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Reflections on COVID-19: Approaches and Challenges Beyond the End of the Pandemic

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Abstract: The COVID-19 pandemic has stimulated numerous reflections and academic debates about its impact not only on health systems, economy and labor market, but also on human rights and international relations. This paper is a brief synthesis- mostly with a political science learning- of the literature dedicated to the challenges of the pandemic, possible post-pandemic scenarios and opportunities towards a better and more sustainable world.

Keywords: *COVID-19 pandemic, digital surveillance, globalization, solidarity, global cooperation*

Introduction

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 has posed a major treat to the health and wellbeing of people around the world. It disrupted health systems, economies, social orders and political systems in a very limited amount of time, worsening the global situation, producing devastating impacts on societies. Since the very beginning of the pandemic, the United Nations have called for solidarity and increased funding for the world's most vulnerable countries¹ and have launched a plan "to defeat the virus and build a better world".² Even if its end is an uncharted territory, the discussion about its consequences is under way.

This paper is a brief synthesis, mostly from a political science perspective, of the literature dedicated to the pandemic since its beginning. The review is not exhaustive. Rather, the paper is a selection of writings of the

¹<https://www.un.org/en/un-coronavirus-communications-team/funding-fight-against-covid-19-world%E2%80%99s-poorest-countries> (Accessed on 2nd of September, 2021).

²<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/03/1060702> (Accessed on 2nd of September, 2021).

most influential authors, from Italian, French, Anglo-American academic and intellectual areas, who inspired and stimulated the debates of ideas about the challenges posed by the pandemic. It seeks to identify some key points of discussion around the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on today societies.

The paper aims to analyses these writings as a whole and from a comparative perspective. Some fundamental issues are at stake in all these views:

- the issue of reducing or even suspending civil rights and freedoms and, closely related to this, the issue of digital surveillance;
- the future of globalization;
- the issue of global cooperation and solidarity.

The purpose of this paper is to summarize these contributions and then to underline the most important challenges we are confronted with in on shorter and longer term.

Restriction of civil rights and freedoms and the problem of digital surveillance

Faced with the magnitude of the health risks caused by COVID-19 disease, the national governments have not hesitated to declare the state of emergency and thus to limit the individual freedoms (freedom of movement, freedom of assembly, entrepreneurial freedom) and even to use the latest surveillance technologies (facial recognition cameras, drones, data from mobile phones networks etc.), raising concern about an intrusive biopolitics, where everyone can be monitored in every moment.

Such concerns are present in the writings of Giorgio Agamben, a leading figure of Italian political theory. Agamben published a lot of texts related to the pandemics, starting from February 2020, afterwards collected in the volume *A che punto siamo? L'epidemia come politica (Where are we? The epidemic as politics)*³. He gives a definition of the term “biosecurity” (*biosicurezza*): it is the behavior of the government that results from a conjunction of “the new religion of salvation” and the

³ Giorgio Agamben, *A che punto siamo? L'epidemia come politica*, Macerata: Quodlibet, 2020.

state power who may impose the state of exception. According to the author, the state of exception is the longest suspension of legality in the history of Italy. The first text included in this volume has been published on 26 of February 2020 and it is called “*L’invenzione di un’epidemia*” (The invention of an epidemics). At the time when the text was published for the first time, the number of coronavirus in northern Italy has risen very quickly. This is a short text where Agamben defies emergency decrees issued by the government. The establishment of quarantine zones and the closure of schools and universities are a response that is completely disproportionate. He considers the measures adopted in Italy to fight the pandemic “frenetic, irrational and entirely unfounded”. Agamben’s perspective has encountered a lot of criticism, as dangerous “ramblings of a 77-year old man”. Slavoj Žižek wrote a text “*Monitor and punish? Yes, please*”⁴ where he qualifies Agamben’s perspective as one of the “extreme form of a widespread Leftist stance” that rejects monitoring as repressive surveillance and therefore any government that take its role seriously is considered a hidden form of totalitarianism. Žižek believes that the pandemic reveals the inequalities: the privileged will come out of this crisis without damages, whereas people living in poverty will be hit the most. Another reaction to Giorgio Agamben’s view belongs to Jean-Luc Nancy. He wrote that when he needed a heart transplant Agamben advised him not to do so, but 30 years later he is happy that he followed the doctor’s advices and not Agamben’s. Accordingly, we shall not follow his thoughts on the pandemic, but nevertheless we shall listen to his arguments. Nancy thinks that we have to thank Agamben because he exposes the dangers of accepting emergency measures and biopolitical policies as a norm in our societies⁵.

