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Coronavirus: globalisation is not the cause but the remedy

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While the Covid-19 pandemic is unfolding in all its violence, "globalisation", to read more than one, is said to be the great culprit for what is happening to us, whether it has been the lightning speed of the virus' spread, the impotence of States to stop its progression, the inability of "capitalism" to produce medical equipment or the madness of stock market speculation. The logical consequence of this has been the repeated call, with some pathos, urgently to invent the time "after", after the follies of globalisation. The magnitude of the shock that Covid-19 represents provides an ideal sounding board to replay a tune that is in fact an old one, familiar to us since the 1990s at least, or even the 1980s, but with an incomparable and therefore particularly disturbing echo. Defined both as liberalization - the triumph of the borderless market economy - and as planetarisation - the unification of the planet through flows of all kinds, information, migrants, ideas and representations, tourists, religious practices - globalisation is said to have become a form of disease fatal to the world. Hence to de-globalise[1].

Yet, it has to be said again, more than twenty years after Paul Krugman, globalisation is not to blame, and those who currently claim the opposite, with a communicative passion, pretending to draw conclusions from a lucid analysis of the recent past, rely on biased historical narratives to impose a political agenda, whether explicit or implicit. So, let a historian try to say a word about it, since understanding the times we are in requires understanding the times from whence we have come.

[1] <https://www.telos-eu.com/fr/economie/le-coronavirus-et-la-mondialisation.html>

THE POLITICAL OBSERVER, THE POLITICIAN AND THE GLOBAL DISEASE.

Let's take two examples to illustrate this new trend in the criticism of globalisation, focusing on the debate in the French-speaking world.

On March 6, at the beginning of the wave of the virus in France, Romain Lecler, who teaches political science at the University of Québec in Montréal, published an article in the French newspaper *Le Monde* whose title, "[Le Covid-19 met au jour toute une série de phénomènes associés à la mondialisation](#)" (*Covid-19 points to a series of phenomenon linked to globalisation*) indicated its descriptive objective. He explained how the spread of the virus highlighted the different shapes taken by globalisation across the world. In the first place, there was economic globalisation: Wuhan, an industrial megalopolis at the heart of the world's automotive value chains; then stock market fever, immediately transmitted via the network of major financial centres. But there were other forms of globalisation in the shape of cruise ships and planes loaded with tourists; of religious gatherings, from Qom to Mulhouse, which became clusters of contagion; of commuting across the Pacific, making Seattle a gateway for the virus to the United States; and the omnipresence of information. Finally, his description turned into an accusation: "*The spread of Covid-19 points to another global disease: our collective addiction to international mobility*", which "*should prompt us to imagine forms of de-globalisation*". The subtle shift should be noted: at the beginning of the text, it was the coronavirus that was the global disease; in the end, it was globalisation that had become

the pathogen. In these circumstances, how could we not wish to deglobalise the world?

Another perspective, same fundamental thesis: Hubert Védrine, former French Minister of Foreign Affairs (1997-2002), an authoritative voice in the field of international relations, published a note on the current crisis, whose title speaks for itself « [La mondialisation à l'heure des comptes](#) » (*Globalisation in a time of reckoning*). It would be out of the question, after the coronavirus crisis, to return to "normal", because the situation before was deeply dysfunctional due to globalisation. The latter, said to be fundamentally American, the result of four decades of unlimited expansion of the market economy and the "neutralization of all forms of sovereignty", has produced, he writes, "unpreparedness, multi-dependence, financial insecurity, collective fragility, ecological irresponsibility", and is therefore the immediate cause behind the seriousness of the crisis. For the former socialist minister turned sovereignist, there is an urgent need to de-globalise in order to renew an international community based, this time, on truly sovereign States, to overcome the aberrations of globalised value chains, to limit ecological disaster, to rediscover the value of "ordinary people" and to review the value of their jobs.

The political observer and the politician; the proponent of the critical sociology of globalisation and the specialist in classical international relations; the young academic trained in the 2000s and the *ENArch* introduced to social democracy by Jacques Delors in the 1970s: the consensus on the responsibility of globalisation promises to be broad, and the call for de-globalisation looks set to be a dominant theme of the moment. We might have doubt, particularly as a historian, the diagnosis and therefore question the remedy.

WHAT KIND OF GLOBALISATION ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?

