

TOWARDS A COMMON EU STRATEGIC CULTURE?

BRUSSELS INTERNATIONAL COLLEGE

**TOWARDS A COMMON EU STRATEGIC
CULTURE?**

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Foreword

JOSEP BORRELL FONTELLES

I have known and appreciated Professor Mario Telò and his work for a long time. When he proposed that the Royal Academy of Belgium and the European External Action Service jointly organise a cycle of conferences to help “build a common strategic culture for European citizens and EU civil servants”, I immediately supported this project.

In an increasingly multipolar world where everything is weaponised, from trade relations to migrants or data flows, such exchanges of views between academics, think tanks and practitioners of European foreign policy is all the more necessary.

In the middle of the cycle of conferences, Russia’s unprovoked invasion of Ukraine has brought a war of high intensity back to European soil, causing tens of thousands of deaths, suffering and destruction, accompanied by war crimes committed by Russian forces. In addition, the aggression triggered a global food and energy crisis that impoverishes and destabilises many countries in the world.

This war is another illustration of the urgent need for the EU to learn to “speak the language of power”, as I have pleaded regularly since the beginning of my mandate — to better defend our democratic values and our interests globally and to build a common strategic culture. This cycle of conferences has actively contributed to this objective, as has also the high quality contributions gathered in this book.

Foreword

DIDIER VIVIERS

For its 250th anniversary the Royal Academy of Sciences, Letters and Arts of Belgium wanted to focus on the Academy's concern for European issues. If the Academies in the 18th century were agents of a mainly local development (at least as far as concerns the Imperial and Royal Academy of Brussels, founded by Empress Maria Theresa of Austria to boost the dynamism of the provinces of the Low Countries), today we must contribute as much as possible to the strengthening of Europe through the construction of a sound and active scientific and cultural network. To underline this commitment, we hosted in May 2022 the General Assembly of ALLEA (All European Academies), the European Federation of Academies of Sciences and Humanities, in our Academy. But it was also important to make the Royal Academy of Belgium a place for critical reflection on the major developments and challenges facing Europe at the end of the first quarter of the 21st century. A place of reflection that is not a "place for self-reflection", bringing together scholars and experts specializing in European issues, but also open to the whole population of Brussels and far beyond, through the modern means of the videoconference. Discussions on the future of Europe should not be seen as the preserve of an elite but should be open to all European citizens.

This is why we have set up the Brussels International College (BIC), based on a partnership between the Académie royale des Sciences, des Lettres et des Beaux-Arts de Belgique and the Euro-

pean External Action Service (EEAS/SEAE), under the patronage of the High Representative for CFSP and Commission Vice-President Josep Borrell whom I would like to thank personally for his involvement in this project, for agreeing to offer the conclusions to this cycle of lectures in December 2022 and for signing the Preface to this book. The Royal Academy of Belgium aimed at deepening its partnership with EEAS, beyond the previous level of cooperation, taking stock of the best outcomes of ongoing research networks on the role of the EU in the world, advancing by multidisciplinary knowledge, and fostering critical and pluralist debate.

In the context of a complex and changing world, it is more and more important to understand how various States, regions and cultures articulate their respective values and interests in the common global challenges of humankind. Combining the analytical with the policy dimension is the best way to envisage concrete progress towards the goal of gradually building a European common strategic culture, closer perception of threats and enhanced political identity.

In order to appreciate the challenges of the future of Europe, it is necessary to start from an objective observation and to ask whether Europe is still a great economic power (Jean Pisani Ferry and Maaïke Okano-Heijmans). It was also necessary to analyze how Europe faced the tension between universalism and local cultures (Thomas Meyer) by addressing, for instance, the particular case of the relationship between Europe and its southern neighbours (Jean-Pierre Filiu). But European unity is not only questioned through its relations with external identities; it must also face internal diversity. What about the emergence of a common strategic culture (Karen E. Smith)? Does the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) offer an effective institutionalisation of this common strategy (Giovanni Grevi)? And how does Europe evolve when faced with a military and

multipolar context (Rosa Balfour and Nicole Gnesotto)? Finally, the questions of trade, multilateralism and common strategic culture could not be excluded. The positioning of Europe in a globalised world is indeed a major issue (Pascal Lamy, Amandine Orsini Bled and Kalypso Nicolaïdis).

To set all this to music, a composer of great experience was needed. I would like to extend my warmest thanks to Professor Mario Telò, academician, scientific director of this programme and editor of this publication. His profound knowledge of European issues, added to the broad perspective he has developed on the evolution of Europe, which has led him throughout his career to consider the historical, geographical and cultural contexts within which, or in relation to which, he has based his approach to the European Union, have been decisive in shaping the questions raised by this series of lectures, which is the origin of this publication. I am personally very grateful to him. His immense culture and the sharpness of his analyses have helped us greatly to translate one of the objectives of our Academy: to highlight the effective balance or tension between the historical and cultural lines of force and the necessary ruptures implied by the European construction. This gives me the opportunity to insist on the indispensable historical perspective that we are forced to have on any contemporary phenomenon if we hope to understand all its aspects. We cannot forget the impact of cultures, identities and popular perceptions on the success of any political project, and certainly on the development of the European idea. Economic rationality does not explain everything and we must keep in mind that Europe was built on the principle of memory. It would therefore be unreasonable to consider the present time as the only perspective for analysis, and socio-economic development as the only issue for the future of Europe.

The discussion is obviously not closed. I hope that the European Commission and the EEAS will continue to build a relationship of trust with the academic world and pursue a balanced and respectful collaboration, as we have been able to do in this cycle of lectures. From this nuanced and plural exchange we can hope to draw a series of effective conclusions and propose a fully participatory approach to the challenges facing Europe, to which every citizen must feel invited.

Towards a common EU strategic culture? The ongoing change

INTRODUCTION

A free cultural discussion about the European Union foreign policy ongoing change

For an inter-institutional dialogue to succeed you need two high level leading partners. Well, from the side of the Royal Academy, no previous “Secrétaire perpétuel” like Prof. Viviers was innovative and courageous enough to establish — for the first time in 250 years of the Academy — a partnership between the most prestigious cultural institution of the country, the Academy of Sciences, and a democratic European and notably EU institution, the EEAS.

The conference cycle has been a big collective challenge for fourteen months, and finally it is a precious achievement for all of us. It was difficult to reach these imperfect outcomes. Even technically. We express our congratulations to Alar Olljium (EEAS) and the staff of three organisations for their flexible and efficient cooperation: EEAS, GOPA and Royal Academy¹.

¹ Many people deserve warm thanks. Alar Olljium, EEAS, has played an essential role as a wise, loyal and competent partner, in helping me to promote and implement the conference cycle. Also Margarita Fernandez Ruiz has to be mentioned for her constructive assistance during the whole cycle. Beyond their EEAS colleagues, the three technical staff were also committed to a successful conference cycle: I would like to warmly thank the Royal Academy staff and notably Isabelle Algrain for her outstanding contribution, as well as the GOPA contractual agency technical team.

As an introduction to the book and its structure, I will firstly try to share a feeling and communicate a general preliminary thought.

Borrell inspired this conference cycle two years ago through his wish to “intellectualize the EEAS”, and his ambition to combine critical cultural debate and EU’s foreign policy.

On the one hand, the world of ideas has reflected the evolution of global politics. On the other hand, the ideas themselves have also shaped the understanding of events. In Europe, debates about the EU’s foreign policy are similarly influenced by the people taking the initiative and by their normative concepts about the EU’s power. The idea, inspiring Borrell, has profound philosophical roots. It was a liberal idea elaborated by Immanuel Kant in 1795, (a few years after the foundation of this Academy) in his famous “Treaty for perpetual peace”: a republican foreign policy needs publicity and transparency against the tradition of secrecy of the traditional Westphalia diplomacy. Kant was a liberal constitutionalist. However, many liberal thinkers like Tocqueville were very sceptical about this idea of democratisation, because foreign policy is highly complex and demands specialized competences and skills. However, a tradition started with Kant aiming at the gradual building of an informed and educated public opinion with a relevant say in foreign policy. It was not very successful at national level, but the construction of the European Union and the European Parliament reopened this difficult challenge.

We would like to avoid any possible misunderstanding: we do not believe in the utopia of European foreign policy to be democratically decided. Of course, there is a relevant technical dimension. And the European parliament, while offering the opportunity for public debate, shows not only strengths but also limits and contradiction in its foreign policy statements and action.

However, the question is open for us as a scientific community: what about the role of civil society? We believe in the mobilisation of the vast scientific literature and research by academies and universities, and the creation of a socialization of knowledge; we believe that free culture, especially if culturally robust and based on fresh research, may provide help by focusing on inconsistencies, clarifying obstacles and shortcomings.

Of course, we are aware of the imperfections of our work so far: however, this joint venture of the EEAS and Academy is a laboratory, a courageous contribution to a democratic debate about foreign policy which does not exist in other democratic polities.

Everybody knows that, as in the USA, there are many lobbies and think tanks influencing foreign policy. But neither in the USA nor in Canada or Australia, nor in some of the EU's democratic member states, is foreign policy yet the focus of a critical cultural debate, of an open dialogue between democratic audience and policy makers, of a sometimes optimistic but more often worried, and a sometimes ironic, dialogue like we are fostering by this conference cycle. We believe that shaping this dialogue is the role of Academies and universities, and notably of the Royal Academy.

This idea was not only innovative but also successful. According to available provisional data, the conference cycle attracted more than 2000 participants in person and online, despite COVID affecting 3 sessions of the physical participation; and more than 150 proactive interventions including speakers and members of a qualified public audience. Last but not least, no democratic public sphere is credible without a clear gender balance. We focused on gender balance and had the privilege of successfully inviting 12 ladies as speakers, discussants and chairpersons and 12 men! Secondly, the multiple national identities of the ladies should be underlined: Tereza Novotna from

Prague, Karen Smith from the USA, Wei Ling from Beijing and Salma Bava from Delhi, Rosa Balfour from Italy and UK; Nicole Gnesotto from Paris, Isabelle Ferreras from Brussels, Okano-Heijmans from Holland, Heli Thirmaa-Klaar from Tallin, Estonia, Kalypso Nicolaidis from Greece and Oxford, Amandine Orsini from Brussels, and Farida Charfi from Tunis. Even the men invited as speakers represent multinational and multidisciplinary pluralist origins: J. Pisani-Ferry, J.-P. Filiu, P. Lamy, T.H. Meyer, A. Sapir, G. Grevi and J. Borrell.

Our distinctive open approach was also symbolised by the final question mark of the conference cycle title: “Towards a common EU strategic culture?” We must recognize that the question marks are more numerous at the cycle end than at its beginning... We believe that this openness is the best achievement for a cultural debate. It will remain a legacy for the future initiative and we have kept the same title for this edited book collecting the best chapters.

The book structure

The book is divided into five main parts. The first session is about the current unachieved EU transformation into a socio-economic, digital and green power, fit for a dramatically changed international environment. The second is about the increasing distances between Europe and the others global players. The third part is about internal challenges, notably increasing national diversities: how to cope with internal diversities is a challenge which bridges with the fourth session regarding the implication of the Russian war in Ukraine for the European unity/disunity and transformation as a power. The fifth and final part focuses on the global multilateral framework and the way the EU is positioning itself within it.

