

Diari de les idees 20



We are facing now the fourth week of confinement, amid growing concern about the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, not only on the public health, but also about its social, political, and economic effects. In the Diari de les Idees we again devote an important space to reviewing expert voices and analysis of various media from around the world. At the same time we also highlight some of the most relevant news on the topics that we regularly monitor. Regarding the contagion data, we close this edition with almost 1,500,000 reported cases and 90,000 deaths worldwide according to data provided by the [John Hopkins University](#). With respect to Spain, the amount is already more than 150,000 declared cases and more than 15,000 deaths. Although daily confirmed cases continue to increase, a positive sign is that the growth variation of these cases is decreasing day by day. Thus, in two weeks it has dropped from a daily growth of more than 30% to less than 5%, which demonstrates the usefulness of confinement measures. Everyday the newspaper [El País](#) offers a very useful tool to follow the evolution of the disease. The epicenter of the pandemic continues in Europe, where Italy that continues to be hit hard despite the decrease in infections but has already exceeded 17,000 deaths and the accelerated growth of infections and deaths in France and the United Kingdom. One aspect that should be studied in detail is why the impact of Covid-19 is notably less in Germany or the Scandinavian countries, especially in terms of deaths, as well as it's also the case at the other end of the continent, in Portugal. In this sense, the first contributions made by a [study](#) of the *Imperial College* of London on the real impact of the pandemic in different countries are already very valuable. Finally, we also refer you to the official data of the [World Health Organization](#) as a complement to the other sources mentioned.

First of all, we want to point out the enormous disorientation the European Union is going through as a result of this crisis. There are many voices that, beyond the impervious attitudes of some Member States, warn of the need for immediate and concerted action by the EU in order not only to effectively fight the current public health crisis and its economic consequences, but also to secure its very existence as a political project. That's why we want to highlight two voices that come from within the institutional framework of the EU. First, there is the letter of resignation from Mauro Ferrari, President of the European Research Council, which brings together the European scientific voice. In the resignation

letter published by the Financial Times, Ferrari expresses his profound criticism to the ineffectiveness of the EU institutions and the complete absence of coordination of health policies among Member States, the recurring opposition to cohesive financial support initiatives and the unilateral border closures within the Schengen area. Likewise, Luca Jahier, President of the European Economic and Social Committee, an auxiliary body of the European Union that represents the interests of the different economic and social groups in Europe, warns that the impact of this crisis on European companies, SMEs and self-employed workers will cause a powerful and economic downturn that will have enormous consequences on the productive fabric. An impact that, if there is no immediate response, will worsen social and territorial inequalities and may cause new fractures and social tensions. Altogether a combination of elements from which authoritarian tendencies may emerge to undermine democracy. For Jahier, the priority passes urgently to guarantee the health of European citizens, strengthen health and prevention systems, support families, the entire working population and companies, and to relaunch the sustainable development agenda. Any other debate or effort is futile and can only cause more damage and could open the door to a new dark age for Europe and for the whole world.

In this sense, in an interview granted to the Portuguese newspaper Público, Guntram Wolff, director of the Bruegel think tank, says that what prevents the issuance of joint debt is that the crisis is not felt at the same level in all countries. According to Wolff, there will only be consensus if the virus spreads with the same effects everywhere. Only in this way, when the Covid-19 crisis will affect the whole of Europe, even the reluctant countries will agree that the European Union is to assume the vital challenge with the necessary capacity to face it. Basically, it can be inferred from the words of the director of one of the most relevant think tanks in European orthodoxy that the break-up of the European project as a project of shared solidarity is at stake.

In Politico, Guy Verhofstadt, Guy Verhofstadt, a former Belgian Prime Minister and former president of the ALDE group (now Renew Europe) in the European Parliament, carries out a fierce defense of the emission of Eurobonds as a way to ease the socio-economic impact of the coronavirus. At the same time, he points out that now is time to show solidarity between countries and use this crisis to create a more united and stronger Europe. Also David Sassoli, President of the European Parliament, defends in La Vanguardia the need to strengthen European solidarity through the mutualization of the indebtedness necessary for the economic reconstruction of the most affected countries. He believes that in a situation like the present one, it is not possible to ask the countries to get into debt at their own risk, and that the mechanisms that already exist - such as the Eurobonds - should be used as well as new tools should be designed to allow the sharing of the debt. Finally, the philosopher Luigi Ferrajoli, one of the leading references in the Philosophy of Law of the last half century, analyzes how the coronavirus crisis reveals the disarrangement existing between the political reality of the world and the legal and political structure governing us. Ferrajoli is very critical of the role of the European Union, which he reproaches that it should have taken charge of the crisis and has shown a lack of coordination that worsens the effects of the crisis at all levels. He believes that the European Union should take a leading and coordinating role among the Member States and take the initiative to reform the WHO or create new international surveillance bodies to ensure the preservation of the

environment, health, human rights and peace..