In both cases, however, the narrative of our "globalisation", which is widely spread and taken for granted, is not clear, due to problems surrounding the dating that fundamentally bias its interpretation. The chronology put forward focuses mainly on the

1980s and 1990s, with both authors referring to "the last few decades" or "more than thirty years". Sometimes, they also propose other timespans, such as that of the establishment of American domination over the world after the Second World War (Védrine), that of the opening up of Deng's China or the massive increase in tourism and air travel since the 2000s (Lecler). Some phenomena linked to globalisation are not dated at all by these two observers, like world religious movements or trans-Pacific migration, which are at the origin of the spread of the pandemic, while others are even said to have been on the decline before the crisis, for example international trade has been growing slower than world GDP since 2010.

This chronological ambiguity is a serious problem in terms of coherence. If current globalisation is American, and dates back to the 1940s (those of the UN, the IMF, the World Bank, NATO and Bretton Woods) and the 1980s and 1990s and the "globalizers'" neo-liberal offensive, then it is a combination of very different rationale and dynamics, which are in fact irreconcilable: the regulated dollar system and monetary deregulation from the 1970s onwards, exchange controls in the Atlantic world during the years of reconstruction and the (relative) freedom of capital movements since the 1980s, etc. . If current globalisation is typified by long-range religious mobility, it remains to be seen what is new in this area, since pilgrimages to Mecca and other holy places have animated the Muslim *koinè* for more than a millennium. The first forms of international monitoring and control of epidemics were structured around the circulation of epidemics along the pilgrimage routes to Makkah Al-Mukarramah at the end of the 19th century.

As for economic globalisation, or liberalisation, what a misunderstanding! If the current globalisation of the economy is so closely linked to Chinese power, should it really be associated with the triumph of globalizers and deregulation, when China's industrialization and its grand entry into the global industrial society have been the product of a very classical "developmentalist" State policy, well known since the Meiji era Japan in the 1860s? Need we recall

that China has strong exchange controls, even though it is the world's second largest economy? As such, our "globalisation" is much less liberal than the one that took place during the 19th century, for example, at the time of the free movement of capital and the gold standard. Contrary to what Romain Lecler says, Wuhan's industrial power is as much due to the Chinese State's desire to control the circulation of capital and goods as it is to global supply chains and the uncontrolled power of multinationals: to reach the huge Chinese market, European and American car manufacturers are forced to invest locally, particularly in joint ventures with Chinese companies that involve massive transfers of technology. States, whether in Asia, engaged since the 1950s in a massive industrialisation effort, or in Western Europe, engaged in the economic integration of the continent, are in reality infinitely more powerful (in terms of the number of civil servants, in proportion to the levies on national wealth, by the sophistication of their systems of standards and regulations, by the number of areas in which they intervene) than their predecessors of the 1950s, or those of the 1900s.

Considerations involving tourism, ecology, the madness of international mobility or transmigration are not much more convincing. The fact that tourism has increased sharply globally since the 2000s does not really change the parameters of the problem of pandemic transmission: there was very little air travel in the 1918s and 1919s, and yet the Spanish flu circulated globally, following American troops across the Atlantic, or the return home of forced labourers from the Indian subcontinent who had been displaced to Europe to contribute to the Great War. The coronavirus may have moved faster. But the slow circulation of the bubonic plague in the 14th century did not prevent it from causing immense damage throughout the Eurasian hemisphere, via the sea. Pendular migration and migrant diasporas were also not novelties in the 1980s and 1990s; there is far less labour migration and immigration in our world than in 1880 or 1910, when massive movements of workers crisscrossed the Atlantic, colonised Manchuria and Siberia, or animated the entire British Empire from the Indian subcontinent. What, then,

is the specific role of these transmigrations in our world, and in the Covid-19 pandemic?

Finally, the authors are passionate about the massive damage caused to the environment by "globalisation". Here again, we can question the timelines involved, and therefore the interpretation of the period in which we are living. Was it necessary to wait for "globalisation" for us to realise that the "Glorious Thirty", most often presented as a culminating moment of the power of the national State, along with industrialization progressing at a rate of +10%/year, had caused immense damage to European and African ecosystems, whilst consumer society was gaining momentum? Was the devastation of Soviet industrialization, in Central Asia, the Urals or the Ukraine, caused by our addiction to international transport and by the offensive of the "globalizers" who are breaking down borders, States and national identity? Awareness of the ecological damage caused by the transition to an industrial society is an old idea, but it has never been as present in public debate in the Atlantic world as it is "today", in the age of "globalisation".

