Topic 2

The current crisis is showing the best and the worst of humanity. Will a new form of solidarity emerge at the end of the tunnel or do you think on the contrary that previous trends of the last few years (e.g. increasing nationalisms) will be enhanced?

Life after COVID: Will the World Be a Better Place?

While in lockdown, a common thought among people was: “After this crisis, the world will be a better place”. This line of thinking might have been due to the many forms of solidarity shown between citizens, and between countries: thousands of donations were made to help hospitals, and those nations who were most in need (like Italy, for example) received great support from other countries. But now, things seem to have changed.

In March, Stephen Walt, professor of international relations at Harvard University, wrote in Foreign Policy magazine: “The pandemic will strengthen the state and reinforce nationalism. Governments of all types will adopt emergency measures to manage the crisis, and many will be loath to relinquish these new powers when the crisis is over”. These words, which may sound as a prophecy, seem to be confirmed by some scenarios we’ve seen in the past few months.

A primary example would be in Hungary: Prime Minister Viktor Orban extended the state of emergency, apparently just to seize more power. Another case would be in Poland, where the parliament has tried to profit from chaos caused by the pandemic to pass restrictive laws on abortion. But these scenes are not exclusively from Europe. In fact, in America, President of the United States Donald Trump usually calls the disease Covid-19 the “Chinese virus”, intensifying the rivalry between US and China.

Furthermore, the hypothesis of Walt gives the idea of being correct by the latest trend of “vaccine nationalism”. This phenomenon involves a group of rich countries, which have already reserved around half of the vaccine supplies. This could bring to a flaw in the global supply chain, leaving poorer countries, where most of the world’s population lives, bare handed.

Like philosopher Thomas Hobbes used to say: “homo homini lupus”. This crisis has, once again, shown humanity’s true colours.

[305 words]

Chiara Di Sano

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