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## **Economic peace and security.**

**Fanny Coulomb, Jacques Fontanel**

**Texte de la conférence présentée par Jacques Fontanel  
Université d'Economie et des Finances de Saint-Petersbourg, Russie**

**13 décembre 2012**

Résumé : To admit the central role of the State on the world economic structures supposes that the concept of economic war cannot be thus integrated into the traditional liberal current, which rejects interventionism out of its field of analysis. The problem is that the concept of war economic remains very vague and that it covers a multiplicity of policies. Is the economic war a phenomenon definitely admitted in the contemporary world economy or is it only the manifestation of the last increasingly impotent sudden starts of States, whose capacity is diluted in economic universalization? Contrary to some ideas announcing the end of the policy, it appears that new economic interventionism reinforces the political power of States. All the countries are however not equal in the economic war. In fact, it seems that the American economic offensive inevitably does not meet much resistance on behalf of the other countries. Economic war are mainly well framed by the United States

Mots Clés : economic war, economic peace, economic security, USA, globalization, interventionism, power of States

The “mediatic” concept of economic wars had only few theoretical bases. Whereas the concept of commercial war is relatively clear, that of economic war is much less. A commercial war supposes the confrontation of two or several countries via measurements of commercial reprisals, in the form of customs duties, restrictions on the imports or other instruments. When the disagreement reaches only the stage of the “conflict”, this one can be regulated within the framework of World Trade Organization.

The concept of war economic is not the subject of any precise definition. In fact, its existence even poses problem. It can as well be applied to the relations between companies as with the actions carried out by States. The campaigns misinformation aiming at destabilizing a competitor, the use of industrial espionage, the raids stock exchange to repurchase company-keys, etc, are as many dangers against which the companies seek to be guarded, success testifies some to the schools to economic war, economic intelligence and other formations. But the economic expression of war can also return to the strategies of Etats to promote the national economic interests on the international scene, not only on the level of the marketing policy but also via other instruments, such as the services of information or the diplomatic means.

To admit the central role of the State on the world economic structures supposes a theoretical hypothesis. The concept of economic war cannot be thus integrated into the traditional liberal current, which rejects interventionism out of its field of analysis. It poses also conceptual problems with the Marxist thought which develops the idea of an economic war between large giant firm, first for the control of the national markets, and then for international markets. However, taking into account the States implications in an alleged economic war is in contradiction with the pure economic determinism. In fact, the economic theories that are in favour of interventionism seem able to integrate the idea of the economic

war. The only proven situations of economic war being when Etats are laid out to undergo a loss of their own wellbeing to achieve political or strategic goals, or then when economic sanctions accompany a military conflict. In times of peace, the international economic sanctions are the only instruments of the economic war in a strict sense. More generally, we must include the economic strategies of States in order to improve their relative position in the hierarchy of international power.

After the end of the cold war, several analysts considered that the rise of the economic and financial interdependences and the increased mobility of the capital and technologies were going to involve a pacification of the international relations. The prospect for a pacification of the world by the diffusion of the market economy was largely developed after 1991, testifies success to them to the expression of “end of the history” invented by F. Fukuyama; it also had many detractors. But it is another idea developed after 1991 which is interesting, according to which the conflicts interetatic would have been transferred in the economic sphere, one of the top priority of Etats being from now on to improve the relative structural performances of the national economy within the international hierarchy.

Thus, Robert Gilpin announced since 1987 a reorganization of the world economy in protectionist and antagonistic commercial blocks. Lester Thurow spoke in 1992 about the battle to come between the United States, Europe and Japan. At the same period, Christian Harbulot described the globalization system as “an economic machine of war”. These samples are enough to recall that new fields of study emerged since the years 1990, such as geoconomy and the economic intelligence. Businesses of industrial espionage, the revelation of the use by the American government of the Echelon system to help the American firms vis-a-vis their foreign competitors, the purchase of company-key European by American shareholders (Gemplus business, repurchases in the industry of terrestrial armament...) and the political interests in the second war of Iraq are as many elements which reinforced the idea of a world economic war.