Closely related to the crisis of the European project, is the return of the State as an active element and source of confidence among a disoriented and frightened citizenry scared for their health and for the devastating effects that the pandemic will have on the economy. The concern about the situation of millions of workers affected by temporary lay-offs, the small and medium-sized companies doomed to suspension of payments and self-employed workers falling in bankruptcy, turns all eyes to seek answers in the state structures of the different countries. Indeed, governments have increased their field of action in terms of economic policies to mitigate the effect of the crisis but also in terms of control and surveillance through technology. *The Economist* asserts that it is a matter of fact that States tend to grow during crises, and in an epidemic context, state action is fully legitimized because if strict measures are not carried out, it seems that nothing is being done. Now, this sudden increase in state power has occurred in such a short period of time that there has been almost no room for reflection. What will remain after the pandemic of this increase in power? In *Social Europe*, Jan Zielonka points out some answers and affirms that the scenario of the return of the state is misleading. From his point of view, although the coronavirus has demonstrated the need and relevance of public authorities to face the emergency, in order for this reinforcement to be positive, it is necessary that governments at the regional, national and European levels be more transparent and accountable, and contemplate a significant increase in citizen participation. Ultimately, he believes that the proper functioning of the public sector will require innovation and the creation of new institutional engineering beyond liberal policies. On the other hand, this strengthening of the state also raises concern among numerous analysts such as César Rendueles who in *El País* considers that the deterioration of democracy entailed by current emergency measures may seem to be a transitory phenomenon and, above all, a reasonable price to pay in the context of a catastrophe of this magnitude, but warns that in many countries the radical right is trying to prevail as an alternative to the collapse of neoliberal globalization, offering a promise of order and a return to a non-existent past prior to the current crises. Naomi Klein expresses herself in a similar way in *CTXT*, where she warns that we are living in the age of catastrophic capitalism, which takes advantage of the shocks produced by natural disasters, wars and economic crises to affirm the power of the elites and increase the existing social inequalities. This analysis and concern are shared by the former director of the World Bank and member of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Moisés Naím, who alerts in an interview granted to *Crónica Global* that democratic societies may be tempted to seek a solution to the coronavirus crisis such as that of China given that when directly confronted with death, people are more willing to yield civil rights and liberties in exchange for a hypothetical greater security. Furthermore, as Sheri Berman points out in *Social Europe*, in theory the inherent features of democracy - such as freedom of the press and free information flows, political parties and governments sensitive to citizens, officials and civil servants appointed according to their merits and not to their good connections - should provide solutions to deal with crises. For Berman however, the coronavirus outbreak has highlighted some of the failures and limitations of current political systems and concludes by stressing that democracies need to defend their principles and values, since the erosion of their legitimacy could mean a global setback and the disintegration of the social contract.

The current moment may be a time of change that ends up defining a new era. The historical challenge of current leaderships and institutions is to manage the crisis while building the future. If the world leaders fail and the institutions do not succeed, they could leave the world on fire, as former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger warns in *Wall Street Journal*.

Regarding international politics, Patrick Cockburn analyzes in the British newspaper *The Independent* the end of the global hegemony of the United States and says that the failure of the United States goes far beyond the toxic political style of President Trump. American supremacy in the world since World War II was based on its unique ability to get world affairs resolved by persuasion or by the threat or use of force. But the inability of Washington to respond adequately to the crisis generated by Covid-19 shows that this is no longer the case and carries the perception that the capacity for American action is fading. He also points out that the controversial figure of Donald Trump is definitely polarizing and fracturing an already divided country, which only reinforces the decline of the United States. In this regard, an article in the French magazine *Marianne* devotes its attention to who may be the great alternative to the current American president, ex-vice president Joe Biden, and analyzes the profile of African American voters to understand why their support is so overwhelming. Based on a Pew Research Center study, the author notes that the very structure of the African American Democratic constituency speaks a lot about Biden's appeal. Indeed, the proportion of African Americans who consider themselves as "liberal" (in the American sense, that is, more progressive) is less than that of the Hispanic or "left-wing" Democratic and college educated population. Thus, the majority of the African American population, despite being progressive, is more favorable to a more conservative discourse within the Democratic Party and ends up supporting a more centrist Democratic candidate, more in tune with these postulates.

Reflections on the crisis of the Spanish monarchy continue to flow in the current Catalan and Spanish context, a crisis which, although temporarily hidden by the avalanche of news about the coronavirus, in a serious country should end up producing structural changes, to the point to question the validity of an expired and, as has been shown, deeply corrupt institution. Bildu's MP Jon Iñarritu points out in the newspaper *Público* the differences between the Spanish royal house and the other monarchies that reign in Europe. He stresses out, first of all, that the European monarchies had an antifascist role in the context of World War II and totalitarianism in the 20th century, while in the case of the Spanish monarchy, it was propped by a fascist dictatorship. Second, Spain is a sui generis case in which after the country having become twice a republic, the monarchy was reintroduced itself- Finally he emphasizes that the Spanish monarchy is the most questioned in Europe, reason why the *Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas*, the Spanish public research institute has stopped asking questions about it in his barometers. Meanwhile, in Catalan politics, Fidel Masreal in *El Periódico* describes how, in the face of the emergency of the current crisis, Catalan politics focuses on fighting the Covid-19, within the framework of cooperation and solidarity. The speed of events calls for action from institutional loyalty and responsibility to protect lives and minimize the social and economic impact of the crisis. There will be time later on to assess and confront if necessary, the actions of the State Government, which once again and in an exceptional situation, reacts showing its true

centralizing and unitary nature.