Nothing in all of this, therefore, allows us to really incriminate "globalisation", a process that is said to be on-going, to be relatively recent, and which is said to be marking the triumph of the global market and of Brownian movements over reasonable anchors, the identities of peoples and the power of States. Yet this is the essence of the criticism made of globalisation: by the scale of the phenomena it is said to unleash, it has led us to lose all control over our lives, both individual and collective, in particular by striking at the heart of the body that makes it possible to build this capacity for collective action, the national State. *Take back control*, as they have been accustomed to saying across the Channel, and therefore, according to the "de-globalisers", the need to regain true State sovereignty lies at the heart of the desired de-globalisation.

THE "RETURN OF SOVEREIGNTY"?

The idea that the "return of sovereignty" is the solution is based on the implicit assertion that, since

sovereignty is the responsibility of the State, it is the clear manifestation of the pre-eminence of the public good over the anarchy and immorality of private interests. Yet the war currently being waged in the medical equipment markets, where States are fighting among themselves to monopolize available stocks and promises of future production, shows that in the name of the higher interests of the "nation" and the State, it is possible to try to monopolize patents for the production of drug molecules in order to try to deprive others of them, that it is conceivable that a State might capture for its own benefit a shipment destined for another because it transits through one of "its" airports, and that unbridled competition between States favours the multiplication of doubtful intermediaries. In fact this disastrous logic deeply undermines the principles of international law, the principles of national public procurement laws, places the different components of States in conflict with each other and accentuates global shortages in the name of securing national supplies.

We must deepen this analysis: these massive shortcomings, this struggle of all against all is a certainly caricatured and hysterical, but in fact realistic, prefiguration of the foreseeable results of the principle of relocation that is being presented as a cure-all against "the global disease". Let us consider two much-quoted cases of the present time, that of masks and that of drugs used in intensive care units, for which the current difficulties in supply provide a particularly telling illustration of the disorders of globalisation and the dramatic dysfunctions of the market, according to their accusers.

To make masks, elastic bands are needed; these are either made of latex (from rubber trees) or of polymers (from oil); in both cases, France, and for the most part Europe, are dependent, whichever way you look at it, on distant supplies. What exactly would it mean then to regain a form of sovereignty by relocating production? It would simply mean relocating certain stages of production and still be dependent on distant supplies for earlier stages. And it would be on these distant supplies, particularly of raw materials, that capture-strategies would weigh,

since each State would have encouraged production to be relocated on its territory and would have encouraged its producers to secure their sources of supply. Historically, it is known that this logic is the one that, in the context of mercantilism, led to the multiplication of colonies, for example to ensure a "sovereign" supply of sugar, rubber or cotton.

Similarly, relocating the production of the necessary drugs to intensive care units, on the pretext that they are produced in China or the United States, and that our health system is therefore dependent on non-national producers, means that we are forgetting that they are synthesised in particular from curare, which itself comes from Amazonian or African lianas. In no way will multiplying the number of producers of these medicines in each State solve the problem of raw materials and therefore of dependence on "foreign" sources. It would mean taking dependency up a notch. To consider this dependence as an insurmountable problem is to take the struggle for survival in the supply chain up a notch too, but nothing better.

Through these examples, we can see that dependence on long supply chains is not the product of the disease of delirious global capitalism. It is primarily a consequence of industrial society and its extraordinary inventiveness. It is industrialization - the technosciences, the regulatory and developmental State, the ecological devastation, the massive increase in life expectancy, the intensification of the movement of people, goods, rumours and knowledge - that requires long, complex, precisely regulated logistics chains that are impossible to contain in a local framework or political territory. Viruses and bacteria have not waited for capitalism, modernity or industry to ravage human populations; it is indeed industrialization that has made it possible to start fighting them in earnest, by mobilizing the planet's resources.