Jean Pisani-Ferry's high level opening chapter is very stimulating in his underlining of the size and framework of the ongoing change. Change of the EU role in the world started during last ten years but has not been achieved so far. The previous model of integration was situated for decades within an optimistic global scenario of peaceful European norm-diffusion and universal norm-setting. The EU is evolving towards a green and geopolitical power, but within a paradoxical situation compared with the soft and civilian power of the 90s: for example, climate involves a stronger interdependence between the domestic and external dimensions, but the EU is not yet a fungible power and is often a marginal leader in COP summits pre- and post-Paris 2015. When interplaying with traditional powers, the EU is increasingly confronted with fungible powers² and must learn "the language of fungible powers" to remain in division A, competing with USA and China protectionism.

Maaïke Okano-Heijmans in her excellent contribution draws attention to the digital revolution, technology and the implications in terms of cooperation, cybersecurity and power. The EU approach is focusing on promoting regulation and norm setting. The EU needs to invest more especially in promoting its agenda. The Indo-Pacific becomes the world centre of economic gravity. Knowledge must produce a step in geopolitical awareness of the inevitable interdependence. Okano-Heijmans adds that "the digital revolution matters to everyone, and is no longer merely a technical or internal issue for specialists — it is foreign policy as well".

External diversities are increasing in size and number in a non-European world. The chapters by Thomas Meyer and J.-P. Filiu

² KEOHANE R. and NYE J., "Power and Interdependence in the Information Age", in *Foreign Affairs* 77(5), 1998, p. 81-94; KRIBBE H., *The Strongmen: European Encounters with Sovereign Power*, Agenda Publishing, 2020.

focus respectively on the far and near abroad, China and the Mediterranean. They have in common the emphasis on the increasingly difficult objective of cooperation and on the need for interregional dialogue and interaction.

In 2021, after almost 25 years of intensive interdependence with China, we (the EU as ally to the USA) were in a situation of quasi Cold war symbolized by the reciprocal political sanctions and the freezing of the CAI (Comprehensive Agreement on Investments, signed in 2020). Economic and political factors, however, make a Cold war unrealistic with such an important economic partner. The EU “strategic autonomy” is at stake: our traditional way of reforming the internal structures of authoritarian regimes does not mean containment but engagement. It proved efficient with the Soviet Empire. According to Meyer, engaging with China is the single way to change it; as well as competing and cooperating with its alternative model of modernity.

Filiu, in his paper on the Mediterranean cleavages, wonders why the Europeans did not understand that the fall of the “wall of fear” in the Arab World in 2011 also had — like in 1989 — a long-term impact on their very future as Europeans? The EU was very prudent in its reactions according to Filiu: “Confronted with such a political tsunami”, High Representative Catherine Ashton launched on behalf of the European Union, in March 2011, a “partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity south of the Mediterranean”, and the Cairo “Spring” program. The Iraqi war and the Libyan war explain the causes of such prudence: divisions at the EU leadership. Regarding the incentives for quick elections, the European Union had proved that it was not always ready to work with the winner. The fall of the “wall of fear” had left both the Arabs and the Europeans with the historical alternative between, on one side, democratic transition

in the Arab world and, on the other, escalating violence to unprecedented levels of horror as shown by the tragedy in Syria and the refugee crisis.

Similarities between the Aleppo (Syria) and Mariupol (Ukraine) massacres show, according to Filiu, that “the challenge is not anymore about ‘shared prosperity’, but about ‘shared destiny’ between the two shores of the Mediterranean, and how the people of the Southern shore could be assisted into benefitting from the values they aspire to share with the people in the North, namely the rule of law and public liberties”. Financial contributions, aid and cooperation, are corresponding to the long-term European interests, north and south of the Mediterranean.

In general, external diversities are a challenge the EU can cope with: the EU needs consolidating partnerships and dialogues with Japan, India, China and the southern rim of Mediterranean. We need to deepen competition and interdependence with both fast-growing digital economies and with developing countries that wish to also benefit from the digital transformation. The EU has developed its own digital model; an alternative to both China and USA. According to Mrs Okano-Heijmans, even critics of tech-facilitated surveillance that undermines democracies should be invited to Europe to study our model.

The third and fourth part are at the crossroads between internal diversities and the external challenge of war. Internal diversities are a deep reality rooted in centuries of history and revived by new various threat-perceptions. Karen Smith’s chapter brings evidence about how structural they are and their impact on the Lisbon institutions, notably the Foreign Affairs Council (abuse of veto). She wonders whether the EU went too far by the centralized Brussellisation process and whether it should not return to a more decentral-

ized polity, for example, reviving the rotating Council presidencies. However, three chapters bring arguments to balance the analysis of the current trend with possible institutional remedies. Grevi agrees that domestic politics, oscillations and geopolitical instability are pushing towards internal fragmentation; he wonders which new, flexible integration tools could make it possible to reverse or contain the disintegration tendency.

Have the pandemic and the war been two turning points? Numerous politicians, officials and scholars have since contributed to this debate, often framing it as the pursuit of a “strategic autonomy” (Borrell) or even “European sovereignty” (Macron), an ambiguous concept remembering the traditional state.

The Monnet optimistic forecast about the sequence between crisis and further integration does not always work. However, Europe’s renewed cohesion is a matter of facts: confronted with the two existential common challenges, Europeans have so far been able to take joint responsibility, to a large extent through the EU. However, political differences matter on key issues such as “how to pave the way for peace negotiations between Ukraine and Russia and the broader re-ordering of the European geopolitical space”. Can institutions cope with these diversities? Treaty reforms will be essential “because the Treaties define the basic terms of interaction between member states and EU bodies and the rules by which decisions are taken at the political level — namely unanimity for CFSP issues”. The debate on treaty-level institutional reform is likely to divide the MS in the years to come. Despite the arguments in favour of the status quo, three main arguments play for a majoritarian urgent treaty reform according to Grevi.

A) The geopolitical context: what might have been suitable for the relatively benign post-Cold War strategic context is inadequate

for the era of great power competition and weaponised interdependence that is fast emerging.

B) “Precluding one or two countries from simply hijacking EU decision-making” is quite logical for consensus building decision-making like that of the EU; however the majority voting procedure is opposed by 13 MS.

C) Convergences are hard to achieve, but divergences become deeper after abuse of the veto right by some MS.

Other institutional improvements don't need treaty-change according to Grevi: fostering the beneficial foresight studies of academies and universities; creating a European security council; improving the EEAS internal socialisation between national and European officials, and between the EEAS staff and that of other institutions, beyond the procedural norms by which officials interact, also by generating a common sense of institutional belonging or strategic culture.

War and the change of the nature of European power

Very much linked to the previous one, this part of the book also develops between two poles: on the one hand, the global system change and, on the other, the ways of EU transformation as a more consistent geopolitical power. Balfour and Gnesotto converge on the limitations of the global bifurcation. Focusing on resilient multipolarity, by contrast, underlies the fragmentation of great powers and regional entities, and the plurality of actors hedging and adapting their power and alliances. The Middle East, Iran, Turkey, ASEAN, revivals of the AU and EU, and finally the Putin Russian adventurism, even before the Ukrainian invasion, provide examples of a resilient multipolar world.

Gnesotto is assertive in arguing that, even if “a bipolar system actually defines the European order”, “reducing the world to a new bipolar order between the West and the rest seems a too easy solution for a too much complex world:” The crisis of the US democracy; the global demographic change (with the US and EU representing less than the 10% of the total population); the misleading similarity with the previous Cold war; a dichotomy affecting globalization between fragmentation on the one hand and continuity on the other, with China as the resilient leader of global growth, with interdependences and competition between the west and China, as between every country and every market.

Balfour draws attention to another general trend: since 2016 three times as many countries have been moving towards authoritarianism rather than towards democracy (Freedom House 2021, International IDEA 2021). Since the 2010s the world has been experiencing the ‘most severe democratic setback’ since fascism (Ingelhardt 2018). However, the demand for democracy is alive in many countries, notably Ukraine, Iran, Afghanistan, USA (“Black Lives Matter”), Brazil and elsewhere. During the Coronavirus pandemic “the global geographic spread and pace of protest has been remarkable despite the lockdown periods”³, influencing domestic as much as international politics. Bipolar interpretations of the current world also fail to grasp the bottom-up movements, the regional, social, transnational, multilevel, and interconnected nature of the major challenges to humanity: climate change, development, technological transformation and other social trends, including change of power. Power was diffused away from the state, across societies

³ See the quotation by Balfour, [accessed 17 Apr. 2023, <https://carnegieendowment.org/publications/interactive/protest-tracker>]. New affirmations of democratic identity beyond nationalism have also gained global traction.

including towards international finance capitals (Kupchan 2012, Naim 2013, Rodrik 2011). This multiplex complexity has been well conceptualized by Acharya (2017).

The impact of these global changes on the EU may be analysed in open terms, as by Balfour, despite the serious multiple endogenous and exogenous shocks (“it was to be expected that Europe’s ‘awakening’ would be rough, Borrell 2022a”); or in very pessimistic terms, as by Gnesotto, putting in question the “European model” as such: the end of pluri-decade illusions about trade as a driver of peace, while Russia and China restore the primacy of geopolitics. Balfour underlines that, while the EU continued to seek global trade opportunities, the multilateral environment, including WTO, UN, NATO and even the EU (Brexit supported by the US) was severely weakened by US disruption to global governance during the US Presidency of Donald Trump.

The EU’s long crisis opened a new debate about its enhanced ‘open strategic autonomy’ (including security, defense and relationship with the US, and the consistency of external relations) which does not mean at all that convergence between member states was prevailing in Europe’s future. According to many, the EU has no choice if it wants to become a serious political actor: start a revolution, become a “super member state” (Gnesotto), with foreign policy geopolitical vision and military might. But this revolution has to cope with internal divisions and contradictions: not only revived divergences among the main member states, but also the enhanced dependence on the US, the contradiction between defence policy and green policy, the costs of aid to Ukraine for European growth.

According to others the EU, since the 70s, was looking at a theoretical and practical definition of its distinct type of power, notably as a civilian power, including among its features the priority for

cooperation, relevance of non-military tools, “and a willingness to develop supranational structures (Karen Smith, 2000; Telò 2006)”. Manners changed the notion of civilian power with “benign attributes which were further identified to define the EU as a ‘normative power’” (Balfour). Well, to what extent are these definitions called into question by recent developments?

The long and difficult Brexit negotiation was the first piece of unity-reconstruction according to Balfour. This revived internal cohesion was labelled as ‘the Brussels effect’ “through which EU internal rules designed through the technocratic logic of the single market acquires the power of external enforcement because outside powers are obliged to adopt them (Bradford, 2020)” given the intimate connection between internal and external policies. Gnesotto adds that this should be applied also to critical technology, energy and food. It implies that the EU re-establishes some sort of political control and protection over free trade and open markets, whether it is with China, the US or others economic partners of the EU.

The second challenge is to reopen in a realistic way the agenda of enlargement. Demands of membership may be seen as a confirmation of the attractiveness of our democracies and social model. The 2022 recognition of the status of candidates to nine neighbours, including the western Balkans and three former members of the Soviet Union, does not mean a short term; inevitably the confused process of enlargement to a 36-strong EU, runs the risk of being paralysed by illiberal democracies and geopolitical adventure states. Grevi has discussed, above, the sensitive issue of the balance between widening and deepening, and the need of the priority for treaty reform.