Finally, we also want to point out some considerations about new technologies in this context of crisis. The current situation of limited mobility due to the declaration of the state of emergency has fueled the massive consumption of those digital tools that are already part of our routine, but which until now have been more or less complementary to our lifestyle. As Oriol Torruella writes in *El País* it is in this setting that it becomes really essential to understand the importance of cybersecurity in the digital environment. Protection against cyberattacks is highly dependent on whether we are able to keep our assets, our information, and our devices safe from cyber threats. This a challenge that will increase further when the use of 5G technology becomes widespread. In relation to 5G and *fake news* Harriet Sherwood writes in *The Guardian* Harriet Sherwood about a conspiracy theory that relates the Covid-19 pandemic to the creation of the 5G network and that has become viral, intoxicating social networks, without any foundation or scientific basis.

Diari de les IDEES

Dossier Coronavirus

Daniel Bernabé La propagación del coronavirus por Europa contra la narrativa centroeuropea derechista

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Richard Arz Largement guérie du coronavirus, la Chine passe à l'offensive

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Luca Dobry Ensayo general de distopía

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Gerardo Tecé Solidaridad de escaparate

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Guy Hedgcock In Spain, austerity legacy cripples coronavirus fight

The staggering rate of coronavirus infections in Spain — where nearly 5,000 people have died since the start of the outbreak — has trained a spotlight on a health care system left badly wounded after years of austerity.

Like elsewhere in Europe, the crisis situation has forced hospitals and doctors to reach to extremes to cope with the surge of critically ill patients: Hospitals have called retired doctors under 70 to the front lines and recruited medical students to do administrative work; in Madrid, a massive conference center has become the country's largest hospital and an ice rink has been repurposed as a morgue.

As politicians of all stripes line up to heap praise on the efforts and sacrifices being made by Spanish health workers, many argue that the excessive pressure on hospitals is at least partly a result of painful austerity measures that have left the country ill-equipped to deal with an epidemic.

Cristina Gallardo Devolved Spain struggles for unity against coronavirus

Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez calls coronavirus a war that “the Spanish people” must fight together, but in such a decentralized country it's proving a challenge to coordinate a common response from 17 autonomous regions with their own health systems.

With the death toll rising at a terrifying rate and Spain set to replace Italy as Europe's virus hot spot, Sánchez's precarious leftist coalition has faced resistance from regional leaders, some of whom see his declaration of a state of emergency as a power grab.

He has imposed a strict lockdown, pushed through economic measures worth 20 percent of Spain's output, and introduced regular videoconferences with four key ministers and the presidents of the autonomous regions in a bid to improve coordination.

But in contrast to another decentralized European country with devolved powers in areas like health — Germany — some regions question the national leader's authority to a degree that Chancellor Angela Merkel never faces from the 16 German *Länder*.

Jean-Louis Rocca Le Covid-19, la Chine et les autres

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Naomi Klein Las élites aprovechan las crisis para aprobar políticas que profundicen aún más la desigualdad

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David Sassoli Es la hora de la solidaridad europea, habrá que compartir la deuda

[This summary is not available in English]

Luigi Ferrajoli Los países de la UE van cada uno por su lado defendiendo una soberanía insensata

[This summary is not available in English]

Paul B. Preciado Aprendiendo del virus

[This summary is not available in English]

Thibaud Croisy La catastrophe comme produit culturel

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Anniek de Ruijter et al. Give the EU more power to fight epidemics

In the EU, national governments have long opposed letting Brussels play a greater role in health policy. Health raises sensitive issues and there's a lot of money in health care and the management of public health; this is political capital politicians are loathe to give up.

The coronavirus outbreak may — and should — change this calculus.

To combat the kind of threat we're facing today, we need to allow the EU to play the role it is primed to perform — particularly when it comes to the procurement and distribution of medical countermeasures such as vaccines, antivirals, respirators or protective gear.

David M. Herszenhorn et al. Virtual summit, real acrimony: EU leaders clash over 'corona bonds'

The summit was virtual; the anger and disagreement among EU leaders was very real.

For Italy, the test of EU solidarity in responding to the coronavirus crisis came down to a simple point: Your bond is your word.

But EU heads of state and government failed Rome's test during a videoconference on Thursday by refusing to back the idea of "corona bonds" — a common debt instrument to help finance the response to the coronavirus pandemic, which has claimed thousands of lives across Europe in recent weeks and put the Continent on virtual lockdown.

The dispute took EU leaders to the edge of a political debacle, with a complete breakdown averted only through an agreement brokered by European Council President Charles Michel for leaders to return to the debate in two weeks, when they will consider formal proposals from eurozone finance ministers.

Luca Jahier In the next 10 days, we will know whether the Coronavirus crisis will make or break Europe

I have always considered myself a proud European, today more than ever. Nevertheless, the current mood between the heads of State and Government, coupled with the persistent viral divisions, presents a lethal risk - not only to the European Union, but also to our ability to bounce back from this unprecedented systemic and symmetric crisis.

Why are we unwilling to understand what the facts and figures on the high level of deaths and suffering are telling us? Why are we not able to grasp what is now known by everyone on the incoming recession in Europe, which will likely be close to 10% loss in GDP?

No one can predict when we will be able to get out of this acute period of the pandemic; nor do we know the exact timetable and the final actual costs for organising the recovery and relaunch of our economies.

Guy Verhofstadt Only EU solidarity can avert economic disaster

The jobs and livelihoods of millions of Europeans are at stake. Large companies have ample buffers and credit lines, but people on a modest salary, the self-employed or small company owners are at risk. The repercussions of bungling our response will be dire.