The problem is that the concept of war economic remains very vague and that it covers a multiplicity of policies. We will try to make more systematized presentation of it (I). In addition, is the economic war a phenomenon definitely admitted in the contemporary world economy or is it only the manifestation of the last increasingly impotent sudden starts of States, whose capacity is diluted in economic universalization? We will show that contrary to some ideas announcing the end of the policy, it appears that new economic interventionism reinforce the political power of States (II). All the countries are however not equal in the economic war. In fact, it seems that the American economic offensive inevitably does not meet much resistance on behalf of the other countries and that if economic war there is, this one is well framed by the United States (III).

## **I - The economic war, a multiform phenomenon**

The economic expression of war is rather general and can indicate very heterogeneous situations. It applies indeed as well to the international economic sanctions, as with the relations interenreprises (even those could not be summarized with this concept) or with the public strategies to improve the relative performances of the national economy in the world economy. This last case raises many theoretical questions however, because of subjectivity of the concept of war economic.

### **I.1. The use of the economic weapon to fine policies or strategic**

The use of the economic weapon shows that the power or the economic vulnerability has a direct influence on the level of national safety. The recourse to the economic sanctions is a constant in the international economic relations since 1945. The vulnerability of the national economies to these measurements can be evaluated by the degree of concentration of trade of goods and services but also by the importance of the transfers of capital, in particular the transfers of incomes and the external assistances. In opposition with liberalism, A.O. Hirschman considers that the policy of power is the heart of the international relations and that laissez-faire is only an exception. The main debate was centered on the vulnerability of the national economies to the international economic sanctions. The majority of the statistical studies on the subject tend to show, without much surprise, that the size of the national market and the degree of diversification of the foreign trade as regards goods and services exchanged but also of outlets, is the key of the importance of the vulnerability of an economy to economic sanctions imposed by outside. Several failures testify however to the inefficiency of the majority of the economic sanction campaigns carried out since the end of the second world war, such as those against Iran or Syria, or previously of Iraq. But the “positive sanctions”, according to the expression of D. Baldwin, i.e. the granting of financial assistances, the promise of investment or other forms of assistances, can also be interpreted like concerning an economic strategy of war. Thus, Sophie Bessis, on several occasions, denounced the use of “the food weapon” by the industrialized countries during the cold war, to influence fragile political régimes. Today the problem of the world hunger remains crucial and the catch of load by humane associations of the food aid does not prevent the use of the famine by the political sphere, in order to eliminate from the groups of opponents or to attract the international assistance.

## **I.2. Relations between war and co-operation**

The economic expression of war is generally used in order to describe the strategies of companies. In fact, competition was exacerbated on a world level with the opening of the economic borders and the rise of communication and information technologies. The unfair operations of industrial espionage or misinformation multiply. The relations between firms could not be summarized with a simple logic of confrontation. The co-operation process is important today, and the competition tends to be reduced in many sectors.

The fast rise of transnational fusion-acquisitions during years 1990 deeply transformed the world industrial landscape, supporting the emergence of oligopolistic structures in many sectors, like car, pharmacy, telecommunications and oil industry and increasing their barriers at the entry, making weigh the risk of anti-competitive behaviors. In the same way, the multiplication of transnational strategic alliances can in some cases lead to a reduction in competition on the markets. Since 1915, the Austrian theorist K. Kautsky had evoked the possibility of “ultra-impérialism”, marked by an agreement between the imperialist powers on the level of the export of the capital, forming a kind of large world trust..

The maintenance of a competing environment is today with the load of the authorities of competition, which must prevent the abusive dominant position and the cartels. The ultra-liberal position do not hesitate to regard the monopolies as beneficial and to be opposed to the policy competition which tends to dismantle them, under pretext which it is not right to sanction the companies which succeeded best and which the monopolies are tolerable as long as the markets remain contestable. The Schumpeter’s analysis of innovation came to the rescue from the opponents to dismantling the monopolies: the constant renewal of industrial fabric via the innovations would involve perpetual competition for the acquired positions, no monopoly being eternal.