While rejecting any Polish leadership and vision⁴, both chapters underline the need for a more understated notion of global power. The EU should revive multilateralism in dealing with the new world disorder. But how? In the context of the relative decline of the West to find its role, the EU needs to shape its space based on its own distinctive strengths, “rather than mimicking some kind of power it cannot attain”. Against the bipolar scenario, the EU should assert its way, by “choosing modesty and realism instead of ideology. Instead of trying to preach to the whole planet the virtues of democracy that we betray too often in our own domestic and external policies, won’t it be wiser to accept the diversity of this world?” The EU is unable to protect human rights everywhere: welcome refugees from everywhere is our most important duty as democracies. However, “this does not imply to evangelize states, which simply cannot or do not want to follow anybody except themselves”. We must be aware that our values may have the vocation to become universal. However, for the time being, they are not. Let us keep them intact, honoured and respected in our own democratic EU, including by marginalizing some of our MS or so-called allies - before preaching to the rest of humanity. According to Gnesotto, “the EU need a long-term global strategy, consistent with the real world, rather than rhetorical demonstration of virtues and good will”.

⁴ “The prospect of a European Union poorer, more divided, less democratic and very dependent upon the US would be the consequence of the “Europe des nations”: it may come back again, where national interest prevail upon any collective ambition”.

The evolving relationship between EU and multilateralism

The interaction between the EU external relations and the multilateral framework is crucial to the main scientific agenda of this book. Development, conflict prevention, digital governance and health policy (notably after the pandemic) are crucial challenges for multilateral governance. According to Nicolaidis' normative chapter, within a multipolar and polycentric world, the whole multilateral network needs radical reforms towards more differentiation and inclusiveness. However, trade and environment, and their reciprocal nexus, are the policy fields where the EU is not only a driver but a global leader: in both areas, it is a matter of "international regime creation", as institutional arrangements made of several institutions and representing the implicit and explicit principles, norms, rules and procedures that guide international behaviour on a given issue area⁵. Interconnections between regimes are increasing within the context of "international regime complexes". According to Orsini, looking for coherence between environmental governance and trade rules within regime complexes "is perceived as central by governments".

Pascal Lamy's thought-provoking paper addresses the fundamental question for multilateral cooperation in these areas: "is trade good or bad for the environment?" Public opinion is divided on this important issue, as mentioned also by Amandine Orsini in pessimistic considerations. This challenge makes the new ways of a leading role for the EU very difficult, notably in the context of WTO and its two functions in serious crisis: A) in spite of the efforts of Ngozi Okonjo, the General Secretary, the negotiations for further liberalization are stopped by populist revolts, demands of national

⁵ KRASNER S.D., *International regimes*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1983.

sovereignty and protectionism; the USA is leading the protectionist wave by the “Inflation, Reduction Act”, a vigorous policy of national reindustrialization (238 billions). B) Secondly, the Appellate Body is paralyzed by the US bipartisan policy of non-replacement of US judges. Furthermore, the largest part of USA-China trade is out of the WTO rules. The EU initiative for a new WTO started after the DDR looked very challenging.

This crisis is aggravated by the divergences and competition regarding the application of COP 21 (Paris) and the public opinion divisions regarding advantages and disadvantages of trade for environmental protection. The WTO legal frame should allow for the “interpretation of whether a carbon-based environment measure is or is not fair as compared to international law”, but in a context of decreasing predictability.

The EU perspective is more optimistic as leader both in trade openness and regulation and environmental protection ambitions (decarbonization agenda before 2050⁶), with the largest market power of the world: “these two characteristics are specifically European; no other entity on this planet has both a positive environmental bias on the one side and this degree of participation in international trade on the other” (Lamy). And, what was surprising to superficial observers, the coalition who won the 2019 EP elections was in favour of an EU Green deal, the strategic choice underlined also by Pisani Ferry. The ways of implementation may be various. The WTO negotiations paralysis made possible and inevitable bilat-

⁶ Amandine Orsini underlines the relevance of the European Union (EU) Emissions Trading System Scheme, with current discussions under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement on the possibility of creating a worldwide emissions’ trading scheme on the same model. Furthermore, the Carbon Border Adjustment mechanism (2022) is meant to avoid provoking a large amount of CO₂ emissions beyond its borders

eral and interregional trade agreements based on reciprocity: when looking at these treaties, “a voluntary contribution to the Paris agreement can become an obligatory (measure), which is a sort of chemical transformation that the EU has now started to provoke”. Furthermore, Orsini underlines that “environmental provisions introduced in inter-regional trade agreements are more likely to pollinate the entire trade system. This shows the importance of regional players, like the EU, and of their interactions with other regional actors for the pollination of environmental provisions across the trade system⁷”.

However, what is dramatically missing is a coordination between trade/environment policy and foreign policy. Pascal Lamy concludes his stimulating paper by precisising his policy recommendations for a more coherent diplomacy as, to be the “first mover in greening trade”. First, we need to make clear our distinction between protectionism and “precautionism”; at the level of narrative, “the EU should therefore be more active in leading multilateral fora, in order to find multilateral solutions”⁸: but, so far, it hasn’t demonstrated the sort of leadership it pretends to have on greening trade. Secondly, the EU should better allocate resources notably to developing countries: it is not only a matter of the past legacy; corporations from developed countries can sometimes have disastrous environmental externalities, when operating in developing countries. The EU is leading the fund-building process of the developed world and international law provisions supporting sustainable development overseas.

⁷ MORIN J.-F., BLÜMER D., BRANDI C. *et al.*, “Kick-starting diffusion: Explaining the varying frequency of PTAs’ environmental clauses by their initial conditions”, in *World Economy* 42(9), 2019, p. 2602-2628.

⁸ According to Lamy, for the moment, the EU is a bit of a follower. You have countries like Norway, Switzerland, Chile and New Zealand who are trying to build a coalition for common standards — the EU is joining such coalitions

Orsini adds a very relevant point to these recommendations: create alliances and advocate for opportunities across international institutions for better coordination. If the EU wants to stay an environmental leader, it therefore has to convince other players⁹ and to engage in the trade and environment complex system and nexus¹⁰.

Nicolaidis brings both theoretical and political normative arguments for the EU supporting a polycentric, differentiated, inclusive multilateralism. Reforming multilateralism is the topic of a large international and multidisciplinary literature¹¹

Last but not least, Lamy explains how costly is the missing coordination between the EEAS (the voice) and the Commission (the resources). He illustrates this remark by the shortcomings about gas, both in Glasgow and after the Ukrainian invasion. The open problem is who should take main responsibility for coordination: in my opinion, logically the HRVP has, according to the Lisbon treaty, the “double hat”. Fourthly, the EU needs to keep and win its credibility at home, notably as far as the challenging issue of the agro-food system is concerned. The Ukrainian war shows how strong the anti-greening forces are within the EU and the difficulty of maintaining the ambition of becoming “the greening power”.

⁹ PIPART F., “Explaining EU influence in international environmental negotiations”, in *Journal of European Integration*, vol. 44(8), 2022, 1059-1074.

¹⁰ EARSOM J. and DELREUX T., “Evaluating EU Responsiveness to the Evolution of the International Regime Complex on Climate Change”, in *International Environmental Agreements: Politics, Law and Economics* 21(4), 2021, p. 711-728.

¹¹ Let me mention my forthcoming book, *Multilateralism, past, present and future. A European perspective*, London, Routledge, 2023.

Conclusions

All in all: the hypothesis of this book is that a new and better multi-lateralism is not a utopia but one of the possible global governance scenarios. The EU is a key actor in achieving it and the change is ongoing. We focused on the need for a “common European strategic culture”, which is more than a policy convergence but much less demanding than a common European identity. A common European cultural identity looks to many scholars as impossible to achieve because of its philosophical, religious and linguistic diversities. These diversities are not only a legacy of history, but are revived by the current experience, notably the different perceptions of the Russian war. “National strategic cultures have been forged through shared experiences, efforts, triumphs and failures, which have shaped a common memory and a sense of shared destiny”. The European Union is, and will remain, far from this deep national common identity perspective. However, at the level of the EU, we may witness positive evolutions: for example, the Ukrainian war may strengthen the feeling of common threats and, while pushing ahead with new joint decisions regarding defence policy, energy policy and security policy, foster a historical change which interacts with a shared strategic cultural culture.

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A transformative decade for the EU: How internal and external factors have changed its purpose and global role

JEAN PISANI-FERRY¹

The exam question I was asked to answer is not an easy one. I was assigned to discuss the global dimensions of the Next Generation EU (NGEU) programme. The reason is that NGEU was mostly initiated in response to a shock that threatened to trigger economic and policy divergence within the EU. Whatever external dimension it could have was not central in the motivations for it or in its design.

So I was tempted to hand in a blank copy. The reason why I did not is that it is, actually, a good question. Major external developments are often unintended consequences of seemingly purely domestic decisions.

So let me try to address the exam question. I will only request permission to broaden the subject a bit and to reformulate it in the following way: what role did NGEU play as part of a broader set of transformations that took place in the last decade? Do these trans-

¹ This piece is based on a lecture delivered in October 2021 at the Académie royale de Belgique. I am grateful to Mario Telò for having invited me, to Tereza Novotna and André Sapir for insightful comments, and to Josep Borrell for stimulating discussions.

formations have the potential to change the way we think about the EU, its purpose and its global role?

A LOOK BACK

Let us start by going back to the last time an overall agenda for the EU was formulated and implemented. This will take us back to the early 1980s. At the time the EU was stuck. It had lost momentum. It was not perceived anymore as conducive to economic prosperity.

The Commission President at the time, Jacques Delors, had been appointed to relaunch what was then called the European Community. Having formulated several alternatives for reviving it and having gathered reactions to them from the national capitals, he concluded that the only one with political and economic appeal was a relaunch of the economic integration agenda².

The next step was to work out the analytical framework of this agenda and to translate it into actual policy decisions. The first part — the EU's mission statement and its functional logic — were formulated with impeccable clarity by Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa³. The second part — the concrete policy agenda — was spelled out with stubborn rigour by the Internal Market Commissioner, Lord Cockfield.

And it was implemented. Its *intensive margin* relied on the single market, based on which monetary union would be designed and launched a decade later. At the time the importance of its *extensive margin* was not yet fully grasped. Yet from where it was in the

² See DELORS J., *Mémoires*, Paris, Plon, 2004, chapter 6.

³ PADOA-SCHIOPPA T., *Efficiency, Stability and Equity: A strategy for the evolution of the economic system of the European Community*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1987.

mid-1980s, successive enlargements led, within the course of three decades, to a near-doubling in EU membership.

The whole process was very internally focused and very market driven. There were also strong economic and financial constituencies behind it: companies endorsed the single market programme as a driver of efficiency and competitiveness. Somewhat naively, as it turned out, banks saw the euro as the basis for eventual cross-border banking and the emergence of pan-European champions. From the mid-1980s, when it was first outlined, to the mid-2010s, when the eurozone avoided fragmentation and overcame the corresponding crisis, the vision of a tightly integrated EU served as a fundamental catalyst of political energy⁴.

The model that emerged combined three core tenets: *integration* as the basic glue and the driver of prosperity; strong *internal rules* to provide clarity to private players and discipline often unruly member states; and, as many of these rules could be exported, a *natural harmony* between the internal model of EU governance and its support of the global rules-based order.

By the early 21st century, before the financial crisis, the EU could therefore celebrate integration achievements (primarily the single market and the euro), congratulate itself on having established the *politics of rules*⁵, and be proud to be regarded as a global standard-setter and regulator. As the European Council declared in 2007,

⁴ The euro crisis was in part due to the incompleteness of the euro, whose financial side had been left unattended despite warnings by Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa. It took a full crisis to overcome the resistance of national supervisors — and even so, implementation of the programme formulated in 2012 by the heads of state and government to break the “doom loop” between states and sovereigns remains incomplete.

⁵ VAN MIDDELAAR L., *Quand l'Europe improvise*, Paris, Gallimard, 2018.