In an interview published in *Le Monde* on 28th of March 2020 that it is also included in this volume, Agamben develops his arguments starting from the assumption that in the course of history we have encountered in Europe much more serious epidemics but nobody thought to declare a state of exception like in Italy or other European countries. This is the reason why the state of exception, that was already familiar to the governments, became the normal condition. The Italian philosopher thinks that we live in a society where it is a permanent state of exception and this is not a free society. In another interview for the Swedish public radio on 19th of April 2020, he thinks that Italy, starting from the period when it was

⁴ <https://thephilosophicalsalon.com/monitor-and-punish-yes-please/> (Accessed on 2nd of September, 2021).

⁵ For an account of this first text of Agamben and its critics, see Lukas van den Berge, *Biopolitics and the Coronavirus: in Defence of Giorgio Agamben*, *Netherlands Journal of Legal Philosophy*, 2020, 49-91), 3 - 5.

confronted with the terrorism, became a political laboratory where the new technologies of government are experimented. The current situation as a result of the pandemic looks like Italy “is on the verge of reestablishment of fascism”.

In a text published on 11th of May 2020, “*Biosicurezza e politica*” (*Biosecurity and politics*) that is included also in this volume, Agamben starts from the assumption of Patrick Zylberman⁶ () on how the health safety becomes parts of states’ political strategies. According to Zylberman, the citizen does not have a right to health but it is obliged to be healthy, as part of a policy that he calls biosecurity. Agamben believes that this is what exactly happened after the beginning of the pandemics: we are witnessing to a new paradigm of governance. The future society will be grounded on “social distancing” and “online teaching”, health data will be mandatory collected etc. Politics has been removed by economics and economics has been removed by biosafety. In an interview for the Greek journal *Babylonia*, first published on 20th of May 2020, also part of this volume, Agamben develops his view on biosafety: with the new paradigm of this concept, the notion of citizenship has changed and the citizen became the passive object of cure, control etc. He became the suspect in any circumstances. Because of the pandemic, the citizen is reduced to the “nude biological existence”.

Another very interesting reflection about the consequences of the pandemic on democracy belongs to Ezio Mauro, who published in June 2020 a volume called *Liberi dal male. Il virus e l’infezione della democrazia* (*Free from evil. The virus and the infection of democracy*)⁷. Mauro starts by giving a historical account of the past pandemics that shaped our societies: we have to take into account all these experiences in order to understand the current pandemics. According to Mauro, the virus has attacked not only our bodies but also “the social body, our freedom”. The politics and the bodies turn into a relationship: the social distancing is not only a sanitary measure, but also a political one, a measure that tries to reorganize the social dimension. Not only freedom is affected by the pandemic, but also our notion of modernity. There is a conflict between labor and health that is essential to modernity and this conflict is better revealed by the virus. Mauro also reflects on emergency measures but in a more neutral way: he is not against or for emergency special measures, but he simply says that in special time there is a need for a form

⁶ Patrick Zylberman, *Tempêtes microbiennes*, Galimard, Paris, 2013.

⁷ Ezio Mauro, *Liberi dal male. Il virus e l’infezione della democrazia*, Milano : Feltrinelli, 2020.



of special governance, able to function and to command in a better way.