The evolution of the world economic environment thus does not seem to be done inevitably in the direction of a competition increasingly exacerbated between the large companies. The agreements and the barriers at the entry on the markets can tend to limit competition and to pacify the markets, so much so that the official authorities are more and more often obliged to intervene to avoid the excessive profit and to restore the prices on the level of the “normal price”. The companies are blamed not only to have obtained an excessive profit, but also to have caused a loss of social effectiveness, by involving a reduction in the volume of sales and thus a reduced satisfaction for the consumers.

It is thus not more relevant of speaking about economic war only for the case of agreements between great transnational entities. The concept of economic war is certainly useful for the strategists of company and to avoid with the companies being eliminated following unfair intrigues on behalf of competition, but it is hardly useful to describe the reality of the relations between firms in their complexity.

### **I.3. Interetatic conflicts in the economic field: heterogenous interpretations**

The concept of war economic within the meaning of an offensive carried out by the authorities to conquer the economic power can be clearly attached only to the realistic movement, or rather to the neo-realist movement, which were developed after the cold war. Whereas the realistic ones consider, such as mercantilists, that the economy is at the service of the power, the “neorealists” admitted that the economic objectives can be central and justify alone the State policies. Thus, S. Krasner assigns four principal objectives with the official action: political power, total national income, economic growth and social stability. For Robert Gilpin, the neorealism is an alternative to the three “traditional” theories of the international relations, liberal, Marxist and nationalist. His realistic approach underlines the contradictory game of the various national ambitions to the level of the international negotiations, in an international economic context marked by the unemployment and the inequalities of development. The main role of the hegemonic power in the organization of the economic area is also underlined, while the transnational actors and processes remain dependant on the evolutions of the interetatic relations. According to him, even if the economic and technical substructures determine partially and interact with the political superstructure, the political values and the interests of safety are essential determinants of the international economic relations.

For the neo-mercantilists, describing the international economic relations like a play with null sum, where “one gains only what the other loses”, the bet being to increase the relative power of the State on the international scene, in a static design of the markets and world richnesses. The normal competition around the oil resources, but also the fight for the control of the main technologies, can illustrate this point of view. Today, the economic conflicts replaced the military conflicts during the time cold post-war. There is an obvious filiation between the realistic analysis and some economic analyzes opposed to liberalism, in particular those of the mercantilists and F. List. It should nevertheless be noticed that separation between the liberal and realistic ideas is not so clear that it does appear to be. Adam Smith himself defended the Navigation Acts, the policies in favour of “strategic industries” and the commercial retaliation in the case of an unfair competition. Power is more important than opulence. David Ricardo was very careful on the question of the power, but he admitted the idea that free trade can be more advantageous for certain countries than for others. He denounced the excessive costs of the wars and the usefulness of economic interdependence for peace. In the same way, Friedrich List considered that international free trade must crown the process of industrialization of all the countries? He evoked the future

installation of an international federation between Nations having reached the same level of economic development.

Whereas the liberal thought supposes methodological individualism and analyzes the official action like resulting from the play of the reports/ratios of force between the various lobbys, the realistic thought considered the State as the principal subject of study and presented the interetatic relations as being dominated by anarchy. F. List thus criticized the fact that Adam Smith applies to the nation the same reasoning as with an individual, by renting the saving. A nation which would prefer to give up its defense with the profit of the saving would run the risk to lose its assets with the profit from abroad.

Beyond these theories, the analysis of the role of the institutions made also much progress on the comprehension of the international relations and the economic conflicts. The institutionnalist analysis exceeds traditional liberalism – interventionism cleavage, and considers that the official action above all is determined by historical, cultural or sociological factors. Thus, T. Veblen explains at the beginning of XXème century why one of the principal differences between the modern societies (of Anglo-Saxon type) and the dynastic companies (of which Germany and Japan are the principal examples) resided in their report/ratio outside and in the implication of the State to the service of the power. Contrary to the modern societies dominated by the commercial interests, the dynastic companies remain marked by mental practices inherited in the feudal era and are more inclined to resort to the military conflicts and the mercantilists policies.

