

Covid 19: Toward A World Risk Society

In the first semester of 2020, the world was swept by a crisis that, though predictable, was in essence unprecedented. Among the most significant consequences were the human impact, whether in terms of lives lost or of durable mental and/or physical impairment; the restrictions of fundamental liberties, first and foremost of the freedom of movement; and the overall economic and related social costs. To this must be added the fact that states have rarely been faced with the reality of their interdependence – thus of their weakness – to a comparable degree, and that multiple societies suddenly found themselves utterly vulnerable. What this spells out is the urgency with which our understanding of peace and security should now be redefined.

The first part of this work will propose a comparative assessment of the current pandemic in light of past crises, and highlight the potential benefits of the early warning approach. We will then turn to the issue of international relations and of the resulting game of loss and gain at state level. The final part will provide a few innovative insights into a number of specific areas, such as the religious, the academic and the military playing fields.

Eventually, the concept that emerges as key to the understanding of this global crisis is that of risk, since, once again, the pandemic has served to underscore the fragile nature of contemporary states, of their interdependence and of their limited – though diverse – levels of sovereignty, and the degree to which contemporary societies are exposed to risk. The current crisis may well demonstrate that the concept of extending military security to human security, such as it emerged a few years ago, was indeed prescient, and how the approaches put forth by Beck and Buzan anticipated a state of affairs that today has become a reality. This is reflected in the title of the book: *Covid-19: Toward a World Risk Society*.

This work is edited by François Mabillet, permanent researcher at CNRS (National Center for Scientific Research, Paris, France) and secretary general of the International Federation of Catholic Universities. It reflects the efforts of a group of experts who endeavored to comprehend the crisis, analyze its foundations, and offer some reflections grounded in futures studies on the world to come.



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