relying on its natural, economic, financial, and human resources, in addition to wise investment and scientific research. The prime example of this strategy, in the last forty years, is China. China was subject to a long and cruel Western blockade which made it rely on itself and its resources from which it reaped self-reliance and a large and strong economy, and economic, scientific and technical independence. Yet, with perseverance a self-relying country will be able to excel in some sectors of interest if it dedicates resources and research to develop it. This is the case of Cuba, which, due to the long embargo imposed on it, and the policies of self-reliance it had to adopt, has succeeded in

producing the best health system in the world that satisfies national needs and is dedicated to providing health services to other countries.

Self-reliance, in the process of developmental construction, is not a substitute for a strategy of cooperation and interdependence, but rather a condition for its actual integrity. There is no mutual dependence without ensuring freedom from the yoke of subordination. Therefore what can the subdued offer to those who impose dependency on them and control their destiny? Interdependence can be only between peers who are equal in power, and in the absence of this, it becomes a pseudonym for a control—a relationship of subordination. ■

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