Coronavirus becomes one of Biggest Challenges for USA in Modern History

According to CNN, “the coronavirus emergency is fast transforming into one of the gravest political and societal challenges of the modern age” but US leaders “are only just beginning to understand the gargantuan task before them.” The pandemic will be a much bigger test for USA’s economy and health system than predicted earlier on. And although the American leadership has seemingly understood the seriousness of the situation, they have yet to take sufficient measures. CNN has reported that President Donald Trump, “who has fractured truth and carved deep political divides over a turbulent three years in office, now faces one of the most profound challenges of any recent Oval Office holder.”

US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, currently “battling to save the economy”, has already painted “a dire picture of what could happen if Congress does not act.” A GOP Senate source has informed CNN that Steven Mnuchin told senators “the unemployment rate could rocket up to 20%.” And “such a nightmare scenario would approach” that of the Great Depression, “and far outpace the jobless number after the 2008 financial crisis, which peaked at 9.9%,” the CNN article has stated.

According to data from the Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center (which reports the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases based on information provided by federal and local authorities), on 20 March, in the United States, there were more than 13,100 coronavirus cases (that doubled practically every two days) and at least 176 deaths as a result of the infection. Governor of California Gavin Newsom has said that forecasts indicated approximately 56% of California’s residents, i.e. 25.5 million people, would be infected with the novel coronavirus in 8 weeks “without mitigation efforts.”

The relations between the United States and its European allies had been tense even before the crisis sparked by the pandemic began. According to the Global Times, USA’s unilateral decision to close its borders to Europeans served only to exacerbate these tensions, and these measures, taken by Donald Trump to fight the outbreak, have “apparently irritated Europe” and pushed it to cooperate with China. The Global Times has reported that Washington initially misled its allies into believing “the virus originated in China.” “Given Trump’s early passive attitude toward epidemic prevention efforts, the possibility that the US is the source of the European epidemic should not be ruled out,” the article has stated.

It is important to remember that American military personnel face the risk of infection at US military facilities overseas. “There have been confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the US military base in South Korea, which has since been closed,” writes the Global Times. The author of the story has also stated that the current coronavirus crisis in Europe poses a substantial risk to the health of people, including U.S. servicemen, in the region, and that “a large-scale virus outbreak” at U.S. military bases worldwide “would have a huge impact on U.S. global hegemony and could accelerate alienation between the U.S. and Europe.”

Le Monde has reported that the coronavirus has finally turned off the lights in US cities, such as New York. According to the French newspaper, streets of the Big Apple, always teeming with people, are now empty as bars, restaurants and financial centers have gradually closed their doors to the public. The mayor of the city has ordered kindergartens and schools to shut down. The article says that “the chic districts of Manhattan are deserted, the richest having” fled to their second homes in the countryside (after all, they have had such back-up plans for quite some time). Broadway has “gone dark” for at least a month. Only the poor, often African Americans, remain in the streets trying to sell souvenirs to non-existent tourists.
US political commentators, such as Jimmy Dore, have indignantly pointed out that until the coronavirus pandemic started in the country, US politicians in California, for instance, had not been worried about the plight of thousands of poor people living in the streets of their states. Since the homeless are particularly vulnerable at present, only now are measures being taken to find accommodation for them to prevent the spread of the virus, which is further evidence of the nation’s moral bankruptcy.

In the current climate, the number of people wishing to purchase fire arms has soared. According to The Guardian, “fears of possible social unrest amid the coronavirus crisis are prompting some Americans to turn to firearms as a form of self-protection.” The article states that “in Washington state and California, locations of early outbreaks of the virus, gun sales increased acutely propelled by Asian Americans fearful that they could face xenophobic and racist violence against their families given that the original source of coronavirus was China.” When asked why the spike was happening, Larry Hyatt, an owner of one of the largest gun shops in the USA, said: “Financial meltdown, pandemic, crime, politics … you throw it all into the pot, and you have one hell of a mess.”

As discussions about actions taken by the United States during the current coronavirus pandemic continue, some commentators have pointed out that as the world is trying its best to stop the spread of COVID-19, the United States has no intention of paying the World Health Organization (WHO) the money it is meant to contribute. According to the article, the USA has not even paid half of what it was supposed for year 2019 to WHO, and Washington’s expected contributions for 2020 exceed $120 million. This limits the World Health Organization’s capabilities to support world-wide efforts to fight the pandemic during this critical period. As a result, the author thinks the “superpower” is not only in financial but in moral debt to the global community.

There is more and more talk about the possibility that the coronavirus pandemic will give free rein to US President Donald Trump’s authoritarian tendencies. According to Le Journal de Montréal, the American leader, in a quest for more power, could “declare a state of emergency” and then postpone the 2020 presidential election. In the opinion of the author, such a possibility is all the more plausible because, until now, Donald Trump’s “management of the coronavirus crisis has revealed his serious intellectual, decision-making and emotional deficiencies.” “His lies and his disclaimers of responsibility for the chaos in which the coronavirus plunged the country are not believed by anyone,” and “the tent is about to fall on the sinister circus of Donald Trump and his band of sad clowns,” the article states. The story in Le Journal de Montréal postulates that “the coronavirus is an existential threat to his presidency … unless he finds a way to use it.” And “it is to be feared that the pandemic will catalyze Trump’s authoritarian impulses and lead him to declare a state of emergency.”

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