To avoid the worst, Europe has to learn from its past mistakes and act quickly, decisively and with a sense of solidarity. Only by sharing the burden of this challenge do we have a chance of succeeding.

Yes, our national social security mechanisms and government emergency measures will absorb some of the blow. But if we want to prevent this from turning into a new sovereign debt crisis like the one we saw in 2012 — and from which we've only barely recovered —

we'll have to come up with a common European approach.

David Runciman Coronavirus has not suspended politics - it has revealed the nature of power

We keep hearing that this is a war. Is it really? What helps to give the current crisis its wartime feel is the apparent absence of normal political argument. The prime minister goes on TV to issue a sombre statement to the nation about the curtailment of our liberties and the leader of the opposition offers nothing but support. Parliament, insofar as it is able to operate at all, appears to be merely going through the motions. People are stuck at home, and their fights are limited to the domestic sphere. There is talk of a government of national unity. Politics-as-usual has gone missing.

But this is not the suspension of politics. It is the stripping away of one layer of political life to reveal something more raw underneath. In a democracy we tend to think of politics as a contest between different parties for our support. We focus on the who and the what of political life: who is after our votes, what they are offering us, who stands to benefit. We see elections as the way to settle these arguments. But the bigger questions in any democracy are always about the how: how will governments exercise the extraordinary powers we give them? And how will we respond when they do?

The Economist Countries are using apps and data networks to keep tabs on the pandemic

Having been quarantined at his parents' house in the Hebei province in northern China for a month, Elvis Liu arrived back home in Hong Kong on February 23rd. Border officials told him to add their office's number to his WhatsApp contacts and to fix the app's location-sharing setting to "always on", which would let them see where his phone was at all times. They then told him to get home within two hours, close the door and stay there for two weeks.

His next fortnight was punctuated, every eight hours, with the need to reactivate that always-on location sharing; Facebook, which owns WhatsApp, requires such affirmation so people do not just default to being tracked. Compared with his first lockdown—in a spacious apartment, with family and dogs for company—the ten-square-metre flat with two tiny courtyard-facing windows was grim. When he emerged, on March 8th, he immediately donned mask, goggles and gloves and took a ferry to the island of Lamma where he galloped down lush forest trails for 30km, high on freedom, injuring his knees in the process. He still has trouble sleeping. But he is fit to work, and Hong Kong is content that he poses no risk to the health of his fellow citizens.

Judith Butler La enfermedad de la desigualdad

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John F. Harris The pandemic is the end of Trumpism

Probably for most of us, the coronavirus crisis will soon enough — *Six months? A year?* — recede in our minds and come to seem like a hallucinatory moment. Maybe it will be like a hurricane that forced everyone to rush inland and then only glanced the coast.

Or maybe it will be like a hurricane that really does hit. Even then, human nature being what it is, most people will clean up and move on.

Yet no matter how the coronavirus pandemic passes, or how quickly, there is likely in these strange housebound weeks a new political epoch being born.

There are two large reasons to believe the political echo of this crisis will last much longer than the crisis itself.

The first is that many of the people whose expectations and routines are most dramatically upended by the pandemic are students. The interruption, and in some cases irreplaceable loss, of important experiences in their education, as campuses empty and untold events are canceled, will likely shape their consciousness in more lasting ways than for the rest of us.

Bruno Bimbi En plena pandemia, Brasil está en manos de un psicópata

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The Economist The coronavirus could devastate poor countries

The new coronavirus is causing havoc in rich countries. Often overlooked is the damage it will cause in poor ones, which could be even worse. Official data do not begin to tell the story. As of March 25th Africa had reported only 2,800 infections so far; India, only 650. But the virus is in nearly every country and will surely spread. There is no vaccine. There is no cure. A very rough guess is that, without a campaign of social distancing, between 25% and 80% of a typical population will be infected. Of these, perhaps 4.4% will be seriously sick and a third of those will need intensive care. For poor places, this implies calamity.

Social distancing is practically impossible if you live in a crowded slum. Hand-washing is hard if you have no running water (see article). Governments may tell people not to go out to work, but if that means their families will not eat, they will go out anyway. If prevented,

they may riot.

So covid-19 could soon be all over poor countries. And their health-care systems are in no position to cope. Many cannot deal with the infectious diseases they already know, let alone a new and highly contagious one. Health spending per head in Pakistan is one two-hundredth the level in America. Uganda has more government ministers than intensive-care beds. Throughout history, the poor have been hardest-hit by pandemics. Most people who die of aids are African. The Spanish flu wiped out 6% of India's entire population.

The Economist The state in the time of covid-19

In just a few weeks a virus a ten-thousandth of a millimetre in diameter has transformed Western democracies. States have shut down businesses and sealed people indoors. They have promised trillions of dollars to keep the economy on life support. If South Korea and Singapore are a guide, medical and electronic privacy are about to be cast aside. It is the most dramatic extension of state power since the second world war.

One taboo after another has been broken. Not just in the threat of fines or prison for ordinary people doing ordinary things, but also in the size and scope of the government's role in the economy. In America Congress is poised to pass a package worth almost \$2trn, 10% of gdp, twice what was promised in 2007-09. Credit guarantees by Britain, France and other countries are worth 15% of gdp. Central banks are printing money and using it to buy assets they used to spurn. For a while, at least, governments are seeking to ban bankruptcy.