The danger of expanding the state power beyond the acceptable boundaries in the context of pandemic worries other political thinkers as well. In the French cultural area, Bernard-Henri Lévy has published in June 2020 a book called *Ce virus qui rend fou (This virus that drives you crazy)*.⁸ It is not a scientific approach of the pandemic and its consequences, but rather a long essay in the typical style of this author, a collection of impressions and thoughts inspired by the events. Lévy makes the observation that “the medical power” is rising, without considering that this is right or wrong. He considers that Plato’ *Politics* offers a good description of the current situation because there is an analogy between the human body and the “civic body”. It is very interesting how Lévy presents the vision of the pandemic as a God’s judgment, a reckoning, by giving the examples of Philippe de Villiers, Bolsonaro, Erdogan, Kadyrov, Viktor Orban. The impact of the pandemic on freedom is also tackled but in a few lines: according to Levy, it is very worrying that because of the pandemic a lot of states and private companies accumulated many personal data that nobody knows how they are used. It is easier to suspend a freedom than to restore it and Lévy draws a parallel with what happened recently with terrorism. Another interesting part of Lévy’s analysis is dedicated on how autocratic leaders use the state of emergency necessary to fight with the pandemics in order to increase their power, as it happened in Hungary or in Poland where presidential elections without campaign were organized, a “masquerade”, without debates or alternatives.

In the same cultural area, the French political scientist and academic Pierre Manent offers his insight about the pandemic. In an interview published by *Le Figaro* on 23rd of April 2020⁹, he is very critical about how the authorities dealt with this event, especially about declaring a state of emergency that imposed “the most primitive and brutal of measures”, namely confinement and police surveillance. Manent does not challenge the fact that pandemic is an emergency and that exceptional measures cannot be avoided, but he believes that because of these measures “a broad path is opened up to the State’s inquisitorial power”. He discusses the issue of freedom of religion, rhetorically asking why to go to a place of worship is not considered as a reason for leaving home, while to walk with a pet is considered.

⁸ Bernard - Henri Lévy, *Ce virus qui rend fou*, Paris : Editions Grasset & Fasquelle, 2020.

⁹ Pierre Manent, *Il y a longtemps que nous sommes sortis à bas bruit du régime démocratique et libéral*, available at: <https://www.lefigaro.fr/vox/societe/pierre-manent-il-y-a-longtemps-que-nous-sommes-sortis-a-bas-bruit-du-regime-democratique-et-liberal-20200423> (Accessed on 2nd of September, 2021).

By adopting this kind of policy, the state is delegitimizing the institutions that order the transmission of life and also the rites that accompany death are removed because burial ceremonies were limited. For Manent this crisis has a positive aspect too: citizens have learned how to admire doctors, researchers, etc. and in the end science got a more positive role in the society.

The future of globalization

How globalization will look like after COVID-19 is another question that attracts the attention of political thinkers. Will the protective functions of the state be discharged by supranational projects like the European Union or will we witness more arguments for a strong state? Will the idea of nation, that was abandoned, discredited and delegitimized in the recent decades, rise up again, as states want to rebuild their own national production capacity, in order to not be dependent on delocalization all over the world? Liberalism has promoted and could be accommodated with just one-side version of extreme globalization or it can adapt to a change of the current reality?

Pierre Manent tackles these issues in the aforementioned interview and considers that one of the negative consequences of the pandemics is the fact that the EU proved to be “as weak as the nations that make it up”. Germany is the biggest winner of the crisis, since its hegemony is not challenged. Because of the coronavirus crisis, nations discovered the advantages of acting alone. He also discusses the effects of this crisis on the fundamental principles of liberalism. The pandemic is undermining the basics of globalization which is grounded on liberal ideas. There is a connection between globalization and liberalism but the concepts are different nevertheless. A liberal regime, according to Manent, encourage peaceful competition and therefore globalization as an outcome but it presupposes however the national framework.