“Globalisation is increasingly shaping our lives [...] We aim at shaping globalization [...] based on our common values and principles”.

It is important to realise, however, that this was not the mere logical outcome of the initial EU template.

The former French Prime Minister, Michel Rocard, observed in 2003 that the political Europe he had dreamed of and fought for was dead, but that the living Europe, although very different, was a remarkable achievement. *“Ce qui s’est fait sous le nom d’Union européenne ne ressemble à rien de connu jusqu’ici. Sans cohésion politique ni identité commune, c’est essentiellement un espace de paix régi par le droit”*⁶.

LIMITATIONS

Whatever the reality, achievements should however not hide built-in limitations. Three major ones gradually emerged in the early 2000s.

Integration disappointments began surfacing around the turn of the century. It was clear, by then, that the single market achievements were less significant than hoped — or, to put it differently, that requirements for building a truly integrated single market were much more demanding than realised at the time of the design of the

⁶ ROCARD M., “Du bon usage d’une Europe sans âme”, in *Le Monde*, 28 novembre 2003. In more detail: “L’Europe n’est donc pas une puissance organisée autour d’une volonté politique porteuse d’un projet. Elle ne le sera jamais. Il est sage, mais surtout urgent, d’en prendre conscience, de le proclamer, et de s’en accommoder [...]. Cet espace de paix n’est pas producteur de volonté mais seulement de règles. Il est régi par le droit. Deux corpus juridiques principaux ont été créés. Le premier concerne les droits de l’homme. En gros, même s’il reste à compléter, c’est le meilleur au monde. [...] L’autre corpus juridique concerne le droit de la production, de la concurrence, du commerce et de l’échange [...] L’Europe ne fait peut-être guère plus que du droit économique, mais elle a la taille pour faire le droit du monde.”

single market programme (and regarded acceptable by European societies).

A telling illustration of these limitations is the fact that, as shown by Jaume Ventura and co-authors, the crossing of a national border still divides trade between two regions by as large a factor as 5. In simple terms, Catalunya's trade with neighbouring *Occitanie* is five times lower than trade with the Madrid region, controlling for distance, economic weight and other factors⁷. The reason why this finding is so striking is that five corresponds precisely with the consensus estimate of the effect of crossing national borders between the US and Canada⁸. What this means is that whereas mutual recognition of standards, EU-wide standardisation, the (partial) opening of public procurement and the enforcement of competition rules have had effects, these are far too insufficient to overcome deeper obstacles to trade. Moreover, European economies are increasingly service-based and the whole new field of digital services is either dominated by US players, or by national players, but rarely by European players providing services across borders.

By the same token, the trade effects of monetary integration fall short of expectations by a wide margin whereas ex-ante estimates suggested that trade within the euro area could possibly triple⁹, ex-post estimates find a much more modest increase of 5 to 10 per cent¹⁰.

⁷ SANTAMARÍA M.A., VENTURA J. and YEŞİLBAYRAKTAR U., *Borders within Europe*, NBER Working Paper 28301, December 2020, [accessed 2 May 2023, https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w28301/w28301.pdf].

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ ROSE A.K., LOCKWOOD B. and QUAH D., "One Money, One Market: The effects of common currencies on trade", in *Economic Policy* 15(30), April 2000, p. 7-45.

¹⁰ BALDWIN R., *The Euro's Trade Effects*, ECB Working Paper, 2006.

The bottom line, as pointed out in the “Sapir report”, is that economic integration could not anymore be regarded as a sufficient growth engine¹¹. By itself, it could not buck the trend and trigger a faltering convergence with the US economy. Moreover, whereas enlargement had been a true economic success, initial enthusiasm gradually gave way to enlargement fatigue.

Paradoxically, the single market may have in fact given the EU more external clout than internal efficiency. Whereas its ex-post economic effects are hard to assess and fall short of the expectations raised at the time of its launch, it has considerably strengthened the normative power of the EU, and its ability to set rules that apply beyond European borders.

The second limitation the EU was confronted with is of a different nature. It has to do with the politics of rules when coping with fast-moving financial crises. There is no doubt that because it is not a sovereign state, a proper functioning of the EU requires rules. But in 2010-2012, the politics of rules took the euro area to the brink of collapse.

Stormy-weather governance calls indeed for reactivity and initiative, whereas fair-weather governance calls for predictability¹². Like when a country is at war, what matters in responding to a crisis is to be able to broaden the range of possible responses — if necessary through relying on discretionary power.

As observed by Luuk Van Middelaar¹³, the EU’s response to the series of crises it began to be confronted with over the last fifteen

¹¹ SAPIR A. *et al.*, *An agenda for a growing Europe: The Sapir Report*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003.

¹² PISANI-FERRY J. and SAPIR A., *Fair-weather versus stormy-weather governance in the euro area*, Bruegel Policy Contribution, March 2009.

¹³ VAN MIDDELAAR L., *op. cit.*

years has been based on improvisation. To cope with the brutal transition from a low-variance to a high-variance world and, more specifically, to the financial crisis / euro crisis / migration crisis / pandemic crisis /energy crisis sequence, it has relied on a series of innovations that have helped give it sufficient leeway to overcome these crises.

The ECB obviously was particularly effective in creating for itself new monetary tools. But in 2020, NGEU indicated that space could also be found for coordinated action by governments in response to the pandemic crisis.

Crises could have been lethal. They nearly were. But the fact that they could be overcome is indicative of the EU's adaptability.

The third limitation has to do with the gradual decay of the global rules-based order and the emergence of a different world, where hard power matters much more and where the effectiveness of rules is greatly diminished.

As pointed out by Rocard, the EU had been (and in some respects still is) very successful in a world of global rules. There was a strong congruence between internal and external governance, and it was fairly natural to export internal rules to the global level. GDPR is the latest example of such successes, but by no means the only one. Interestingly, the strength of its competition rules and the size of its market made the EU able to behave as "the world's regulator" (as angrily dubbed in 2005 by the *Wall Street Journal*).

But as Sapir wrote, EU power was fragmented¹⁴. It was strong globally when based on an exclusive mandate given to an institution (competition, currency), or at least on a clear assignment of the negotiation role to an EU institution, but otherwise it was weak. As Josep Borrell observed, EU power is fragmented into a series of silos.

¹⁴ SAPIR A. (ed.), *Fragmented Power: Europe and the global economy*, Bruegel, 2007.

The EU in a way is a perfect illustration of what Joseph Nye calls the “non-fungibility” of soft power¹⁵. The key difference between hard and soft power is that the former is “fungible”, meaning that it is “transferable from sphere to sphere” (for example, military might can be used to accumulate resources), whereas the latter is not (economic power is largely independent of military power).

Non-fungible power has many virtues. Institutions can be endowed with much power, but within the remit of strictly defined competence. We do have good reasons to love non-fungible power. But in a world of Strong Men, the EU is increasingly confronted with fungible power¹⁶.

Summing up, by the end of the second decade of the 21st century, before the pandemic crisis, it was apparent that the template of the 1980s had reached its limits and that the EU had to rethink its model. Integration was running out of steam; The politics of rules had proved counterproductive; and the world of separate sectoral spheres in which the EU could thrive was making way to a much more polarised world where it felt much less at ease

The EU was, in a way, ready for an overhaul. Events would soon result in three major initiatives:

- The European Green Deal
- NGEU
- The recasting of the relationship between internal and external action

¹⁵ NYE J.S., “Soft Power”, in *Foreign Policy* 80, Autumn 1990, p. 153-171.

¹⁶ KRIBBE H., *The Strongmen. European Encounters with Sovereign Power*, Newcastle upon Tyne, Agenda publishing, 2020.

Each of these initiatives remains in the making. What it implies is not yet entirely clear. But each is sufficiently important to contribute to a redefinition of the EU's purpose. This makes it worth:

- Assessing what is being done in each of these fields
- Finding out whether there is coherence between these three initiatives
- Discussing whether they provide the basis for a new European agenda

THE EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL

The European Green Deal proposed by the von der Leyen Commission soon after its appointment, and which has by now been largely translated into law, is bound to be transformative for our way of life and for the economy. But it has also been transformative for the EU and its relationship with the member states and the rest of the world.

The first reason is a simple one: unlike most previous initiatives, the Green Deal is not an integration policy. It aims at throwing most EU resources into the battle for a global public good. The outcome of this battle is far from certain. With the policies of the past, the EU was mostly accountable for instruments, not for outcomes. It was not accountable to the citizens for growth, employment or well-being, but only for having created the framework conditions for them¹⁷.

With climate, the EU took responsibility for outcome and connected directly to a political constituency. According to the Eurobarometer, almost as many respondents considered, in 2021, the

¹⁷ The ECB's price stability objective and the new financial stability mandate it has been given are admittedly exceptions to this pattern.

Union to be responsible for tackling climate change (57%) as those who considered national governments to be responsible for it (63%). Climate action has become a new pan-EU political object. The EU will be accountable for the benefits, and for the economic and social fallout. It is without doubt a difficult political equation: benefits will be long-term and depend on what the whole world is doing, costs will be borne upfront and are likely to be significant.

The second major difference between climate and other traditional fields of EU action has to do with the vertical coordination between the Union and national levels. For trade, competition or the management of the currency, exclusive competences have been assigned to the EU. For climate however, the situation is more complex: international negotiation in the framework of the COP is an EU competence, there is a single market for emission permits, and the EU has the capacity to mobilise its standardisation powers. But energy policy, transport, housing, and obviously taxation and support to low-income households remain in the hands of member states.

Climate therefore is not an exclusive competence, rather it is a shared competence under EU leadership. Moreover, the EU is — as indicated — accountable for the outcome, but that outcome will depend on a whole series of individual decisions at EU, national and subnational levels.

The third significant difference with other policies is that climate involves a stronger interdependence between the domestic and external dimensions. This is in part because of the large spill-over effects of EU policies in Europe's neighbourhood¹⁸, but also — and

¹⁸ LEONARD M., PISANI-FERRY J., TAGLIAPIETRA S. *et al.*, “The EU can't separate climate policy from foreign policy”, in *Foreign Affairs*, February 9, 2021.

mainly - because the eventual outcome of EU policy will essentially depend on the behaviour of the rest of the world.

Being currently responsible for 8.5 per cent of global emissions (9.5 per cent if indirect emissions are taken into account), the EU finds itself in a fundamentally different situation than when the size of its market enabled it to export its preferences. Its ability to claim success will eventually depend, first, on action by other major players, especially China and the United States and, second, on its own ability to turn leadership on the climate front into a permanent competitive advantage.

It was thought for a while that having survived rough times during the Trump administration, the election of Joe Biden implied that EU could share the leadership baton with the US. But the long-awaited climate legislation embedded in the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 is replete with subsidies conditional on protectionist conditions. It provides a clear indication that the US is not on the same page as the EU. Instead of cooperation, we may be on the verge of a major Transatlantic divide.

All in all, therefore, the Green New Deal entails at the same time:

- a redefinition of the EU's purpose,
- a retooling of its governance model,
- and a major investment into the effectiveness of the EU's global leadership.

NGEU (NEXT GENERATION EUROPEAN UNION)

The Next Generation EU response to the Covid crisis was a watershed moment. At the same time, however there is both remarkable consensus on the initiative, and remarkable dissensus on its legacy.

Some see it as a one-off, non-reproducible crisis response; others as a “Hamiltonian moment”.