What we most often forget to mention is that these chains are not the only result of "capitalism", even if it is globalised, in the sense of market logic alone, of minimizing costs and maximizing profits. In fact, since at least the 1860s, they have involved direct or indirect intervention by States, through the establishment of systems of rules and

internal standards, articulated with those of other States, a sine qua non for the intensification of the exchange of goods, persons and commodities required by industrialization. These systems of standards have been developed not in the context of "sovereignty" per se, but in a framework of intense international cooperation, often carried less by professional diplomats (aristocrats linked to the European military castes) than by scientists, lawyers, technicians, journalists and entrepreneurs, who have enabled the emergence of sophisticated international technical, economic and legal systems. These systems, developed by the first international organizations as early as the 1860s to enable the worldwide deployment of mail delivery, telegraph networks, rail networks, but also to converge weights and measures of distance, time measurement and intellectual property, health standards and migrant workers' rights, did nothing to undermine the power of the States, to ruin their "sovereignty". It was they who gave them the means to control and direct the enormous dynamics of industrialization, to make their populations literate, to develop their productive capacities, to invent the first, largely transnational, forms of the social State.

Since 1850, the increasing economic, industrial, regulatory and intellectual integration of global society has not led to the disappearance of the national State; on the contrary, it has multiplied the number of States in the world, constantly increasing their budgetary clout, allowing the steady increase in the number of their civil servants, thanks in particular to the improvement in labour productivity, which in turn has led to huge surpluses for public employment. Since the mid- 19th century, industrial globalisation has constantly strengthened modern States, and the so-called neo-liberalisation of the world since 1970 has in no way interrupted the process: for thirty years the OECD countries have, on average, not stopped increasing their public spending and the burden of their compulsory levies on their internal economic activity. And it was when the imperialist autarchic logics and national sovereignty imposed themselves as the *alpha and omega* of national and international politics (at the height of imperialism from 1880, followed by

communism and fascism from the 1920s onwards) that wars multiplied and States collapsed, were broken up and their populations were occupied or even exterminated.

Moreover, there is no indication at this stage that the degree of international openness or the degree of integration into globalisation is a decisive factor in understanding the greater or lesser effectiveness of States in their fight against the pandemic. Taiwan and South Korea, highly integrated into global production chains (the rate of extroversion, the share of GDP dependent on external constraints, of the Korean economy is around 40%), seem - at this stage - capable of containing the phenomenon in the main or, at least, slowing it down effectively, much better for example than the United States, which is much more self-sufficient from an economic point of view (their extroversion rate is 11%). Similarly, even if comparing the development of the pandemic in the different European States remains a perilous exercise, there is nothing to indicate that Germany, whose economy is largely open, accounting for more than 30% of its GDP, is less capable of coping with the pandemic. Its wealthy State, which is to some extent debt-free compared to many of its European partners, and its solid health system, over-equipped with intensive care beds compared to the OECD average, are clearly functioning well with reactive, albeit highly "globalized", industrial facilities.

And for good reason: the question is not that of autarky, of sovereignty, but that of the power of the State, which depends on its capacity to take full advantage, from the perspective of the public good, of an efficient economy that is well integrated into the intrinsically international logics of industrial society. And therefore to anticipate the possible shocks of the great speculative crises typical of industrial society, the great international conflicts, rarer but possible, the great pandemics, no less probable than in the past whilst more than seven billion people live on earth, sometimes in terrible conditions of deprivation. Because the opening of borders and the reasoned free movement of goods, people and ideas are in no way incompatible with the development of an ambitious State, the solution lies

in closely linking the two internationalisms born of industrialisation and the unprecedented revolution it has brought about, liberal internationalism and socialist internationalism. A lesson that is exactly the opposite to the one suggested by Hubert Védrine, who never ceases to denounce the "Europeans" and the "globalists" in the name of "sovereignty". Or how old-fashioned, lazy thinking about international relations disarms European social democracy, despite its rich internationalist tradition, in the face of the temptation of sovereignty.

However, we cannot make strategic reserves in all areas to deal with all potential threats. Even wealthy, efficient and far-sighted States will never manage to cover all the risks and absorb all the shocks; there will always be a trade-off between emergencies, between multiple constraints. The pressure of the present or the near future will always be too great, particularly in a democratic system, to ensure that whole sectors of the necessary vigilance do not somehow slip into second or third place.

This is why the solution can only be international, that is, in the words of its detractors, more "globalized". Globalisation" has little to do with the disaster of the lack of strategic reserves of masks. The lack of true political globalisation has an overwhelming responsibility in this: an adequate response could have, should have been a coordinated intervention of States for emergency supplies directed towards the areas of the pandemic. We can be sure of this: contrary to what Hubert Védrine seems to be suggesting, which is consistent with his neo-realist and neo-conservative positions on international relations, no serious international coordination will emerge from a neo-mercantilist and sovereignist world. How can one imagine a sudden aptitude for peaceful coordination, in a climate of crisis, on the part of international elites accustomed, year after year, to challenging each other in "sovereign" stand-offs, to confronting one another over customs tariffs, to opposing each other through their national industrial "champions", to submitting to their national economic lobbies in search of protection and privileges under the pretext of "national independence"?