Several authors of years 1980 prolonged this type of analysis,. The “Rhenish capitalism” was better prepared to the “economic war”. For L. Thurow, some countries invested in the military sector after the second world war in order to compensate heir apparent economic disadvantage and to affirm their national power. However the evolutions of the international economic hierarchy during years 1990 tended to contradict these arguments. The crisis passed through by Germany and Japan since more than one decade led these countries to give up many the characteristics of their model, which approached the Anglo-Saxon model. To consider that this model is “ultimate model” towards which would converge early or late all the economies would be however hazardous. It exists “modes” as regards economic policy, as the passion for the model Japanese neomercantilist within the Western countries in the years 1980 testifies some; but the economic models were and remain very different from a geographical area with another, and the process of globalisation does not seem to attenuate the regional idiosyncracies.

The process of universalization economic, characterized by increasing commercial interdependences, the development of the foreign direct investments and the financial globalisation, are not a threat for the State, but on the contrary reinforces its capacity, which appears in new forms.

## **II - The economic war, an instrument of safeguarding the national sovereignty?**

The revival of the public action in favor of the economic power can nourish the debate around the capacity of the State in universalization. It can be indeed analyzed at the same time like a need vis-a-vis the evolutions of the economic environment but also like a strategy of resistance of States against globalization.

### **II.1. A fundamental usefulness of States for the economic competition**

R. Keohane and J. Nye denounced the idea that the development of communication and information technologies and the rise of the economic, social and environmental interdependences involve a progressive disappearance of States and political power. Initially, apart from the pacified democratic zones, the complex interdependences are very limited and the military capacity and the concerns of safety remain essential. In addition, the interdependences are developed in a political space already occupied by States and those remain impossible to circumvent, in particular on the level of flows of information. Several theories developed in 1980s stressed the importance of the role of the State in the economic development. Thus, the endogenous theory of growth, developed in particular by Romer, Barro and Lucas, shows the basic character of the economic growth of the public infrastructures but also of the public incentives with the research and development and the innovation, as well as public expenditure of education and training, thus allowing the accumulation of the human capital.

In the field of the international economic competition, the concept of strategic marketing policy popularized by P. Krugman during years 1980 met a broad echo, melting even a “new theory of the international economy”. This approach is based on the report of the imperfection of competition, in opposition to the neo-classic assumptions of pure and perfect competition. The existence of barriers at the entry raised in many sectors (resulting in particular from the existence of, cost economies of scale of transfer, patents, etc) supports the emergence of oligopolistic structures, generating a strategic environment. The strategic marketing policy can be defined then as the whole of the measurements installation by the authorities to improve the share of market of the national companies on the international market. The existence of economies of scale in many sectors involves an advantage for the “first entering” the production, owing to the fact that the unit cost of production decreases with the increase in the produced quantities; public subsidies can then make it possible a national company to already overcome its disadvantage in terms of production costs compared to the firms in place. The bored rapid of Airbus in a sector of the civil aeronautics hitherto dominated by Boeing in fact was allowed by subsidies granted by economic Communauté European. In addition, the taking into account of the phenomenon of external economies of scale can justify that the public authorities are used for of commercial protectionism to support the rise of companies in a sector with a future or public expenditure to place at the disposal of the companies effective infrastructures (as in the case of Silicon Valley).

All these approaches tended to rehabilitate the role of the State, by in particular underlining the strategic character of the public intervention to conquer external markets, in an environment of imperfect competition and accelerated universalization. Whereas the procedures of deregulation and reduction in the barriers to the exchanges tended to limit the room for maneuver of the State to the level of the traditional economic policy, this one remains however impossible to circumvent for the policy of education and training, the incentive with the research and development or the installation of effective infrastructures. Moreover, the policies of attractivity have today a great place in the public action. It is about the whole of the measures intended to support the entry of foreign direct investments on the own territory: incentives tax, financial assistances, creation of a favorable environment, etc S. Strange considered as well as the question of the negotiations between Etats and the firms, and in particular the foreign firms, would become an important field of research for the analysts of the international relations.