For the EU as a whole, NGEU cannot be regarded as a major macroeconomic initiative. Overall, its grant component amounts to 2.8 per cent of EU GDP over 5 years, or 0.7 per cent at peak. The crisis response relied much more on action by individual member states. But for the least-developed and the most vulnerable, it is a turbo-charged Marshall plan and a potential game-changer, including through the deliberate choice by some countries of leveraging its grant component. Italy’s recovery plan launched by the Prime Minister, Mario Draghi, amounted to 235bn (13% of 2019 GDP). This is evidently macro significant. Moreover, transfers to some individual member states reached higher levels.

Three taboos were broken by this remarkable initiative: to start with, solidarity transfers, which were obstinately rejected by Northern Europe during the euro crisis, suddenly became reality; second, agreement was reached on creating new, temporary EU «own» resources. The nature of these own resources remains fuzzy, however. There will probably be few genuinely own ones; third, a way was found, on solidarity grounds, to overcome the legal prohibition of the financing of expenditure by EU debt.

The global signalling effects of NGEU and the ECB crisis response have been very strong. The message delivered to the world at the time of the euro crisis — at least until Mario Draghi’s “whatever it takes” of June 2012 — had been that the policy system was unprepared to cope with unexpected events, and that member states could only agree on reforming it on the edge of the precipice, and in a piecemeal way. This was a message of incompleteness and unwillingness.

The message delivered on the occasion of the pandemic crisis has been exactly the opposite: the EU displayed willingness to act, and an ability raised to the magnitude of the challenge. It started with a swift activation of the SGP General Exemption Clause and an adaptation of competition rules, continued with the launch of the Pandemic Emergency Purchase Programme (PEPP) of the ECB, and culminated with the launch of NGEU and the creation of the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF). In less than six months, agreement had been reached on the structure of the crisis response. For sure there have been, and there still are, disagreements — for example on the ECB stance, on the future own resources, or on the rule of law. But they did not prevent action, not even pre-emptive action. The logic of *ultima ratio* was forgotten for good.

An important dimension of the response was the demonstration that the politics of rules is not necessarily an obstacle to the politics of events. The politics of rules remains, but a creative compromise was found: the EU created for itself breathing space for the politics of events within a framework of rules.

The truly hard question is the legacy of NGEU. It is already apparent that some of its features will survive and transform the EU's *modus operandi*. The RRF is a permanent instrument which is bound to change the way the EU interacts with member states. Conditional matching grants are likely to become a fixture of the EU budget.

This is not the case, however, with the financing of the RRF. The legal basis for it is specific. Legal experts cautiously consider that it could be used again for specific, time-limited purposes, certainly not as the basis for a permanent debt-financing of EU expenditure¹⁹. Even this narrow window is disputed, however: in a recent ruling,

¹⁹ MADURO M. *et al.*, “Revisiting the EU framework : Economic necessities and legal options”, in *CEPR Policy Insight* 114, December 2021.

the German Constitutional Court indicated that it would probably object to relying on it for the financing of the green transition²⁰.

In the end, events will tell how transformative NGEU has been. Eventually, success will be assessed on the basis of results. If successful on the ground, it may well result in the creation of a new contingent crisis response instrument.

THE RECASTING OF EXTERNAL ACTION

As said, an endeavour to help set the global rules is part of the EU's DNA. And being both a large market and itself a rules-based entity, it has been very successful in its attempts to shape the global rules. However, the situation has changed dramatically over the last ten years, and even more since the multilateral moment of the early 2000s: the rules-based global order that governed trade and finance is unravelling at an impressive speed, while at the same time global commons are increasingly prominent, and geopolitical interference in global governance is every day more pervasive.

It is important to note that global commons are gradually substituting economic linkages as the main driver of global governance. Historically, our approach to international coordination has been shaped by the management of international exchange. Its institutional pillars, the WTO and the Bretton Woods institutions, have been created to manage interdependence.

We have now entered a different world where collective action matters more than the setting of good rules for the road to international exchange. This is true of climate action obviously, but also

²⁰ BUNDESVERFASSUNGSGERICHT, *Judgment of 6 December on the ratification of NGEU*, 2022, [accessed 2 May 2023, <https://www.bundesverfassungsgericht.de/SharedDocs/Pressemitteilungen/EN/2022/bvg22-103.html>].

of global public health, biodiversity, and the increased density of objects in the outer space. All these fields have in common that action cannot just prevent beggar-thy-neighbour initiatives. What they call for is a new form of collective action whereby countries are nudged into acting in the right direction.

As previously said about climate, the EU has seen an opportunity for itself in shaping global responses to these challenges, and it been rather successful this far. It faces, however, much more difficulty in adapting to a new world characterised by increasing systemic heterogeneity and the heightened interweaving of economics and geopolitics. For sure, the post-war world order was by no means apolitical. It had been designed to prevent wars through creating prosperity and served American geopolitical interests. But the economic sphere was reasonably protected from the direct interference of geopolitical considerations. In less than ten years, this semi-separation has made way to a much more assertive approach. Even the Biden administration considers that economics are too strategic a matter to be left to economists²¹.

There is no visible indication that this trend is about to end, let alone to reverse. On the contrary, the war in Ukraine, Xi Jinping's stance and the approach of economic relations by the Biden administration are indicative of its strength. We have entered a different world, and the question is how the EU can adapt to it. This requires:

- An ability to take into account the geopolitical context and its implication for economic decisions

²¹ HARRIS J. and SULLIVAN J., "America Needs a New Economic Philosophy. Foreign Policy Experts Can Help", in *Foreign Policy*, 7 February 2020, [accessed 2 May 2023, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/02/07/america-needs-a-new-economic-philosophy-foreign-policy-experts-can-help/>].

- An ability to resist coercion (through economic or non-economic means)
- And an ability to act outside the framework of multilateral rules if needed. As Sabine Weyand, the Commission’s DG for trade, once said, it implies to “work with others wherever we can, and work autonomously wherever we must.”

CONCLUSIONS

I have broadened the subject. I have not made it simpler. Not so much because of Europe, but rather because of the changes affecting the world.

Europe’s basic paradigm has changed and is continuing to change. Up until ten years ago or so, the EU could be characterised by the primacy of integration, a preference for governance by rules, and a natural role as standard-setter for the world. It now defines itself by the primacy of public goods, has found ways to make space for more discretionary action, and is in the process of adapting to a changing, more geopolitical world. It still has to rethink its role and formulate a doctrine for the times to come.

The question is how the EU can respond without changing its DNA. I could be very French and call for a political Europe (and I would be in good European company). I could pretend that there can be sovereignty without a sovereign, and speak of European sovereignty, but I do not think it would serve the purpose.

The way forward is rather to work out responses that preserve core principles and the essence of what the EU is - not yet, and perhaps never, a sovereign state; and therefore, a community based on law, rather than the primacy of popular democracy. For this reason, the EU is, and will remain, a “fragmented power”. This

is no reason for being weak. Much can be done within this framework, including in fields like defence and security, provided there is sufficient clarity in the identification of the challenges and sufficient political agreement on the setting of priorities. Here are the true challenges for Europe in the years ahead.

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The geopolitics of technology and digitalization: Rethinking the EU's role and action

MAAIKE OKANO-HEIJMANS

INTRODUCTION

Policymakers in Europe are increasingly concerned with the mounting strain on the existing liberal international order and the shifting geopolitical center of gravity to the Indo-Pacific and China in particular. As the status-quo of the post-Cold War era is quickly fading away, it is clear that a new, more challenging era of international politics is taking form. Technologies play a crucial role herein: the digital revolution is profoundly changing the way that people live and interact, and technologies are a defining element of the economic and strategic competitiveness of countries. Long gone is the ICT-age when engineers offered support for computer networks almost in splendid isolation. In today's digital age, technologies are permeating every element of society and economy, and have become an issue for all people — including foreign policymakers and analysts.

Maintaining the course of economic liberalism of the past decades will cause the EU and its member states to fall behind and hinder their competitiveness in the digital era. Therefore, new and increasingly ambitious policies and instruments are being devised and implemented to further European interests. These initiatives are underpinned by six key European digital rights and principles, pro-

posed by the European Commission in January 2022: (1) people at the centre; (2) solidarity and inclusion; (3) freedom of choice online; (4) participation in the digital public space; (5) safety and security; and (6) sustainability of the digital future. These principles complement existing rights — such as data protection and ePrivacy — and provide guidance for the EU and member states as they design digital rules and regulations.¹

Some initiatives by the EU and member states seek to *protect* these European digital rights and principles within EU borders. Based on the recognition that today’s choices of governments elsewhere also shape Europe’s future, other initiatives are designed to *promote* them at home and in third countries. *Regulation* plays an important role in both the protect and promote agendas, but shapes the behaviour of foreign governments and companies through a different, more indirect mechanism: the EU’s market power. For all three domains of promote, protect and regulate, the availability of competitive and skilled players in the private sector, civil society and government are crucial assets to resist the pressure on the key principles and foundations of the digital domain. This explains the EU’s push also for smart industrial policies and towards a multi-stakeholder approach.

This chapter unpacks the three ways by which the EU seeks to uphold its competitiveness and promote its values in the tech and digital domains. Following an analysis of the (geo)politics of technology and digitalization, it takes stock of developments in recent years in the promote, protect and regulate agendas, and offers ideas for the future. A key conclusion is that the EU and its member states

¹ EUROPEAN COMMISSION, “Declaration on European Digital Rights and Principles”, Brussels, 26 January 2022, [accessed 17 Apr. 2023, <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/digital-principles>].

have successfully positioned the EU as a regulatory power on digital governance. But the EU needs to aim higher, investing more in especially the promote agenda. After all, referees do not win matches² and Europe's attractiveness as a playground will diminish as fast-growing digital economies, especially in the Indo-Pacific, become the centre of economic gravity. Knowledge, true understanding, and a real sense of urgency with our decision makers of these issues is of the essence, and this chapter seeks to contribute to fill this gap.

THE EU'S GEOPOLITICAL AWAKENING?

In recent years, the parallel developments of rapid technological development combined with global power shifts and norms divergence, have resulted in a paradigm shift in the EU and EU member states. The paradigm shift involves a turning away from the market-based, open economy thinking that has dominated in European policy circles in the past decades. The new direction is towards a geostrategic, closed economy thinking, and a shift from a focus on trade to a focus on technology.

Exemplifying this shift are the EU-China Strategic Outlook of 2016, which described China as a partner and as a strategic rival, and the Industrial Policy of 2020 (updated in 2021). As High Representative for the Union's Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and European Commission Vice-President (HRVP) Josep Borrell put it: "The EU has the option of becoming a player, a true geo-strategic actor, or being mostly the playground." The risk, he added on a different occasion, is of strategic shrinkage, in economic reach, demography, and in normative power.³

² Taken from Guntram Wolff, then Director of Bruegel, undated.

³ From a letter sent by Josep Borrell to EU foreign ministers before chairing his first Foreign Affairs Council on December 9, 2019, [accessed 17 Apr. 2023,

Three main triggers contributed to the paradigm shift in Europe, each with specific effects on the geopolitics of technology and digitalization. The hardening competition between the US and China for supremacy that erupted from 2017, was the first trigger for policymakers to be more concerned with trade, tech and data — and the geopolitics of it. While the Sino-US rivalry initially presented itself as a tariff war, it emerged into one that was primarily about technology and data. 5G Telecommunications networks, gathering and use of data, semi-conductors and cybersecurity became hotly contested fields. Next, the Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated this trend, exposing digital connections as an opportunity: a life-saver, as people were suddenly forced to work, shop and interact online. At the same time, the global pandemic widened the digital divides within and between countries, and exposed disruptions in the tech supply chain that triggered a push towards “trusted supply chains”. Third, the war in Ukraine, started by Russia in February 2022, exposed yet further challenges to deep and strong digital connections, which were now widely used also for dis- and misinformation, hacking and (threats of) disruption of critical infrastructure.