EUROPEAN UNION, INDUSTRIAL SOCIETY AND NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY

The invention of the European Union was largely based on the belief that, in the context of the international industrial society, it was impossible to achieve a state of lasting peace and a stable society without a high degree of integration of national economies and, at European level, without a Europeanisation of industrial society. It is also based on the observation that it was impossible to save the European States without Europeanizing them, since they were in grave danger of death or vassalization in the context of the nascent Cold War and Reconstruction. At the beginning of the 1950s, it was clear to those who had experienced the failures of European federalization "from above", in 1948, at the time of the Briand Plan in 1929, and even in 1899 around William Stead's project for a United States of Europe, that the lasting pacification of Europe, the continent of war par excellence, would not involve a collective surrender of sovereignty in favour of a European federal State. Based on the principle of relations between sovereign States, the European political system lived under the threat of multiple, even generalised, conflicts. Federalist tendencies, most often originating from fervent but powerless militants, and sometimes supported by States, but then closely dependent on the pacifist goodwill of their governments, did little to conceal the widespread trend towards conflict that was typical of mercantilism and neomercantilism. The renewed intertwining of the interests of the States with those of big private interests, with the return of protectionism and the acceleration of renewed imperialism, geared in particular towards the constitution of autarkic economic systems and confronted with each other, made any real European international cooperation impossible. It fuelled permanent competition for power which led to two world wars and forty years of almost uninterrupted European conflict which ravaged the continent.

The enormous difficulty in overcoming the continent's legacy of war through political decisions focusing on sovereignty was naturally known

to Robert Schuman, Jean Monnet and the great European leaders after 1945, even to those who came from the federalist tradition of the inter-war period. That is why their choice, at the beginning of the 1950s, turned to two other methods, that of small sectoral steps and that of the European market. The method of sectoral progress aimed at hastening the integration of particular, but crucial, activities of the European industrial society: this was the method followed by the ECSC. The European market method aimed at the economic integration of the continent through the transnational solidarity of its industrial society, and therefore at political integration, through the creation of a single internal market and a customs union outside: this was the choice of the EEC and the Treaty of Rome. Make no mistake about it: the European market and the organization of an integrated industrial society was indeed a political project, a project of political unification which aimed at progressively reducing the interventions which the various States made, in the name of power logics, in their economy and that of their neighbours. Indeed, political union implied that States no longer engaged in their usual economic warfare within its borders. And it has been up to the central normative power of this union to define the common forms of the economic - and therefore political - public good, in this case the integration of the internal economic space and the freedom of private actors framed by collectively established rules.

Explaining this orientation via a liberal, neo-liberal or ordoliberal ideological choice, so dear to the detractors of "Europeanists", "globalists" and "neo-liberal globalisation", is completely inadequate: by proceeding in this way, the builders of the Community, and then of the Union, sought to liberalize the European industrial society to facilitate its reconstruction after the Second World War. The aim was to overcome the authoritarian neomercantilism that had affected the world since the end of the 19th century, which had led the world to war, particularly at the time of the 1929 crisis. Following this path, they rediscovered an old logic, the one that had governed the invention of

the liberal-national State against the decay of the military-fiscal State between the end of the 18th century and the middle of the 19th century. When the French Revolutionaries decreed the disappearance of internal customs and freedom of enterprise, it was to remedy the economic balkanization of the Old Regime, which meant the triumph of inefficiency, but above all of arbitrariness. As early as the middle of the 19th century, the Liberals tried to transpose this logic of building the national liberal State to the global level, by promoting free trade, monetary unification, the unification of European private rights or, at least, their coordination. The wave of free trade agreements and the first attempts at a single European currency thus made the 1860s the time of the first "European common market". And this unification through the market was based on a pacifist cosmopolitanism explicitly formulated by the "Manchester Liberals" such as Richard Cobden and John Bright. For them, as for the European statesmen of the early 1950s who began the construction of the Union, internal free trade, the unification of standards and the customs union were justified by their political horizon, that of constituting a European community beyond national borders, efficient because it was pacified, pacified because it was efficient.