## **II.2. Supranational capacity and reinforcement of the political power**

The economic theories evoked previously have also their detractors. For the liberal economists, the importance of the official action is often over-estimated, and in last spring in fact the individual initiatives are determining; however those open out of as much better than the public intervention is minimal, in particular as regards legislative barriers (and particularly on the labor market) and of taxation and than the stability of great macroeconomic balances (budget, inflation) is guaranteed. P. Krugman itself admitted that the concept of strategic marketing policy had only one theoretical interest, since in practice the liberalization of the exchanges and the policies of deregulation tended to limit the possibilities of protectionism and public interventionism. The risk of commercial reprisals on behalf of the countries partners to the exchanges limits the possibility of protectionism. In addition, it explained why in practice, the industrial policy, i.e. the public subsidies granted to industries, was likely to be ineffective, because of difficulty in targeting industries with a future, and of the risk of wasting of public funds.

However, these reserves, if relevant is it, must according to us be moderate. The case of the United States illustrates indeed rather well the reality of the strategic marketing policy, as it will be seen in the following part. There is a cleavage between the speech posted by the American authorities of defense of free trade and laissez-faire and the reality of public interventionism to the profit of the national companies. And successes of the American economy during years 1990, whereas during years 1980 the majority of the analysts bet on his irreversible decline, do not make it possible to show the harmful character from the public action as regards support for the R & D in particular.

The question is not so much to know if the intervention of the State to the profit of the national companies is effective but rather if this one is not useful before very reinforcing the capacity of the State itself, by giving him new roles for better sitting its legitimacy, without supposing effectiveness of this intervention.

The term of "geoeconomy", born in the United States in the years 1990, in particular under the feather of E. Luttwak, underlines the primacy from now on granted to the economic objectives and the will of the State to invest the economic sphere. According to Pascal Lorot, the geoeconomy indicates the public policies having for objective to acquire technological and commercial supremacy sensitive products or services. It is a question for the State of assisting the strategic objectives of the large companies by the installation of adapted devices and thus of limiting the loss of national sovereignty. The implication of Etats in the economic war is used as fact the interests of the State itself, in particular by assigning new role with the public administration.

The development of the international economic organizations and the supranational structures, like the regional agreements, also takes part in the reinforcement and the extension of the capacity of the State. As R. Keohane and J. Nye underlined, the description of the existence of international modes does not mean by in so far as the international organizations are powerful; they were created by Etats and remain their creatures. Union European itself is more controlled by the intergovernmental co-operation that by the supranational bureaucrats. One can also quote Ulrich Beck, according to whom the supranational structures are used for the States-Nations to reinforce and extend their capacity in new forms. But by doing this, control escapes more and more the citizens, whose support is however essential.

In fact, the current crisis of Organization Mondiale of Commerce, which sorrow to find an exit with the cycle of negotiation of Doha, in particular because of thorn-bush agricultural file, testifies to the difficulties of the international economic institutions born from the post-war period, which suffers not only from the renewal of unilateralism on behalf of the United States but also of the rejection by part of the world public opinion of the liberal model of deregulation and reduction of protections, that they are social or commercial. The World Bank



and the IMF wiped during years 1990 of criticisms and the failures which started their credibility with the eyes of many citizens, the point to oblige these institutions to operate a radical change in their speech during years 1980, and to rehabilitate partially the role of the State in the growth and the fight against poverty. Democratic adhesion at the supranational institutions is thus more than ever determining. One should not certainly be mistaken in objective. As it Keohane and Nye showed, one should not hope to obtain on the level governorship total the same type of democracy as that which legitimates the national institutions, by the means of the direct election. The democracy in the international institutions must above all rest on their apparent effectiveness as an instrument like on a role increased on the level of the total governorship of the politicians, and thus of the national policy, to reflect more the aspirations of the people.