While the Covid-pandemic amplified concerns in Europe especially of Chinese acts and intentions, the war in Ukraine exposed yet other divides between countries. Specifically, it highlighted that supposedly “like-minded countries”, including India and Indonesia, do not necessarily “bandwagon” with the West on a (to them, far away) war in Europe. Thus, while the war united the West — and the

<https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/aussenpolitik/europa/aussenpolitik/maas-borrell/2286592>], quoted in Noah Barkin, [accessed 17 Apr. 2023, <https://merics.org/en/report/export-controls-and-us-china-tech-war>]; and BORRELL J., “A Strategic Compass for Europe?”, 12 November 2021, [accessed 17 Apr. 2023, <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/eu-strategic-compass-by-josep-borrell-2021-11?barrier=accesspaylog>].

Transatlantic alliance and relations with Japan in particular — it also widened the gap between the West and other countries.

As the EU and its member states are becoming more aware of this, it is forcing them to rethink their relationships with those non-Western countries if they wish to cultivate long-term, strategic relationships with them. After all, as Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki of Poland eloquently put it in June 2022: “The economic domain is another frontline [next to the military one], and we need to not just win the war but also not lose the peace.”⁴

THE (GEO)POLITICS OF TECHNOLOGY AND DIGITALIZATION

Trends of centralization, techno-nationalism and surveillance have become prevalent in the digital domain. A few internet platforms dominate services and supply critical digital infrastructure. Supply chains of critical technologies (and other products) including semi-conductors and rare earth metals are reorganised to include mainly “trusted” partners. And a growing number of governments are using technologies to control and suppress their citizens. This is a sea change from the ICT-age when the emergence of the internet involved optimism and high hopes for digital technologies as a force for openness, global connectedness and freedom for all.

As digital technologies profoundly reshape societies, the fourth industrial revolution is creating new winners and losers in economies and societies throughout the world. Paralleled by the continuing global power shift in which China in particular is rapidly expanding its influence, this has resulted in a clash of capitalism and systems: a rivalry between state-guided versus market-oriented capitalism as well as between authoritarian versus liberal-democratic political systems.

⁴ PISM Strategic Ark Conference, Opening session, 19 May 2022.

Technology is not neutral

There is an urgent need to act on the fact that technology is not neutral. Humans' role in shaping the development, application and uses of technology is profound. Ethical considerations are built-in in technologies, and cultural, ideological and political differences make for divergences in the understanding of their "appropriate" use. This means that engineers and industry must be sensitised to geopolitical and regulatory challenges, and regulators need to be educated in the potential of technologies so that they can contribute to it while mitigating its challenges. At the same time, engineers and industry can co-create the digital reinvention of compliance through so-called RegTech.⁵

Now is the time for the EU to define its values, core principles and interests in the digital domain. And, based on this, to enhance investments in protect, regulate and promote initiatives. These must start at home and then engage as many, and diverse, a group of countries as possible.

This new era of geopolitics, wherein (digital) technologies are a key source of competitiveness, poses profound challenges to the EU and its member states. All too often, these are framed as a question of "How to deal with the US-China conflict" or "How to avoid a binary choice between the two powers?". Doing so, however, distracts from the real underlying questions that force the EU and European capitals to identify and prioritize our own interests, and to reflect on the instruments needed to pursue those interests and how to bear the (economic) costs involved.

⁵ See, for example, DOKTOR R. *et al.*, "What is RegTech and what does it mean for policymakers?", 21 June 2022, [accessed 17 Apr. 2023, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2022/06/what-is-regtech-and-what-does-it-mean-for-policymakers/>].

The real questions are thus: Do we protect liberal values and the peaceful world order, or do we lose them? How do we uphold and build our own strength? What is the European proposition to third countries? And how can the EU deliver on this with a needs-driven approach? These questions will be central in the discussion that follows.

US & Chinese tech companies dominate the markets & the world

As illustrated in Figure 1 below, the list of 100 most valuable companies by stock market value in 2021 is dominated by companies from the US and China. American companies hold almost three quarters (74 percent), followed by Asia with about 22 percent. Europe follows at a wide distance, with just under 3 percent share of global stock value. European companies are unable — and some, unwilling — to keep up in the business-to-consumer (B2C) markets or in their traditional strength in the business-to-business (B2B) industries.⁶ Africa stands at one per cent, with more and more interesting business models emerging although still in their infancy.

⁶ “Asia and fintech dominate top 100 platform unicorns”, in *Platform Economy blog*, 15 February 2022, [accessed 17 Apr. 2023, <https://www.platformeconomy.io/blog/asia-and-fintech-dominate-top-100-platform-unicorns>].

An overview of unicorns by countries of origin also paints a picture of US and Asian/Chinese dominance, as shown in Figure 2. While only the US has more than 500 such privately held start-ups valued at 1 billion USD or more, China is next with 180 unicorns, while India has more than 60. Europe's total stands at just over 100, of which roughly one third are in the United Kingdom.⁷

The greatest momentum in the digital economy is currently seen in Asia: the region accounts for the majority of the top 100 platforms in market share. Even if Chinese platforms are recovering from massive loss in value in 2021 due to various regulatory measures, Southeast Asia — led by Singapore and Indonesia — is at the forefront of the digital economy and technological developments. Between 2015-2019, the region's booming internet economy grew threefold from \$32 to \$100 billion USD, and is expected to reach \$300 billion by 2025. While trade between Europe and Southeast Asia is large and European companies hold the largest stock of foreign direct investment in the region, European presence Asia's digital market is negligible.

Beyond the question of which companies from what countries dominate in stock value or market share, our digital future will also be defined by the way in which technologies are regulated and used by governments. After all, some countries tend to consider companies more as an extension of state power and many tend to use technologies also as a tool in the geopolitical competition between countries. Technologies are thereby becoming the target of malign interference — for example, algorithms running AI can also be tampered with in order to disrupt or repurpose their functioning, and

⁷ See ZANDT F., “The UK Has Europe's Biggest Unicorn Stables”, in *Statista*, 23 August 2022, [accessed 17 Apr. 2023, <https://www.statista.com/chart/26367/european-countries-with-the-highest-number-of-unicorns/>].

digital technologies are being used to suppress human and civil rights or democracy.⁸

Also as concerns the uses of technology, recent developments are thus worrying from a European perspective. As illustrated in Figure 3, governments in many parts of the world are tightening their grip on the internet at home. China's growing international tech presence, in particular, exports illiberal digital standards and practices, leading to less transparency, online freedom, data privacy and global connections, and to more state influence. A case in point is Cambodia's plan of early 2022 to adopt a national internet gateway that will manage all local and international Internet traffic — both incoming and outgoing.⁹

The EU and the US share — with partners like Australia, India and Japan — concerns over China's authoritarian approach to (governing) the digital domain, which emphasises state security.¹⁰ A key characteristic of China's approach are its strict data localisation requirements, which prevent any data from being stored outside its borders and a mandatory security assessment for cross-border transfers. Another key initiative is its Digital Silk Road, which supports the overseas presence of Chinese Big Tech companies, thereby fostering interoperability and compatibility with Chinese networks.

⁸ REKOWSKI M., "Secure and resilient digital infrastructure: an agenda for Europe and Asia", in *AESCON Policy Brief 2022-02*, July 2022, [accessed 17 Apr. 2023, <https://www.clingendael.org/publication/eu-asia-digital-connectivity-aescon-policy-brief-series>].

⁹ WAN A. and MOK Ch., "How Cambodia's Internet Gateway will harm the internet", in *Internet Society*, 18 February 2022.

¹⁰ DEKKER B. and OKANO-HEIJMANS M. (eds.), *Dealing with China on high-tech*, Clingendael Report, 2020, [accessed 17 Apr. 2023, https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/2020-12/Report_Dealing_with_China_December_2020_0.pdf].

Europe thus needs to act — with partners — if it wishes to uphold and promote an open and rules-based digital domain.



Figure 3. Countries with the lowest internet freedom index scores (2021).
Source: Freedom House and Statista.

Transatlantic cooperation – and its challenges

While Europe’s approach to governing the digital domain is fundamentally opposed to that of the Chinese government, divergences also exist with the path that Washington has taken. Washington continues to prioritise the interests of businesses and (economic) efficiency, in a system that some refer to as “surveillance capital-

ism”.¹¹ Europe’s approach to digital and tech emphasises individuals’ privacy, equity and online privacy, thus putting a strong focus on ethics with a human-centred approach. In data protection regulation, for example, this is evident from its strong focus on the ability of people to manage and control their data.

Europe’s approach is at odds with Washington which continues to emphasise free data flows, both personal and non-personal, to strengthen companies’ competitive advantage in collecting and using data to develop themselves. Hence, more than a few US government officials and analysts strongly oppose European digital regulation of not just the US Big Tech lobby but also government.

These Transatlantic differences mean that while the EU and US share many concerns about China’s geopolitical alterations, joint action is by no means straightforward. This is important, as China’s growing dominance in the digital domain challenges not only the existing balance of power, but also reshapes the rules of the game of that very system and the standards and norms underpinning it. The US is strongly resisting both developments, unafraid of direct confrontation. The EU, however, does not wish to — or believe it can — curb China’s rise as a technological power. As discussed in more detail below, until just a few years ago, France, Germany and the EU as a whole took a very positive approach towards China, with few limits to engagement. The economic opportunities outweighed possible national security threats, and this was amplified by the geographical distance and strong internal focus of the EU. While most EU-countries now recognize and act on China’s assertiveness and authoritarian drive, they are still far from the confrontational approach of the US.

¹¹ ZUBOFF S., *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*, Profile Books, 2019.

PROMOTE, PROTECT, REGULATE

In recent years, European governments and businesses have started to act on the challenges of the geopoliticization of technology and digitalization in diverse ways. Initiatives of the EU and member states can broadly be categorised in three courses of actions: promote, protect and regulate. Action on all fronts is necessary if the EU wishes to remain a relevant player in the digital age. A long-standing challenge that is yet to be overcome is to connect the dots between the various agendas. This requires vast investment in knowledge and people with diverse backgrounds (from engineering to law and International Relations), and bridges between them.

The regulate, protect and promote categories all involve action at home — that is, within EU borders — and abroad (bilaterally and in multilateral settings), and there is some overlap between them. This three-pronged agenda resonates with what US State Secretary Anthony Blinken in 2022 referred to as invest, compete and align.¹²

When acting abroad, coordination with trusted partners is essential to make the most of limited funds, to avoid loopholes, and to avoid free riding, and to ensure interoperability and compatibility between technological networks of partners.

¹² ZHOU M., “U.S. focused on ‘serious’ Chinese threat to global order, says Blinken”, in NIKKEI ASIA, 27 May 2022 [accessed 17 Apr. 2023, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-relations/Biden-s-Asia-policy/U.S.-focused-on-serious-Chinese-threat-to-global-order-says-Blinken>].



Figure 5. Three courses of EU action. Source: Okano-Heijmans, Open Strategic Autonomy: the Digital Dimension (Jan 2023).

As visualized in Figure 5, the promote-agenda at home is about innovation and valorization, while action abroad is now taken under the Global Gateway brand. The EU's regulate-agenda, both at home and abroad, revolves around broad issues including data, digital market and services, standards, the internet and security. For its part, the protect-agenda is about updating the framework conditions of the internal market, and about establishing and deepening trusted connections with third countries (for supply chains, for example), while avoiding protectionism.