Reducing the logic of the common European market and competition policy within it to a "neo-liberal" project therefore seems questionable. The true ultra-liberals, British and American, are not mistaken: the internal market of the Union is highly regulated; the European Commission is a massive producer of standards, far from the logic of *laissez-faire*. It often passes for the rather complete realization of a "socialist" economy, for its detractors on the other side of the Atlantic. There is no doubt about the trajectory of the European States, from a historical perspective: the economic integration of the continent, the creation of the single market, the unification of standards and the application of competition rules have not prevented a steady rise in the power of the European States. Alan Milward diagnosed it in [The European Rescue of the Nation-State](#) : The invention of the European Union can

also be thought of as a vast process of rescue and stabilisation of European nation States, exhausted as never before in 1945 by thirty years of war, faced with the risk of vassalisation by neighbouring empires (the United States, the Soviet Union and then Russia) and the crises caused by the dissolution of their own empires. In this case, as on a larger scale, economic integration, the free movement of goods, people, capital and ideas, in short "globalisation", have in no way weakened the nation States, although they have shown the fragility of their legitimization through the notion of "sovereignty". Through their active economic integration, European States have for the first time in their history durably overcome their fatal propensity to war, but also, in the same movement, powerfully enriched their populations and strengthened as never before their capacities for action in the economic, social, cultural and environmental fields. Nor is Europeanisation guilty of an alleged collapse of the State.

GLOBALISATION IS NOT GUILTY ... ONE MORE TIME.

"Globalisation" is not guilty for the appearance of the virus, nor for its spread. Or else we must point to the fact that our world, since at least the 11th century as far as Eurasia is concerned (a continent crossed very early by "plagues" of all kinds), at least the 16th century as far as relations between the two hemispheres are concerned (the main part of the collapse of the Amerindian population is due to the bacterial shock caused by the arrival of Europeans who were much more exposed to domestic animals than pre-Columbian peoples), and since at least the middle of the 19th century, as far as the international integration of industrial society is concerned, is crossed by movements and circulation of goods, people, animals, information, capital and, therefore, also bacilli and viruses. This mobility has in fact, despite sovereignist clichés, never been contradictory to the rise in the power of States and the capacity to make political choices: the movement of goods, animals, humans and their ideas builds links, animates societies, gives resources to the powers that be, and that is why

the revolution of industrialization, this gigantic worldwide movement, has also led to the birth of the modern State, more powerful than any other in the history of humanity. To decouple the modern State, especially when it is liberal and social like ours, from its transnational and international articulation with the global industrial society and the international society of States, in the name of "sovereignty", is to render it impotent, or to force it into confrontation. Globalisation is not the cause of the impotence of the State and States in the face of the pandemic; it is in fact a cure.

If recent developments in our world are responsible for something in the pandemic and the attempt to respond to it, it is the fact that we are trying to respond to it, albeit with great difficulty, with the means at our disposal, and by trying to alert humanity to the seriousness of the threat. One hundred years ago, between 1918 and 1920, probably more than 70 million people died of Spanish flu in a deafening silence and a particularly striking lack of national and international mobilisation. The world was at war at that time, and it was out of the question to tell people that American soldiers were bringing the disease to Europe with them. The world was then made up of colonial empires, and it was perfectly acceptable that millions of Indian subjects of His Majesty the King of England were dead without anyone really knowing. The "mundialists" then tried to structure something like a formal world government around the League of Nations, but they met with implacable resistance from "sovereign" States and their empires, and with the International Office of Public Health, supported by the Rockefeller Foundation's "cosmopolitan businessmen", they could only sketch out the lines of a world health policy, which was opposed by many European States hostile to "Americanization", the then proxy for "globalisation".

Since then, our world has seen fewer wars; it has seen a decisive, but very incomplete, effort to build something like a world government, after the Second World War and then during the 1990s; international industrial society has deepened and expanded considerably, at the cost of major ecological damage, but at the benefit of an unprecedented increase in

the level and life expectancy of humans. It is this international industrial society that States, more powerful than ever because they are integrated into this international society, are trying to articulate, not without difficulty most of the time, but also with major successes, which gives humanity the means to try to confront this terrible pandemic, just as it has for decades made it possible to confront that of

AIDS, or the Ebola virus. Neither of these battles has been won, but it is globalisation that allows us to imagine, for the first time in our history, that a victorious outcome is possible.

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