Trying to find the answer to the impact of pandemic on the future of globalization, the English philosopher John Gray published his view in April 2020 under the title *Why this crisis is a turning point in history*.¹⁰ The answer is, from his perspective, that the era of globalization is over and a fragmented world is coming

¹⁰ John Gray, *Why this crisis is a turning point in history*, available at: <https://www.newstatesman.com/international/2020/04/why-crisis-turning-point-history> (Accessed on 2nd of September, 2021).

into being. Globalization is the final result of the spread of liberalism which was an “experiment of dissolving traditional sources of social cohesion and political legitimacy”. John Gray believes that such an experiment is over. China was before the pandemic the world’s essential medical supplier but this situation will be no longer tolerated. The author believes that the best form that will be chosen after the pandemic will be what John Stuart Mill called in the *Principles of Political Economy* the “stationary-state economy”, a form of market economy where expanding production and consumption will not be the only goal to be pursued. The most successful examples in dealing with the pandemic are Taiwan, South Korea and Singapore and the reason of their achievements is a mixture between focus on collective autonomy and the resistance to “the cult of the minimal state”. These countries will adjust to de-globalization better than the West. Gray believes also that the pandemic will bring geopolitical changes, most probably in Iran and Saudi Arabia. He dedicates an important part of his reflection to the place of the EU, by being very critical of the way the EU responded to the crisis. The reason of this failure is the fact that rich countries do not want to rescue other countries that have to fight more with the pandemic. The lack of solidarity between EU Member States will lead to a lack of power that will transform the EU in “something like the Roman Empire in its last years”. Apart from this path, Gray believes that the main reason behind the EU’s failure in fighting the pandemic is that it cannot be more or less than a state with “protective functions”. Gray states also that Russia will get use of the current weaknesses of the EU. Another fundamental change of the pandemic is that the United States position as a global actor will change, but Gray does not say whether he believes the US will get out of this global crisis weaker or stronger. The pandemic itself is the consequence of globalization, therefore winning against pandemic would mean the start of de-globalization. Gray thinks that the pandemic will change the current perspective that “humans are no longer part of the natural world and can create an autonomous ecosystem, separate from the rest of the biosphere”. In fact, humans are vulnerable to the virus and humans’ adequate response is to believe in science. Not only globalization will suffer, but also the idea that the progress is irreversible. There are some unchallenged effects of globalization, like more people around were getting out of poverty, but the main effect of the pandemic, namely de-globalization, is threatening this achievement. The author is concluding that only by better understanding how fragile the liberal societies are we can understand why it is so important to preserve the values that underlie them.

Reflections on the future of globalization can also be found in the book of the American journalist and political scientist Fareed Zakaria, entitled *Ten lessons for a Post-Pandemic World*, published in October 2020¹¹. He started by saying that states are on their own during the pandemic. Many nations that cooperated in a very good manner for a long time in Europe closed their borders, but the experts in international relations would not be surprised since they agree there is no world government that could impose order. Zakaria explores the unexpected bad way US dealt with the pandemic so far. In 2019 Johns Hopkins University published for the first time the Global Health Security Index, an analysis of the countries better prepared to deal with a pandemic and the US were on the first place. The harsh reality contradicted this conclusion. On the contrary, China has dealt very well with the pandemic because it succeeded to control the information, which is in fact the source of its power. Democracies or authoritarian regimes are better prepared to deal with pandemics? The answer is not easy, since, according to Zakaria, the key to control pandemics is to avoid the spreading of rumors and to help the free movement of information. The political orientation of the government in place during the crisis is not very important: the left governments of Taiwan, South Korea and New Zealand performed well, but also center-right governments in Germany or Australia. Unfitted attitudes to the pandemic were in Sweden with a left government and in Brazil and Mexico led by populist leaders. This puzzle shows that there is no correlation between the orientation of the government and the possibility of a successful way to deal with the pandemic.