1. Regulate: maximising the Brussels effect

Since 2015, the EU has established itself as a leading player in digital governance, starting from cyber security and personal data protection. Internal market standards, such as for data protection and market regulation, become EU law that applies to all industry operating on the market. EU regulation is thereby an end to industry self-regulation. At the same time, the European Commission is taking steps to move from 28 national digital markets to a Digital Single

Market.¹³ Importantly, since regulatory competencies for existing and emerging digital technologies rest with member states, on such issues the EU seeks to advance European integration and non-binding documents that are subsequently put into law in the member states. Beyond liberal tech policies, reform in broader policy areas — such as access to languages, visa policy, labour system, banking and education — is another prerequisite to foster digital economy entrepreneurship in Europe and to assist companies that wish to operate throughout Europe.¹⁴

As a first-mover, the EU inspires other countries to develop regulation of their own on relevant issues, thus externalising its norms and principles. EU regulatory actions — with a human-centered approach that emphasises the interests of users — are thereby having significant ripple effects on regulation and business practices also in other countries and in multilateral groupings. Europe’s regulation is effectively becoming a brand that helps spread Europe’s digital principles.

The EU’s regulatory efforts in the digital domain can broadly be divided into four categories. These are efforts to strengthen cyber security, to govern data, to set internal market standards, and to regulate (the use of) technologies.¹⁵

¹³ While the abolition of roaming charges can be seen as a first achievement in the creation of a Digital Single Market, barriers still apply in many other fields, including cross-border e-commerce cf. “What is the Digital Single Market about? ”, [accessed 17 Apr. 2023, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/infographs/ict/bloc-4.html>].

¹⁴ A point repeatedly made by various tech entrepreneurs, including Loubna Bouarfa, at the Tech Policy Primer hosted by Considerati on 13 November 2021, and Bert Hubert in private conversations with the author.

¹⁵ BENDIEK A. and STÜRZER I., “Advancing European Internal and External Digital Sovereignty”, in *SWP Comment*, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, March 2022, [accessed 17 Apr. 2023, <https://www.swp-berlin.org/10.18449/2022C20/>].

Common policies in the field of cyber security were sought from 2016 through the Network and Innovation Security (NIS) Directive, followed by the NIS2 Directive in 2021. Framework guidelines and harmonized EU-wide cyber regulation are being developed for national capabilities, cross-border collaboration, and national supervision of critical sectors. The EU Cybersecurity Act, adopted in 2019, established a cybersecurity certification framework for information and telecommunication products that companies want to offer on the European market. Set against a context of heated debates around the inclusion of foreign — especially Chinese — vendors, the Commission in 2020 issued the “toolbox” on secure 5G networks.

Next, EU regulatory actions turned to the field of data governance. The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), adopted by the European Council and European Parliament in 2016, elevated the protection of personal data to a fundamental right protected by a comprehensive legal standard. Today, the EU is working on regulation that implements the European strategy for data.¹⁶ The aim is to create a single market for data that will ensure Europe’s global competitiveness and data sovereignty. As part of this strategy, the EU proposed a Data Governance Regulation, which creates the processes and structures to facilitate data, and the Data Act, which clarifies who can create value from data and under what conditions.¹⁷

Key initiatives to set internal market standards include the e-commerce directive of 2000, which the Digital Services Act (DSA)

¹⁶ European strategy for data, [accessed 17 Apr. 2023, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020DC0066>].

¹⁷ Regulation on European data governance, [accessed 17 Apr. 2023, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52020PC0767>] and the Data Act, [accessed 17 Apr. 2023, <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/data-act-proposal-regulation-harmonised-rules-fair-access-and-use-data>].

of 2022 updated to address the proliferation of illegal and harmful content, goods and services online. Introduced at the same time as the DSA, the Digital Markets Act (DMA) — or gatekeeper regulation — is primarily concerned with competition in the digital economy and ensuring that large tech firms do not dominate the market to an extent that new entrants find it impossible to operate. With these measures, the European Commission is battling to limit the power of Big Tech companies, which have come to set the rules of the game, imposing their business standards on their users and competitors. The aim is to provide sufficient room for challengers, for example by demanding interoperability and portability of data.

A final set of regulatory action concerns the use of technologies. Now is the time to set norms and standards for the use of new and emerging technologies — such as quantum computing, self-driving cars and cryptocurrencies — as well as of older technologies that are used in new ways — such as cameras and printers. EU action in this field received a significant push with the proposal in 2021 for an Artificial Intelligence Act. This AI Act is to lay down harmonized rules on AI, regulating access to the European market based on the risk category evaluation of a company's AI technology products. The Act was part of the Commission's AI package of April 2021,¹⁸ proposing new rules and actions to turn Europe into the global hub for trustworthy AI.

As said, Europe's regulatory action at home is having significant ripple effects on third countries and in multilateral discussions that are inspired by the EU's action. This so-called "Brussels effect"¹⁹ was

¹⁸ [Accessed 17 Apr. 2023, <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/european-approach-artificial-intelligence>].

¹⁹ BRADFORD A., *The Brussels effect: how the European Union rules the world*, Oxford University Press, 2020.

most pronounced with the GDPR — to the surprise of many EU officials. Following in the EU’s footsteps, a growing number of countries and jurisdictions outside Europe also started to draft and implement (personal) data flow regulations — including India, Thailand, Chile and Australia, as well as California and other US states. The GDPR also drove discussion on personal data regulation in multilateral settings, including in the Asia-Pacific Economic Forum (APEC) and subsequently the United States–Mexico–Canada Agreement (USMCA, previously NAFTA).

The EU seeks to elevate these effects by way of regulatory dialogues with countries that are interested in learning from the EU’s best practices and in guidance on underlying principles and norms. Beyond such bilaterals, the EU can invest more in multilateralising regulation with groups of countries, in an attempt to avoid the infamous “spaghetti bowls” of regulation that hamper international operations companies. Specifically, the EU would do well to engage also with hard and softer multilateral digital agreements in the Indo-Pacific. This includes Digital Economy (Partnership) Agreements (DEAs and DEPAs) and digital finance — for which Singapore has emerged as a hub — and the e-commerce chapters of RCEP and CPTPP, as well as softer “network initiatives”, such as China’s Digital Silk Road or the US-led Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF).

2. Protect: industrial policy 2.0

In the past five years, as Europe woke up to the more hostile environment and challenge of competing capitalisms, policymakers throughout the continent started to invest in instruments that need to operate when Europe is confronted with non-market players and economic coercion. All of these tools are new, and not country-spe-

cific. But they are clearly triggered by China's assertiveness, asymmetries, lack of reciprocity and lack of a level playing field that have been a constant in EU-China relations. Other triggers include an increasingly unpredictable United States under President Donald Trump, Russia and the US-China rivalry. With Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the EU entered a new phase, with even more geo-economic tensions, making it even more important to cooperate with partners.

Trade and economic policies are one of the EU's most powerful tools. This is thanks to the unity coming from the EU single market and the EU having the capacity and mandate to act in many of these fields on behalf of the member states. While interdependence continues to be seen as something desirable and good by most Europeans, the aim is to reduce overdependence and vulnerabilities and to strengthen credible deterrence.²⁰

At home, the protect-agenda has significant overlap with new or "smart" industrial policy that seeks to (re)shape framework conditions and aims for economic security.²¹ Key instruments that have been developed in recent years include Trade Defence Instruments (TDI), which have been used several times to deal with the problem

²⁰ See also WIGELL M. et al., *Europe facing geoeconomics: Assessing Finland's and the EU's risks and options in the technological rivalry*, [Finnish Government: Prime Minister's Office, 2022, accessed 17 Apr. 2023, <https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/163804>].

²¹ *Updating the 2020 Industrial Strategy: Towards a stronger Single Market for Europe's recovery*, Brussels, European Commission, May 2021, [accessed 17 Apr. 2023, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_21_1884]. For the perspective of the high-level Dutch Advisory Council on International Affairs, see *Slimme Industriepolitiek: een opdracht voor Nederland in de EU*, Adviesraad Internationale Betrekkingen, AIV-advies 120, 18 March 2022, [accessed 17 Apr. 2023, <https://www.adviesraadinternationalevraagstukken.nl/documenten/publicaties/2022/03/18/slimme-industriepolitiek>].

of overcapacity, including of steel and solar panels from China. A screening mechanism for Foreign Direct Investment has been established to deal with potential take-overs of non-market players of high-tech and sensitive sectors that could pose a risk for security or public order beyond the member state where the investment is made. Transposition into national laws is still taking place, and accelerated during the Covid-crisis.

In 2021 the European Commission proposed several new legal instruments to deliver on the updated EU industrial strategy released that same year,²² levelling the playing field for European companies and pushing back on foreign powers' encroachment operations on European institutions. One seeks to address potential distortive effects of foreign subsidies in the Single Market. Another — the anti-coercion law — aims to deter countries from restricting or threatening to restrict trade or investment to bring about a change of policy in the EU in areas such as climate change, taxation or food safety — the so-called anti-coercion instrument. In 2022 the EU created an international procurement instrument (IPI) that introduces measures limiting non-EU companies' access to the open EU public procurement market if their governments do not offer similar access to public tenders to EU companies seeking business.

Beyond such economic instruments, enhanced coordination and information efforts with companies to address supply chain vulnerabilities are also needed. Intensified coordination with the private sector can help to protect scientific and technological knowledge and to maintain the capacity for technological innovation. In the first stage, such mechanisms need to be developed by the European governments with the European private sector.

²² *Updating the 2020 Industrial Strategy, op. cit.*

Sharing of information and best practices on these fronts, however, must be extended to trusted communities with foreign governments and companies. This links to the protect-agenda abroad, which is about building coalitions between “like-minded” or “democratic” countries, or preferred partners, that share Europe’s interests in economic resilience. High on this agenda are efforts to build stable, secure and trusted supply chains’ for critical goods — such as semi-conductors, pharma and energy.

The Global Supply Chains Forum hosted by the WTO in March 2022 contributed to this, and more regular, institutionalised (inter) regional initiatives have been established to this effect also, for example, within the EU and in the Indo-Pacific. Also, trusted communities are paramount to (updating) export controls of technologies in the Wassenaar Arrangement.²³ The EU-US Trade and Technology Council offers a valuable venue for discussion on both issues, but more must be done.

3. Promote: innovation and the EU’s Global Gateway

Least developed of the three categories, but most important if the EU shifts from a ‘dealing with China and the US’ mindset to one that focuses on upholding and promoting its own principles, is the promote-agenda. Action in this field seeks to (re)position the EU as a true player in high-tech and digitalization, with European companies as standard-setters and norms-exporters also in the digital age.

²³ DEKKER B. and OKANO-HEIJMANS M., “Emerging Technologies and Competition in the Fourth Industrial Revolution: The Need for New Approaches to Export Control”, in *Strategic Trade Review*, vol. 6, issue 9, Winter/Spring 2020, p. 53-67.

Whereas competitors from the United States and China, in particular, built large data sets in the years before the GDPR was in place, European start-ups and small- and medium-sized companies are struggling to build them and are thereby having great difficulty in competing internationally. To address this problem of data scarcity and dependency, the EU in recent years started to invest in policies that pool European data in key sectors and, at the same time, nurture and maintain European players in a broad range of tech and digital sectors, including cloud services, semi-conductors, and domain name servers. Also contributing to this effort are adequacy decisions, which determine whether a non-EU country has an adequate level of data protection, thereby allowing personal data to flow from the EU to that country without any further safeguard being necessary. As of 2022, the EU has adequacy decisions in place for 15 countries — but notably not the United States.

