

The traditional notion of Infrastructure is physical: roads, bridges, tunnels, airports, and railroads. But our social infrastructure is just as essential. Social infrastructures are how we treat and support our population for best outcomes.

Modern developed societies around the world are judged by both physical and social infrastructures. Countries are deemed well run when they are clean, orderly, just, healthy, and citizens content with their governance. These elements require entire systems to produce good outcomes.

President Biden's Infrastructure Bill is using a modern definition: systems designed to rebuild America for 21st century challenges. This is essentially an investment in America's future. Because of a half century of neglect, we are no longer a global model for the world, and Democracy is being challenged by Autocracy as a system that can meet modern needs.

Biden's Infrastructure Bill covers seven major issues: 1) physical infrastructure (bridges, dams, roads, airports, schools, hospitals; 2) health infrastructures (water pipes, clean air and water, safe food and drugs, and expansion of Affordable Care System's Obamacare); 3) transportation (electric cars, charging stations, modern railroad systems, batteries replacing petrochemicals, which also addresses climate change and pollution of air and water; 4) communications; 5) Internet for everyone and modernization of educational system; 6) workers (education, training, childcare and eldercare needed by women in workforce, and immigration changes to bring in new workers; 7) research and development (basis for modern manufacturing, health care, and meeting future challenges; 8) justice and equity (more judges, rebuilding modern policing, retraining for equal justice for all).

If we regard infrastructure as all the systems that govern a modern thriving society, the social infrastructures cannot be ignored. The physical infrastructures serve the social ones, just as our skeletal system and skin support all the rest of the systems that make us human beings (blood, nerves, electrons, and health). In addition, the individual human being with all his or her bodily systems cannot survive without the social systems. The infrastructure of human life goes well beyond just the physical.

A modern society made up of diverse human beings needs cleanliness: systems that protect the cleanliness of water (no pollution), replacement of our century-old water pipes that leach lead (brain damage to children), and sewage systems that do not spew raw wastes into waterways or the ocean. The Green Revolution replaces polluting petrochemicals with new energy system that promote healthy human and animal life.

The last major restructure of America's infrastructure was the New Deal of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, whose "brain trust" of experts redesigned American life for the better. Consider the benefits to the entire impoverished American South when the TVA provided inexpensive energy for all. Other presidents provided the national highway system (Eisenhower), the Equal Voting Rights Act (Johnson), and an affordable medical care system (Obama), all of which made the United States a better country than it had been.

One of the more contentious elements of the Biden Plan address the "Green Revolution," a system long promoted by progressives and opposed by conservatives. This system is based on the replacement of petrochemical energy which has served us well, but its downside of pollution and contribution to climate change mandates non-polluting energy systems. Wind, solar, tidal, and nuclear must replace oil, gas, and coal. This revolution has already begun. President Biden is convinced that investing in this system will open more jobs, many not requiring university degrees, to replace the jobs being now lost to computers and artificial intelligence.

Economic equity (fair wages) falls within our new respect for many of our lowest paid citizens, whose work has proven "essential" during the pandemic. Most of these are women, those who care for our elders and pre-school children, and the agricultural workers (immigrants) who continued to feed us, endangering their own lives,

Education is a major infrastructure. We need citizens who are educated for their duties to our society: voters, workers, parents, doctors, justice system workers, and those with special skills to keep our economy healthy.

A country is much more than roads and bridges. It is how we live, how we treat each

other, and what sort of future we envision.

687 words

Dr. Laina Farhat-Holzman is a historian, lecturer, and author of "How Do You Know That? Contact her at Lfarhat102@aol.com or www.globalthink.net.