Zakaria explores how the digital economy grows because of the pandemic and it started to dominate over the material economy. The entire world has been connected to the Internet and the main obstacle to digital economy was the attitude of people. Because of COVID-19, this obstacle has been trespassed. In a certain way, this transformation brings us back to a pre-industrial era when there was no need that everyone has to go to a common work place where the whole day is spending. Cooperation between the members of a team belonging to a company presupposes intellectual cooperation and this could be done by emails or video-chats. Therefore, Zakaria suppose that the work will become again what really was throughout the history, an activity that is closely connected with the work from home. This conclusion leads Zakaria to discuss what he calls “the post-pandemics city”: the

¹¹ Fareed Zakaria, *Ten lessons for a Post-Pandemic Word*, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2020.

urbanization process will slow down since people want to move to safer areas. Another effect of the pandemic is the suppression of the progresses made by underdeveloped countries in the last decades and the turn back in a world of inequalities. Globalization will not disappear but the effect of the pandemics will be certainly a “real but modest” de-globalization. Nevertheless, the effects on the long run are unclear. According to Zakaria, no matter the globalization trends, to come back to an international order dominated by the US will not be possible after the end of the pandemic, because too many powers are on the rise and cannot be tamed, even if the US administration will incline to multilateralism. China has become a rival power and, in many regards, equal with the US.

The effects of COVID-19 pandemic on globalization are also discussed by the political scientist Ivan Krastev in his volume *Is it tomorrow yet? Paradoxes of the pandemic*, published in October 2020¹². He starts from the assumption that the pandemic is a “grey swan event” capable of turning the whole world upside down. Krastev considers that at this moment we can only speculate about the long-term political and economic impact of the pandemic. Nevertheless, the younger generation is affected more than others by the economic effects of the pandemic.

According to Krastev, the 21st century started with a lot of crises: 9/11, the Great Recession of 2008-2009, the refugee crisis of 2015 and the pandemic. COVID-19 has an ambiguous relationship with globalization: it has exposed the dark side of it, but also acts as his agent. The pandemic has accelerated the trend towards de-globalization, but this trend started already with the Great Recession more than a decade ago.

The fear of the virus created “a state of national unity” and has put democracy on hold due to the state of emergencies that have been established. Once the exceptional measures were in place, the desire for more authoritarian government has been gone; people thought that this is the maximum limitation of their freedoms they could accept. The pandemics restored trust in expertise and science, but it led also to conspiracy theories. As an effect, it compelled politicians to share power with experts. The European Union has been “temporarily suspended” as citizens took shelter in the nation-state. The author formulates what he considers to be “the great paradox of the pandemic”: European Union has failed to deal with the crisis, but this failure shows to the national governments that they have to go in the direction of a deeper integration.

¹² Ivan Krastev, *Is it tomorrow yet? Paradoxes of the Pandemic*, London: Allen Lane, 2020.

Another effect of COVID-19 is that politicians were shaken to get out of their usual modus operandi; they have to mobilize public opinion and to say that this is an unprecedented crisis. Krastev says that the virus had as effect also to infect societies all over the world with ethnic nationalism. According to him, China will not be a major beneficiary of the pandemic, since it will be negatively affected by the de-globalization.

Krastev refers also the way Giorgio Agamben addressed the pandemics. Without declaring that he considers Agamben right or wrong, Krastev prefers only to say that “the liberal defense of rights in the context of the “war on terror” does not apply during this pandemic”. He addresses the same issue as Fareed Zakaria: is there a form of political system that deals with the pandemic in the best way? His answer is that the pandemic “blurred the borders between different types of regimes”.

The global cooperation and solidarity

Beyond the question of which political regime better copes with the pandemic, there remains a need for global cooperation and solidarity to combat the devastating effects of the pandemic. The virus knows no borders, challenging our societies, testing our humanity. In one of the few volumes written by a theologian dealing with the issue of the pandemic, published in June 2020, N. T. Wright¹³ starts by comparing the efforts made by the doctors with “what the early Christians did in times of plague”, namely to care people that caught disease. The Christian tradition is to heal people, as Jesus did. According to Wright, the Christian religion is about concrete involvement to address the health crisis. As Christians, we have to act now; it is not “the time for speculating about previous sin”. It is up to the state authorities to take the right measures against COVID-19, but whatever this response will be, “it should be one in which all Christians can join”. Wright does not make any further reference on what is and what is not the right answer that Christians will accept. Even if Christians shall involve themselves in a concrete way to fight pandemic, they shall not forget that they are “people of prayer at the place where the world is in pain”; the main task of Christians is to pray and then to help the medical system. For Wright, one thing is certain: the state deals with pandemics, the Christians with praying, even if in its early stages the Christians had “a long record of medical work”.