The failure of the referendum on the European constitutional treaty in France and in the Netherlands gives rise to think that the question of democratic control in universalization will be crucial during next years, undoubtedly opening the way with new regulations. D. Rodrik thus showed that since the end of the second world war, the policies of commercial opening and liberalization always developed jointly with the social protection systems. The questioning of the latter would involve the end of the consensus in favor of the opening of the markets and a renewal of protectionism, stopping the process of globalisation.

. The disappearance of the national borders and the public action in the process of universalization-liberalization is thus nothing less than inescapable. One often recalls that the first universalization of the end of XIXème century was brutally stopped by the First World War, to reappear only in the years 1980. Admittedly, another point of view is to consider that universalization is an uninterrupted process since the Middle Ages. It does not remain about it less than the observation of the public strategies in universalization shows that Etats are more than ever present on the international scene, and than “economic patriotism” expensive with F. List in XIXème century knows today a resurgence in the United States but also in Europe and Asia, in particular in China.

### **III. The American economic offensive and reactions in Europe: an “economic war” good framed**

A question which one can put today is to know if economic nationalism is not in resurgence in the world economy, under the American impulse. It seems however difficult to support that Union European carries out today a strategy of economic power comparable with that of its principal competitor. The alleged contemporary economic war rather summarizes an economic offensive on behalf of the hegemonic power, which profits in addition from a “software power” still uncontested.

#### **III.1. The policy of American power**

The reorientation of the American policy in favor of objectives geoeconomic since starting from 1992 reflected a will of the government to take again the economic matter offensive, whereas the topic of the “American decline” was largely exploited by the analysts. It led to a development of the marketing policy, which can be interpreted like a renewal of protectionism. Thus, section 301 of Trade Act of 1974, which introduces taxable rules of honesty to the whole of the trade partners, knew not less than three prolongations since 1988, widening the possibilities of protectionism in many crucial fields, like telecommunications or the rights of ownership intellectual. Other laws, like that voted after September 11, 2001 on

the control of the containers by American customs officers in the foreign ports, contribute to an increased control of the American authorities on trade.

In addition, the American policy of subsidies to the companies is more than ever to topicality, the business testifies some to Foreign Sales Corporations. It is about a device of indirect assistance to the export for the great American groups, which remains in spite of a judgment by OMC in 2003. The subsidies with the military research and development are also today an essential aspect of the American industrial policy. By this skew, the public authorities finance the development of dual technologies, thus serving civil industry, in particular in the field of telecommunications.

Several analyzes also proposed the important reinforcement during years 1990 of the American device as regards economic intelligence, i.e. of use of the services of information to the profit of the national companies. It is not only about the system of listening of the NSA, the Echelon system, but also of Advocacy center and a whole whole of governmental and private institutions which contribute to the direct and indirect strategies of economic influence in favor of the American interests in the world.

The question is to know if these current characteristics of interventionism “to American” are sufficiently determining so that one can speak about a return of the policy on the international scene and validate the idea of a world economic war. To make the war, it is at least necessary to be two. However all the countries do not follow American logic, testifies the example to it to Union European.

### **III.2. Towards a European response?**

Several calls to a “reaction” of the European governments vis-a-vis the American offensive were launched. In alarmist terms, using images directly borrowed from the military sphere, C. Harbulot explained thus in 2002 the need for the European governments for reacting vis-a-vis the American economic offensive: “The configuration of the international relations since 1945 has cold gradually the political thought on Action with the profit of a fixed vision of the world peace guaranteed by the free world, in fact the United States of America. This refusal to act as terms of indirect strategy nourished failure of the colonial wars and disappearance of a reflection on the power, if it is not in the field militaire. Les tensions between allies, revealed by the Iraqi conflict, reveal little by little the nature of the underground confrontations inside the Western world. As of the moment when the United States does not want Europe independent, it becomes obvious that the progression towards this Europe/power will not be done without a strategy of the geoeconomic action. The first urgency consists in containing the attempts at American surrounding in the vital sectors (industry of Défense, information system security, telecommunications terrestrial and space, financial circuits, energy resources, operating mode of the institutions...). The second urgency relates to the reinforcement of Europe/power inside and outside its borders. In both cases, all is to be built.”