Nikita Malik Self-Isolation Might Stop Coronavirus, but It Will Speed the Spread of Extremism

The COVID-19 crisis has ravaged many countries across the globe—and it has also presented an opportunity for extremist groups across the ideological spectrum to spread hate. As is often the case in times of uncertainty, extremists and terrorists have jumped at the chance to exploit confusion and fear, reach new audiences, and serve their own interests.

This is worrying for several reasons. In 2014, when the academic community was studying the effects of Islamic State propaganda on people's willingness to travel abroad and join the conflict in Iraq and Syria, it was clear that the appeal of recruiters lay in a target audience's need to understand their place in the world. As more information became available on those who joined terrorist organizations, or even those who committed terrorist attacks in their own countries, a common theme was the need to belong to an "insider" community and commit violence or destroy the ways of life of those who were part of the "outsider" community.

Alberto Acosta et al. ¿Puede el coronavirus salvar el planeta?

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Robert Peckham Past Pandemics Exposed China's Weaknesses. The Current One Highlights Its Strengths

When the novel coronavirus first emerged in China's Hubei Province, foreign reactions to the country's handling of the epidemic swung between extremes. At a press conference held in Beijing in late February, Bruce Aylward, who co-led the World Health Organization's (WHO) joint mission with China on the disease now known as COVID-19, praised what he described as "probably the most ambitious, and I would say, agile and aggressive disease-containment effort in history." Pointing to a graph that showed a steep decline in cases, he commented, "If I had COVID-19, I'd want to be treated in China."

Others have been far more critical. In a *Wall Street Journal* opinion piece titled "China Is the Real Sick Man of Asia," Walter Russell Mead, a professor at Bard College, suggested that China's "less than impressive" management of the crisis would reinforce "a trend for global companies to 'de-Sinicize' their supply chains." The use of the term "sick man of Asia" in the headline caused particular umbrage and provided a pretext for the expulsion of three *Wall Street Journal* reporters from China. Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Geng Shuang condemned the use of "racially discriminatory language," to which U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo responded with a defense of the free press.

David Frum The Coronavirus Is Demonstrating the Value of Globalization

To fight a pandemic, governments are erecting barriers to the movement of people and goods unlike anything seen since the end of World War II. In some ways, the new barriers are even tighter. America's borders with Canada and Mexico remained open during the war, but they are closed now.

These interventions have been introduced as temporary measures. Globalization is suspended only for the duration, governments insist. But if we are not very careful now, during the crisis, the duration will extend itself indefinitely.

In the crisis, even the ideal of global cooperation is dying. The Trump administration did not consult with European allies—if *allies* remains the right word—before effectively suspending transatlantic air travel. The German government accused the Trump administration of trying to gain exclusive rights to Germany's vaccine research, again without consultation. France and Germany forbade the export of protective medical gear to Italy. Hungary and Poland unilaterally closed their borders.

Valeria Pulignano The coronavirus, social bonds and the 'crisis society'

The world-renowned economist Joseph Stiglitz has rightly called our attention to the dramatic threats the coronavirus poses to everyone's health and to the economy and society at large. He urges us to appreciate once more the important role of government, public policy and public values, as the antidote to what Ulrich Beck long ago defined as 'risk society'—the society of side-effects.

From a different perspective, but similar approach, the eloquent feminist social scientist Nancy Fraser highlights in her 2017 book *Social Reproduction Theory* how creating and maintaining social bonds is essential to guaranteeing 'sustainability' in society. Fraser's focus is on caring, which provides ties between generations, as well as within and across communities. But this is threatened, she argues, by the withdrawal of public support under neoliberal, financialised capitalism.

Jan Zielonka Has the coronavirus brought back the nation-state?

From Madrid to Paris, Berlin to Warsaw, the nation-state seems to be experiencing a striking renaissance. Borders are back, and with them national selfishness. Each national government is focusing on its own people, and each claims to be better prepared to fight the crisis than its neighbours.

Virtually overnight, national capitals have effectively reclaimed sovereignty from the European Union without asking either their own people or Brussels for permission. They are practically ruling by decree in a war-style fashion. We are at war, declared the French president, Emmanuel Macron, and he sent armed units on to the streets to police the draconian orders. Other leaders have more or less followed suit.

The coronavirus outbreak seems to be reversing the course of history. Gone is globalisation and European integration. Back is the heroic struggle of states for national survival.

Fernando d'Oliveira Neves O eurovírus

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César Rendueles La tormenta perfecta de autoritarismo

[This summary is not available in English]

Jean-Dominique Giuliani Les sept défis capitaux pour vaincre le coronavirus

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Giorgio Leali et al. Economic patriotism is back amid the coronavirus crisis

EU countries are reverting to a familiar mantra in times of crisis: Buy local!

Some countries have betrayed a shaky sense of European solidarity in the early days of the coronavirus crisis, and a half-hearted commitment to the internal market. Borders have shut, countries have been reluctant to export medical equipment and northern countries have shot down the idea of a pan-European debt instrument dubbed “corona bonds.”

This week, France’s Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire stoked further suspicions that charity really begins at home in the EU by calling on retailers to be “economically patriotic” and favor products from French farmers.

“I call on major distributors to make a new effort: Stock up on French products,” he said on France Info radio.