¹³ N. T. Wright, *God and the pandemics. A Christian reflection on the coronavirus and its aftermath*, Michigan: Zondervan Reflective, 2020.

Another issue discussed by Wright is why God had enabled pandemics to affect the whole world and the answer is that God is everywhere, also in the front battlefield with COVID-19 where people are suffering and dying.

From another perspective, that of a strategist and analyst of international relations, Edward Luttwak discusses the consequences of the pandemic in an article published in *The Economist* on 11th of May 2020.¹⁴ According to him, the most important consequences will be the political ones. Coronavirus is named by Luttwak as “the truth virus” because it has revealed the true nature of the political regimes. China offered a new proof that it does want to suppress the truth about pandemics. Then the virus revealed “the servility of Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus”, the head of the World Health Organization. When the virus arrived in Iran, it had exposed the “blind fanaticism of its theocracy”, because Iran leaders refused to stop the pilgrimages. In Italy the truth that emerged is that there is an “exceptionally unhealthy public life”, quite the opposite with the private life. The health system of Italy could not deal with the pandemic, as doctors in the public hospitals are not well paid. For Luttwak, the political consequences of the pandemic are yet to come, because the EU has been weakened, China and Russia are willing to get use of this situation. The vaccine war that started after China and Russia started to sell their own vaccines proved that Luttwak was right at the time when he wrote this article. Luttwak underlines that China success in defeating the pandemic is a mirage, because Taiwan, Hong Kong, South Korea and Singapore performed well in taming the virus without taking the extreme quarantine measures enforced by China. As conclusion, Luttwak writes that no country will get out of this crisis unchanged but it is hard to predict which country will win more in the end.

The geopolitical dimension of the pandemic is also discussed in the recent book of Gilles Kepel, *Le prophète et la pandémie. Du Moyen-Orient au jihadisme d’atmosphère*, published in February 2021¹⁵. One of the leading experts in Islamism, the Middle East and North Africa, the French political scientist Gilles Kepel argues that the pandemic was a fatal blow to the geopolitical order established more than one century ago in the Middle East, together with the decrease of the oil price in 2020. This mixture has the effect of a cataclysm on all the states from the region. In

¹⁴ Edward Luttwak, *The political repercussions of the pandemic*, available at: <https://www.economist.com/by-invitation/2020/05/11/edward-luttwak-on-the-political-repercussions-of-the-pandemic> (Accessed on 2nd of September, 2021).

¹⁵ Gilles Kepel, *Le prophète et la pandémie. Du Moyen-Orient au jihadisme d’atmosphère*, Paris : Gallimard, 2021.

his view, the countries that wants, as an effect of the pandemic, to have more influence in the region are Turkey, Russia and Iran, all these countries having in common the hate against the West. According to Kepel, Iran was the country most affected by the pandemic from the region, but the effects on its political regime are rather unclear for the moment.

Another approach to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on global cooperation belongs to the Israeli historian and philosopher Yuval Noah Harari. In an article published in *Financial Times* on 20th of March 2020¹⁶, few days after the World Health Organization named it as pandemic, Yuval Noah Harari affirms that the coronavirus crisis is a global crisis and the humankind is facing two choices: the first between “totalitarian surveillance and citizen empowerment” and the second between “nationalist isolation and global solidarity”. The first choice emerged because technology made possible to monitor everyone, all the time. This was the path chosen by China to fight the pandemic, followed by Israel, in order to track coronavirus patients. From Harari’s perspective, this is dangerous because “the same technology that identifies coughs could also identify laughs”. Nevertheless, we need efficient means to fight against the pandemic and some countries like South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore succeeded by the use of tracking applications, combined with extensive testing and by developing a cooperation between authorities and citizens. Therefore, the pandemic is “a major test of citizenship”. As for the choice between nationalist isolation and global solidarity, this is a current dividing line already existent. To defeat the virus is not possible to work in isolation, but to promote global cooperation. It is essential from this perspective to share any information available about the virus. It is not possible to act in isolation because there are already global supply chains; to ignore them could generate chaos. According to Harari, the only solution to succeed in the fight with the virus is to promote global solidarity and this is the reason why he considers the current crisis as an opportunity.

