**Now Is Exactly the Time to Investigate the WHO's Catastrophic Public Failures and Internal Rot**

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President Trump made precisely the right call in suspending U.S. funding to the World Health Organization, pending a review of its role in "severely mismanaging and covering up the coronavirus." Trump is doing an important service not only to America, but to the world, with his demands that the WHO clean up its abysmal and misleading act, and stop kowtowing to China.

But here comes the chorus of alarms that this particular moment, in the midst of the worst pandemic since 1918, is not the time to interrupt the WHO's annual intake of roughly $500 million from U.S. taxpayers. Bill Gates, a big backer of the WHO, declares the United Nations health agency irreplaceable. A Beijing government spokesman proclaims that Trump's decision will weaken the WHO and "undermine international cooperation." UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres opines that the WHO is "absolutely critical to the world's efforts to win the war against COVID-19" and any review of the WHO should wait till "we have finally turned the page on this epidemic."

Don't fall for it. The Hippocratic Oath enjoins doctors to do no harm, and the WHO Constitution includes similiar requirements of the director-general and his staff. But today's WHO has done harm on a pandemic scale, misleading the world with its rotten assurances ("no clear evidence of human-to-human transmission"), its perverse prescriptions ("WHO advises against the application of any restrictions of international traffic") and its paeons to China's ruinous fictions and totalitarian ways ("China deserves gratitude and respect").

Nor does it excuse the WHO that the prime culprit of today's pandemic is China's ruling Communist Party. China reported the Wuhan outbreak to the WHO on Dec. 31, but for almost three more weeks downplayed the evident dangers, stifled the warnings of Wuhan's terrified doctors and hid the alarming signs of exponential spread in Wuhan until travelers leaving China had richly seeded infections abroad. Either the WHO was clueless, or complicit --neither scenario reflects well on the WHO's deceptive drumbeat, for weeks, that this novel coronavirus was no threat to the rest of the planet.

As the disease spread, the WHO put out a stream of misinformation, including the now-infamous Jan. 14 message on Twitter that Chinese authorities had found "no clear evidence of human-to-human transmission." Even after China admitted on Jan. 20 that the disease was highly contagious among humans, even after China on Jan. 23 forcibly locked down the entire city of Wuhan, Tedros and his team delayed sounding a serious alarm. It wasn't until Jan. 30, a week after the Wuhan lockdown, and following Tedros's lightning trip to Beijing to pay court to China's tyrant, President Xi Jinping, that the WHO finally declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern.

Following Trump's Jan. 31 restrictions on China travel, which slowed the spread of the virus into the U.S., the WHO (and China) carried on objecting to any such restrictions (though, with the coronavirus now amplifying around the globe, China has imposed its own bans on inbound traffic). At a WHO executive board meeting in Geneva, in early February -- by which time China was officially reporting more than 17,000 coronavirus cases and more than 360 deaths, and the U.S. was recording its 11th case -- Tedros reiterated his objection to travel restrictions. He told the board that China was doing a great job of protecting the world from the virus, adding: "The chances of getting this going to anywhere outside China is very low... ."

That's been pretty much the tenor of WHO's approach, at every turn, to COVID-19 control, including Tedros's delay in declaring a pandemic until March 11. By that time the disease had spread to more than 100 countries -- as the WHO intoned that it could still be contained if everyone took a cue from China's "amazing achievement." (Meantime, China's state-controlled press was coming up with headlines such as "WHO's independence should not be doubted.")

By now, Tedros and his team have had to adjust their messaging to take into account the virus's spread to at least 184 countries and regions outside China, with cumulative cases worldwide numbering more than two million, and more than 134,000 deaths. These days, amid a rising death count and global landscape of fear, quarantines and cascading economic ruin, Tedros and his lieutenants at the WHO spend a lot of time calling for total global "solidarity" -- plus lots more money for the WHO to continue its ever-expanding adventures in disease control. (Though last week, Tedros interrupted his calls for total global unity in order to single out for insult and attack the democratic government of Taiwan -- which, unlike the WHO, discerned the threat of this coronavirus from the get-go, and acted accordingly.)

In China's viral deceit, the WHO under the leadership of Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has been an enthusiastic accomplice. Wielding the WHO logo, Tedros and his team ran cover for Beijing's lies, denials and propaganda. They praised China as a model of transparency and paragon of disease management, and continued to do so even as horrific stories emerged of the Chinese government's deceptions and brutal treatment of its own people. Apparently, Tedros considers it a matter of grave concern to the WHO if America restricts China travel. But if China itself threatens, arrests or disappears its own outspoken doctors and bloggers, or locks sick people into their homes to die, that's not within the WHO's purview.

Though, such twisted standards at the WHO should come as no surprise. China began colonizing the WHO at least 13 years ago, when China's candidate, a former Hong Kong director of health, Margaret Chan, became WHO director-general, serving for 10 years before Tedros took charge. Chan was already controversial in Hong Kong for her slow and bungling early response to the 2003 SARS outbreak that spread from China to Hong Kong. Under her leadership, the WHO's response in 2014 to the Ebola crisis in West Africa was a debacle -- leaving the U.S. and a number of private medical charities to ride to the rescue. Commenting on this at the time, a Nov. 4, 2014, Wall Street Journal editorial noted that "since the 1990s the WHO has devoted ever more of it resources to political activism instead of its core disease-fighting mission -- a loss of function that helps explain why the WHO failed to contain Ebola when it was less rampant." Sound familiar?

If we judge by results, then as UN debacles go, the WHO's 2020 failures, fictions, delays and Beijing boot-polishing in dealing China's coronavirus outbreak rank right up there with the UN's decision in 1994 to ignore desperate warnings from its own peacekeepers of the impending genocide in Rwanda. In that instance, more than 800,000 people were slaughtered. For the current pandemic, the cost in lives and livelihoods is already colossal, and we do not yet have a full tally. It would be gravely irresponsible of the U.S. to simply carry on bankrolling the WHO. An investigation into its public failures and internal rot is urgently needed -- now -- before the UN's erstwhile health agency steers the world any deeper into catastrophe.