Le Maire’s call came after Prime Minister Edouard Philippe announced on Monday evening that open-air food markets would be closed. Almost simultaneously, Agriculture Minister Didier Guillaume encouraged citizens “to make a gesture of alimentary patriotism” and “buy French” in an interview with BFM TV.

Simon Tisdall Power, equality, nationalism: how the pandemic will reshape the world

The global impact of the coronavirus pandemic poses a fundamental question: is this one of those historic moments when the world changes permanently, when the balance of political and economic power shifts decisively, and when, for most people, in most countries, life is never quite the same again?

Put more simply, is this the end of the world as we know it? And, equally, could the crisis mark a new beginning?

Genuinely pivotal global moments, watersheds or turning points (pick your own terminology) are actually quite rare. Yet if the premise is correct – that there can be no return to the pre-Covid-19 era – then it poses many unsettling questions about the nature of the change, and whether it will be for better or worse.

For countless individuals and families, normal life has already been upended in previously unimaginable ways. But how will the pandemic influence the future behaviour of nation states, governments and leaders - and their often dysfunctional relationships? Will they work together more closely, or will this shared trauma further divide them?

Emilio Lledó Ojalá el virus nos haga salir de la caverna, la oscuridad y las sombras

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Kenan Malik Our basic decency is clear. But a good society needs more than decency

Camus would probably have welcomed the moral choices made by most of the country in this pandemic. This might seem an odd judgment in light of the outcry about people acting selfishly, from supermarket hoarders to seaside revellers.

Yet, given the degree to which our lives have been turned upside down, the extent to which we've had to curb our usual behaviours, and the swiftness with which the changes have been imposed, what is extraordinary is not that some people are flouting the new social norms but that the vast majority comply with them so willingly and completely.

Rana Ayyub Social Distancing Is a Privilege

On March 24, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced a complete nationwide lockdown for 21 days—one of the strongest national measures to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. The decision marked a sharp turn. Just a week ago, the world's second-most populous country was being seen as a mysterious anomaly that had remained relatively unscathed from the deadly pandemic. But then the math caught up. As the lockdown began, the number of confirmed cases in the country was beginning to grow exponentially, rising to 933 by March 28.

While New Delhi has taken decisive action, there are fears it has come too late and that too many of the country's poor and homeless will be left exposed. The World Health Organization (WHO) declared the spread of COVID-19, the disease caused by the virus, a pandemic as long ago as March 11. Back then, India refused to label it a health emergency, and large parts of the country continued about business as usual. Even now, the entire country has tested fewer than 30,000 people, representing one of the lowest testing rates in the world.

Colum Lynch U.N. Security Council Paralyzed as Contagion Rages

The United Nations Security Council is watching the greatest global health crisis in a century unfold from the sidelines, quarreling over the wisdom of working online, batting down proposals to help organize the response to the pandemic, and largely ignoring the U.N. secretary-general's appeal for a global cease-fire.

The paralysis comes at a time when the United States is pressing the 15-nation council to adopt a resolution that would largely blame China for unleashing the pathogen on the world. The initiative—which appears to be part of a broader U.S. strategy to deflect responsibility for its own sluggish response to the spread of the virus—is certain to be blocked by China, which wields veto power.

Amílcar Correia A Europa ou é solidária ou não é nada

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Nicola Grandi e Alex Piovan I pericoli dell'infodemia. La comunicazione ai tempi del coronavirus

[This summary is not available in English]

Christophe André Eloge et usage de la peur au temps du coronavirus

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Thomas J. Bollyky Plagues Tell Us Who We Are

To borrow and paraphrase Fyodor Dostoevsky's famous quote about prisons, you can tell a lot about a society by its response to epidemics of infectious disease.

Plagues put a mirror to the societies they afflict.

A pandemic will expose the failures of a government that does not invest in the health of its constituents or address the collective risks that arise when vulnerable groups lack health protections. For such a society, taking those lessons and applying them to reduce the risks of future contagion is surely the better of two possible outcomes.

Michael Luo The Fate of the News in the Age of the Coronavirus

In 2009, as the economy struggled to rebound from the Great Recession, executives at the *New York Times* found themselves in a vigorous internal debate. They were trying to decide whether their content should go behind a paywall, making it available only to paying subscribers. There were compelling arguments on both sides. It wasn't at all clear that people would be willing to pay for news; by implementing a paywall, the *Times* risked cannibalizing its enormous digital audience. But advertising revenue was plummeting, both online and in print, and the newspaper desperately needed new sources of income. To study the matter, Arthur Sulzberger, Jr., the publisher at the time, convened internal committees and hired outside consultants. The *Times's* leadership, meanwhile, took drastic steps to stabilize the company financially, borrowing two hundred and fifty million dollars from the Mexican billionaire Carlos Slim, trimming the size of the newsroom, and reducing a dividend paid to members of the Sulzberger family. In a final meeting of newsroom and business-department leaders, both sides presented their cases. Sulzberger cast his lot with those who favored charging for digital access.

Amanda Andrades En esta crisis del coronavirus el Gobierno no tiene en cuenta a las trabajadoras domésticas

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Moisés Naim Los que se enamoren de China, tienen que desenamorarse de la democracia

[This summary is not available in English]

Alain Touraine Esta crisis va a empujar hacia arriba a los cuidadores

[This summary is not available in English]

Sami Nair Porvenir al borde del precipicio

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Sarah Kreps i Brendan Nyhan Coronavirus Fake News Isn't Like Other Fake News

In the desperate fight against the novel coronavirus, social media platforms have achieved

an important victory: they have helped limit the dissemination of life-threatening misinformation that could worsen the pandemic. But this success should not cause us to adopt a similar approach to political speech, where greater caution is required.

Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube have each moved quickly to remove coronavirus misinformation that encourages people to take actions that could put them at risk. Google is privileging information from official health agencies, such as the World Health Organization, and has established a 24-hour incident-response team that removes misinformation from search results and YouTube. Facebook's WhatsApp has teamed up with the WHO to provide a messaging service that offers real-time updates.

Alan Rusbridger Amid our fear, we're rediscovering utopian hopes of a connected world

If this is the worst of times, it is also the best of times. In our anxiety we are drawing deep reserves of strength from others. In our isolation we are rediscovering community. In our confusion we are rethinking whom we trust. In our fragmentation we are rediscovering the value of institutions.

To each their own narrative or metaphor. If this feels like the blitz spirit to you, all well and good. Others find it helps to imagine a world recast through virtual networks.

But what it amounts to is this: there is such a thing as society and we are all interdependent. And if it sometimes takes a grave crisis to remind ourselves of these truths, then this moment may well be historic for the possibilities of hope as well as for all the tragedy and turmoil.

Nearly 200 years ago, the French political theorist Alexis de Tocqueville wrote about the power we have been re-experiencing over the past few weeks: "In democratic countries knowledge of how to combine is the mother of all other forms of knowledge; on its progress depends that of all the others."

Sheri Berman Democracy, authoritarianism and crises

An old adage has it that crises don't make a person, but rather reveal what s/he is made of. The same applies to political systems: during times of crisis, their underlying strengths and weaknesses are laid bare. When the coronavirus crisis began, there was much discussion of how it revealed the underlying weaknesses of Chinese authoritarianism.

Faulty bottom-up and top-down information flows in China hindered an early understanding of the nature and depth of the crisis. Local officials in Wuhan prioritised maintaining favour with party elites over protecting the health and wellbeing of their citizens, contributing to cover-ups which sent the catastrophe 'careening outward'. The Beijing regime's bureaucratic nature and reliance on 'performance legitimacy'—in return for giving up their

freedom, citizens are promised effective government—created incentives for it to suppress, rather than deal openly with, bad news and difficult challenges.

Yuval Harari El mundo después del coronavirus

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Henry A. Kissinger The Coronavirus Pandemic Will Forever Alter the World Order

The surreal atmosphere of the Covid-19 pandemic calls to mind how I felt as a young man in the 84th Infantry Division during the Battle of the Bulge. Now, as in late 1944, there is a sense of inchoate danger, aimed not at any particular person, but striking randomly and with devastation. But there is an important difference between that faraway time and ours. American endurance then was fortified by an ultimate national purpose. Now, in a divided country, efficient and farsighted government is necessary to overcome obstacles unprecedented in magnitude and global scope. Sustaining the public trust is crucial to social (...)

International politics and globalization

Yashiraj Sharma In Delhi, First Came the Pogroms. Then Came Coronavirus

Lying on a torn cot inside a tent, 38-year-old Nizamuddin didn't turn when a cloud of dust landed on him. He closed his eyes and tried to recall what his home felt like.

In late February, he lost his house at the hands of Hindu nationalist mob in the Indian capital's worst communal violence in decades, riots that were arguably sparked by a series of hatemongering speeches by the local leaders of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's governing Bharatiya Janata Party. Nizamuddin ended up stuck sheltering in the Eidgah displaced persons camp in New Delhi's Mustafabad neighborhood, three miles from his destroyed home.

Patrick Cockburn The US has faced decline before - but nothing like what's to come

The US may be reaching its "Chernobyl moment" as it fails to lead in combating the coronavirus epidemic. As with the nuclear accident in the Soviet Union in 1986, a cataclysm is exposing systemic failings that have already weakened US hegemony in the world. Whatever the outcome of the pandemic, nobody is today looking to Washington for a solution to the crisis.

The fall in US influence was visible this week at virtual meetings of world leaders where the main US diplomatic effort was devoted to an abortive attempt to persuade the others to sign a statement referring to the “Wuhan virus”, as part of a campaign to blame China for the coronavirusepidemic. Demonising others as a diversion from one’s own shortcomings is a central feature of President Trump’s political tactics. Arkansas Republican senator Tom Cotton took up the same theme, saying that “China unleashed this plague on the world, and China has to be held accountable”.

Augustin Herbet Proche d'Obama et perçu comme conservateur : les raisons du plébiscite de Joe Biden par les Afro-Américains

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Giuseppe Cucchi Mentre noi pensiamo solo al coronavirus, il mondo va avanti

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David Petraeus i Vance Serchuk Can America Trust the Taliban to Prevent Another 9/11?

For nearly 20 years, the U.S. intervention in Afghanistan has been sustained by a single, vital national interest: the clear and present danger of another September 11-like attack emerging from this region of the world, absent constant efforts to thwart it. To this end, U.S. strategy has been threefold: deploying American and allied forces to Afghanistan to conduct sensitive counterterrorism missions there and in neighboring parts of Pakistan; training and enabling Afghan partner forces to assume the bulk of responsibility for security inside their country; and backing a friendly government in Kabul that has permitted international forces to operate from its territory against Islamist extremism.