In another article published in *Financial Times* a year after the outbreak of the pandemic¹⁷, Yuval Noah Harari is trying to summarize “the Covid year” from a

¹⁶ Yuval Noah Harari: the world after coronavirus, available at: <https://amp.ft.com/content/19d90308-6858-11ea-a3c9-1fe6fedcca75#> (Accessed on 2nd of September, 2021).

¹⁷ Yuval Noah Harari: *Lessons from a year of Covid*, available at: <https://www.ft.com/content/f1b30f2c-84aa-4595-84f2-7816796d6841> (Accessed on 2nd of September, 2021).

broad historical perspective. Unlike the previous pandemics, “2020 has shown that humanity is far from helpless. Epidemics are no longer uncontrollable forces of nature. Science has turned them into a manageable challenge” says the author. Scientists cooperated globally, shared information, conducted jointly research projects and relied on the finding and insights of one another. Thus, in less than a year, several vaccines were in mass production. “In the war between humans and pathogens, never have humans been so powerful”. By contrast, politicians have failed to form an international alliance against the virus and to agree on a global plan.

Harari says that at least three lessons can be learned after a year of pandemic. The first one is to safeguard our digital infrastructure. Thanks to it, we found that life can go on even when an entire country is in physical lockdown. The second lesson, more than obvious, is that each country should invest more in the public health system and the third one is that we should establish a global system meant to monitor and prevent pandemics. The institutions such as World Health Organization should receive more money and not be dependent on the whims of politicians. An independent global health authority could be an optimal platform to compile medical data, to monitor the potential risks, to raising alarms and directing research and development. If we do not learn from the experience of this pandemic and a possible future pandemic finds us unprepared, it will not be “neither an uncontrollable natural calamity nor a punishment from God. It will be a human failure and, more precisely, a political failure”, concludes the author.

Conclusions: *Nothing is written yet*

We can conclude from this brief presentation of the selected writings- and paraphrasing Fareed Zakaria- that nothing is written yet. The pandemic has shown us how vulnerable we are and how, in a very short time, the whole planet can become completely paralyzed. It has turned the world upside down and its long-term consequences are not yet fully known. But certainly it depends on us how we will handle this crisis.

As we found in the writings outlined in this article, there is a concern about limiting our civil rights and freedoms, expanding the state power, and using digital surveillance in an epidemiological context as a future tool to strengthen that power. In the words of Ezio Mauro, this is a concern for our social body, because the virus can infect not only our bodies, but also the democracy and freedom. Today's

technologies allow anyone to be constantly monitored, which totalitarian communist regimes for example, with all their police and terror tools, had failed to do decades ago. That's why these new surveillance tools must be lawful, proportionate and time bound. There should be no choice between health and privacy, we should enjoy both, and governments should strive to protect them.

The pandemic also brought into question the future of globalization, cooperation and global solidarity. According to some authors, the pandemic has exposed the dark side of globalization, is the beginning of the process of de-globalization, it has questioned the viability of supranational structures such as the European Union, while for others the pandemic will deepen the European integration and will accelerate globalization. It is obvious that at least in the short term globalization, in the form of the flows of goods and services, is negatively impacted. But beyond what national governments' free market strategies or consumer habits will look like in the future, the pandemic can be a catalyst for closer cooperation, because global challenges like this one require global solutions and cooperation. A sign of optimism in this direction could be the global cooperation of the scientific community to find solutions to this crisis. In such an interconnected world, in which no country, no matter how big and strong, cannot manage all the challenges it has to face (from protecting health to fighting misinformation, from environment to economy), the solution is cooperation, not conflict. Coordinated and coherent action, which involves, among other things, support for the World Health Organization and other international and regional organizations, will help us to better cope with future common challenges.

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