This approach, in which one can see a renewal of the economic nationalism, is very characteristic of the new speech around the economic war that Smith appears in certain European countries today, and in particular in France. It is based on a parallel between the military conflicts and the conflicts economic and its defenders propose a direct collaboration of the military sector in the defense and the conquest of the national economic positions. This type of speech causes in fact the rejection of many analysts, who see a doubtful field there there where cotoient themselves militarist, nationalist and nostalgic colonialism.

The question is however much more complex, and could not be reduced to a simple debate between nationalists and europeanists or nationalism and cosmopolitanism. The economists

are numerous, apart from any political position, to point the insufficiency of the European policy research innovation and to plead in favor of a reform of the public policy, in particular via an industrial policy in favor of the economy of knowledge. The repurchase by foreign groups, and in particular American, of much of company-keys in Europe, caused many criticisms on the wait-and-see policy of the European governments. The use of the system Echelon to the profit of the American companies, the generalization of economic espionage, the participation of European companies in American programs, with the detriment of the European programs, in particular in the armament (business of Joint Strike Fighter), are as much of element which show than the governments which would not be implied in the field of “economic safety” are from now on likely to be shown of naivety, even of incompetence.

### **III.3. A manifestation of the American “softpower”?**

To finish, it should all the same be recalled that the more or less great intensity of the “economic war” is partly determined by the attitude of the American government. In 1976, S. Krasner explained why the hegemony of a dominant power was necessary for the creation and the maintenance of free trade. In fact, the future of the American model will undoubtedly be determining for that of the international economic relations. The question is to know if there is truly an economic war or it is not a question itself rather of an imposition by the United States of their model to the rest of the world. In fact, the Anglo-Saxon criteria, as regards economic policy and social but also on the level of the countable and different standards, seem to be diffused largely today, via the political sphere but also of the companies, the banks, the agencies of information, ONG, the think tanks It is the “software power” describes by R. Keohane and J. Nye: a State will be able to decrease the resources reserved for the economic and military power if it manages to make its capacity legitimate to the eyes of the other countries and to establish international institutions which encourage the other countries to defend of the interests compatible with his. In the same way, S. Strange explained that the American structural capacity is not based solely on their domination on the level of the structures of safety, production or financial but also on the conviction shared by the other countries which the United States did not keep only in mind their own interest but also that of the other countries, i.e. a will to create a better international system. According to Jean-Jacques Roche, the economic conflicts between the United States (“new empire” resulting from the end of the cold war) and their allies are a counterpart to make accept the American domination and choke the disagreements in the political field. However the equality between the parts is only formal: the United States in fact profits from economic supremacy and OMC is especially used to channel the disagreements, “to reduce the influence of the reports/ratios of force and thus to make more acceptable the principle of this competition for the third nations.”. The alleged economic war would be in fact only one competition limited between the super power and its allies, making it possible to channel inclinations of dispute of the American domination.

### **Conclusion**

The exacerbation of international competition opens new possibilities of action in Etats, on the level of the regulation of the markets but also as combined national companies in their conquest of the international markets. The idea of an economic war can be integrated in the field of the theory neorealist, which places the political power in the middle of the international economic relations. It seems in fact that the economic competition tends to give a new legitimacy to Etats, whose capacity is reinforced rather than weakened by

universalization. The international institutions themselves can survive only as spaces of intergovernmental co-operation. But American hegemony and the diffusion of its “software power” partly determine the characteristics and the limits of the economic competition. On the level of the relations between the United States and Europe, it is less than one economic war that about a unilateral economic offensive on behalf of the United States.

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