Catalonia, Spain and Europe

Jon Iñarritu El rey está desnudo

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Jeremy Shapiro Little Britain. Will Brexit Break Up the United Kingdom?

Even before the United Kingdom officially left the European Union in late January, Brexit had pushed the country into political convulsions for over three years. But as the

dust settles, another long-feared ramification is coming into clearer view: Brexit could ultimately break up the United Kingdom itself.

The most attention has focused on Scotland, which voted against independence in 2014. The region has long been home to a vibrant independence movement, and a large majority of Scots opposed Brexit. In December, the ruling Scottish National Party formally requested authorization to hold another independence referendum. In reality, however, a breakup remains unlikely. Brexit may have alienated the Scots politically, but economically, it will bind them even closer to the United Kingdom—so much so that financial common sense will likely prevail over nationalist sentiments. If there is a real threat to British territorial integrity, it stems not from Scotland but from Northern Ireland, where the centrifugal forces of Brexit may prove too powerful to contain in the years ahead.

Emmanuel Dupuys Tbilissi: nouvel horizon européen, porte vers l'Eurasie?

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Fidel Masreal et al. La política catalana, después del coronavirus

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Democracy, diversity and culture

Adela Cortina El dinero público destinado a batallas ideológicas debe invertirse en ciencia

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Karolina Wygura i Jaroslaw Kuisz Coronavirus is now contaminating Europe's Democracy

To say that Europe is united by its divisions is an exaggeration - but only a small one. Closing national borders during the pandemic may have been a rational health response, but the longer term political consequences become more troubling when we look at the order in which European governments began to reimpose frontiers.

Italy made the decision on 10 March, when the number of confirmed cases had already exceeded 10,000. Over the next five days, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary closed their borders one after the other, even though by that time in any of them the number of confirmed Covid-19 cases had not reach a hundred.

As a first impulse, suspending the Schengen border-free zone after years of free movement is understandable. Leaders naturally wanted to act quickly to avoid a dramatic Italian scenario in their territories. Bear in mind, though, that these decisions to limit the free movement of people were made by politicians not by doctors. Just as when Donald Trump imposed his European travel ban selectively at first, the closing of frontiers in central and eastern Europe has a political significance that goes beyond mere sanitary demands. Politics in the time of plague is still politics. (This is why, by the way, the the much-discussed “return of the expert” is a fantasy, at best wishful thinking.)

Economy, welfare and equality

Pere Aragonès Renda bàsica. Ara és l'hora

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Gérard Horny Trois krachs boursiers en vingt ans, cela fait beaucoup

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Keith Johnson Is the U.S. Also to Blame in the Oil Price War?

The Saudi-initiated oil price war has sparked a virulent reaction from some U.S. lawmakers, who accused Riyadh of waging “economic warfare” on the United States and threatened a host of potential reprisals, from economic sanctions to a halt to U.S. assistance for Saudi Arabia.

The problem is that the United States is probably as responsible as anyone for the plunge in oil prices. No country has added more oil to the global glut in recent years than the United States—and despite the recent plunge in crude prices, U.S. producers are still increasing output. That gives Moscow and Riyadh zero reason to swallow a financial hit on their own by lowering their own production levels, which in the meantime just increases the pain for all.

Sustainability and climate change

Sébastien Broca Le numérique carbure au charbon

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Melody Schreiber The Climate Crisis Will Be Just as Shockingly Abrupt

As governments around the globe debate how to respond both to the coronavirus itself and the economic chaos it has unleashed, a theme that's come up over and over is how to prioritize what makes it into spending packages. In the United States, right-left fault lines have emerged over the question of bailing out emissions-heavy industries versus a greener stimulus. On Thursday, the Environmental Protection Agency announced a large-scale rollback of environmental regulations as a response to the pandemic—allowing many emitters to police themselves when it comes to pollution.

While some argue that the oxygen in the climate debate should be taken up by the pandemic instead, the two issues aren't mutually exclusive, experts say. In a warming climate, more diseases are likely to emerge and spread, making climate change action an important part of addressing future health crises. Moreover, the perception that climate change isn't as urgent as other crises may rely on misunderstandings about how climate-related changes will happen. The rate isn't constant: Instead, there's reason to believe everything from Arctic melt to Amazon deforestation might experience what's known as "tipping points," where small changes in nature shift into rapid and irreversible damage.

Innovation, science and technology

Oriol Torruella La ciberseguretat, clau en la societat digital

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Harriet Sherwood Call for social media platforms to act on 5G mast conspiracy theory

The government is to hold talks with social media platforms after mobile phone masts in Birmingham, Merseyside and Belfast were set on fire amid a widely shared conspiracy theory linking 5G networks to the coronavirus pandemic.

Broadband engineers have also faced physical and verbal threats by people who believe that radiation from 5G masts causes health risks and lowers people's immune systems.

The mayor of Liverpool, Joe Anderson, revealed he had received threats after he dismissed the theory as "bizarre".

Cabinet Office minister Michael Gove branded the conspiracy theories "dangerous nonsense".

And the NHS director, Stephen Powis, added: "The 5G story is complete and utter rubbish.

It is nonsense - the worst kind of fake news.

“The reality is that the mobile phone networks are absolutely critical to all of us, particularly in a time when we are asking people to stay at home and not see relatives and friends.