At home, the promote-agenda involves a variety of mission-oriented industrial policies that seek to fill the gap when the market (in the short to medium term) does not deliver on public needs or goods. Although policies towards this end are no longer the taboo they were in recent decades, they remain controversial as the (neo) liberal mindset continues to prevail in many European countries. The need to rethink stable, secure and trusted supply chains and data ownership are key examples of this today. This explains steps towards a European Chips Act (for semi-conductors), DNS4EU (for domain name server infrastructure) and Gaia-X (for a federated secure data infrastructure). Yet another set of initiatives seeks to bring players together to foster solutions that conform to European principles in the field of climate and digitalization. Examples of such efforts to strengthen Europe's digital and tech capabilities at home

include the Green Digital Coalition and support for the development of open banking.²⁴

New industrial policies on the “promote” side do not seek to support European champions (as the first wave of such policies mistakenly did) but to support promising start-ups with the valorization of innovative technologies through scale-up to greater capacity. After all, in Europe, knowledge transfer between science and business is still relatively limited: whereas European institutes excel in research and innovation, knowledge is all too often not valorized through commercialization. The EU and European governments could assist further by buying European themselves. Adopting technologies from innovative European companies is an effective way to assist scale-up and greater market share of those companies, and thereby develop a trusted brand.

“Promote” policies thus need to make available capital to nurture and to maintain start-ups and to move from start-up to scale-ups, which are the job creators of tomorrow. Funding remains a challenge, particularly for software development and, relatedly, a lack of talent — of engineers and tech & digitalization experts in Europe. The relatively low salaries software developers and engineers receive in Europe is certainly not helpful.²⁵ Moreover, as argued above, reform in broader policy areas — such as access to languages, visa policy, labour system, banking and education — is another prerequisite to foster digital economy entrepreneurship in Europe and to assist companies that wish to operate throughout Europe.

²⁴ [Accessed 17 Apr. 2023, https://ec.europa.eu/info/files/200924-retail-payments-factsheet_en].

²⁵ Salaries in Europe are said to be 2-3 times lower compared to the United States. See for example various posts by Bert Hubert, 2022, [accessed 17 Apr. 2023, <https://berthub.eu/articles/>].

Less controversial than industrial policy, but also less of a political priority to most EU countries today are “promote” efforts beyond EU borders. Launched by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen in December 2021, Global Gateway seeks to do just this, following on from the 2018 EU-Asia Connectivity Agenda. Digital connectivity is highlighted as a key element in this agenda to promote individual freedom, political liberty and economic openness globally, together with partners that share Europe’s interests. This positive narrative highlights Europe’s so-called “human-centered approach” in the digital domain as an alternative opportunity to growing Chinese influence, in particular. With improved coordination that is referred to as the “Team Europe” approach, EU governments, companies and financing institutions seek to position themselves better in regions where growth, security and stability are key interests of both the EU and its member states — notably Africa and the Indo-Pacific, home to the fastest growing digital economies.

The EU and member states thus seek to deploy their cooperation with developing countries much more strategically, by actively investing also in the *application* of EU technology (with European standards and values embedded) in Africa and Asia. As a result, those countries are more likely to adopt liberal norms like openness and transparency, rather than allowing an all too strong state or dependence on giant tech companies. Europe’s proposition to third countries that wish to also reap the benefits and mitigate the challenges of the digital transition, can follow the same set of objectives that the EU also set for itself in its 2030 Digital Compass published in March 2021.²⁶ This includes the furthering of digital skills, digital

²⁶ OKANO-HEIJMANS M. and VOSSE W., “Promoting open and inclusive connectivity: The case for digital development cooperation”, in *Research in*

infrastructures; the digital transformation of businesses and of public services.²⁷

Towards these ends, the EU is preparing flagship projects — of which the EllaLink submarine cable system to Latin America was a first.²⁸ It has also initiated Digital Partnership Agreements that seek to give political steer and impetus for joint work on digital technologies in areas such as secure telecommunications infrastructure, safe and ethical applications of artificial intelligence, or the resilience of global supply chains in the semiconductor industry. Furthermore, Digital for Development (D4D) Hubs have been established at the Directorate General for International Partnerships in 2021-22 — mainstream digitalization in development cooperation efforts of the EU and its member states. Multilaterally, the Declaration on the Future of the Internet of April 2022²⁹ is the first successful example of digital diplomacy of the EU with the US, persuading countries as diverse as Morocco and Kenya to join the initiative. Whereas an early draft of the declaration that was more about sanctioning the internet, was successfully made into a positive vision for an “open, free, global,

Globalization, vol. 3, 2021, [accessed 17 Apr. 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.resglo.2021.100061>].

²⁷ EUROPEAN COMMISSION, *Europe's Digital Decade: Commission sets the course towards a digitally empowered Europe by 2030*, 9 March 2021 [accessed 17 Apr. 2023, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_983].

²⁸ The European Investment Bank [<https://www.commsupdate.com/articles/2019/07/10/eib-funding-supports-cape-verdes-ellalink-connection-4g-expansion-ftth-rollout/>] provided 25 million euros — of a total budget of 150 million — in financial support for the EllaLink cable, as part of its Building Europe Link to Latin America (BELLA) initiative.

²⁹ EUROPEAN COMMISSION, *EU and international partners put forward a Declaration for the Future of the Internet*, Brussels, European Commission, 28 April 2022, [accessed 17 Apr. 2023, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_22_2695].

interoperable, reliable and secure” Internet — endorsed by a 60 countries.

COOPERATING WITH PARTNERS

In recent years, the EU woke up to the fact that, despite all its merits, the human-centered approach comes at a cost — a cost to European economic competitiveness. After all, the prioritization of individuals’ interests comes with a trade-off, concerning business and state interests. For example, in prioritising individual privacy, the GDPR obstructs data-gathering by companies which, in turn, applies a brake to digital innovation, companies’ growth perspectives and commercial practices. Most innovation in new technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) is, after all, dependent on large data sets. The challenge is thus to develop regulation that does not stifle home-grown tech businesses and to develop strong players in the tech and digital domains that deliver the EU proposition to other countries through their global activities.

While the EU is by now well under way with its regulate and protect agendas, the promote agenda — in particular abroad — is now the biggest challenge. A networked and inclusive approach, with partners that share Europe’s concerns and stakeholders that can bring in a range of knowledge, is opportune.

As visualised in Figure 6, by 2020 a strong consensus had emerged between European and most partner countries — notably Japan, India and Australia but not the US — on conditional engagement with China. This means that cooperation with China is not ruled out, but care is taken not to align own priorities with those of the Chinese government or the Communist Party. All partner countries by then considered China’s behaviour as somewhat aggressive. However, as both the starting points of the various countries and direction of

change differ, differences obviously remain and preferred responses vary between the countries.

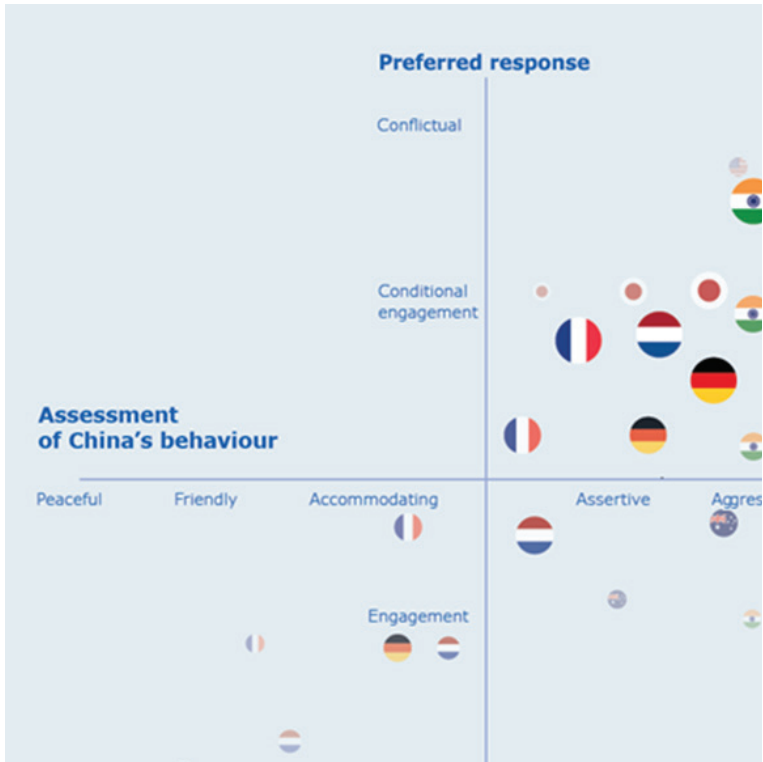


Figure 6. Selected countries' assessment of China's behaviour and preferred responses.

Source: DEKKER B. and OKANO-HEIJMANS M. (eds.), *Dealing with China on high-tech*, Clingendael Report, 2020, [accessed 17 Apr. 2023, https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/2020-12/Report_Dealing_with_China_December_2020_0.pdf].

Also after the transfer of power from President Donald Trump to Joe Biden in early 2021, the US continues to stand at a distance from the other countries, (publicly) assessing China's behaviour as predatory and taking an outright conflictual approach.

To bridge these divides and to coordinate action with key partners, the EU from 2021 initiated a series of efforts. The establishment of the EU-US Trade and Technology Council, which met for the first time in September 2021, is of course a key example. Next, in April 2022, the EU and India agreed to launch an EU-India Trade and Technology Council. And shortly thereafter, the EU inked a Digital Partnership with Japan, the first of its kind, while negotiations continue with Singapore and South Korea. The challenge with all of these is how to move from dialogue to concrete objectives and (sectoral) initiatives, and how to add linkages between them.

PLAYING TO WIN: THE EU PROPOSITION

A more balanced approach between the promote, protect and regulate agendas is needed to better serve the EU's interests in an era of geopolitics of technology and digitalization. The EU and member states should continue to make use of the current window of opportunity — their market power that makes for regulatory power. It would be foolish, however, to take this strength for granted: the fastest growing digital markets are not in Europe, but in the Indo-Pacific and in Africa. Beyond being a referee, the EU thus needs to not be afraid to protect where needed, and — more importantly — to invest where it can. This means broadening and deepening engagement with fast-growing digital economies and with developing countries that wish to also benefit from the digital transformation. To make the most of limited funds, cooperation with partners that share European interests is essential.

Making this change, requires expertise and awareness of the geopolitics of technology and digitalization amongst a far larger number of policymakers than Europe currently has. Only then can the EU and the member states co-create from bottom-up — with key stakeholders in the private sector and civil society — a stronger digital ecosystem and a human-centered approach. The EU needs to invest in ensuring that promising European companies remain European, and that experts wish to work at European centers of excellence. Also, people with knowledge and skills in tech and digital issues should be nurtured at all institutions and foreign delegations of the EU and its member states. Efforts must be made to enhance debate and the understanding of (the geopolitics of) technology and digitalization within Europe — in their full complexity. The digital revolution matters to everyone, and is no longer merely a technical or internal issue for specialists — it is foreign policy as well.

Europe now has an opportunity to engage the “Nobels” and the “Einsteins” of the digital age — that is, the engineers and experts who made great contributions to the tech and digital revolutions early on. More than a few are now worried that their expertise is used in ways not foreseen or intended. Critics of tech-facilitated surveillance that undermines democracies should be invited to Europe as partners. And successful tech companies and digital platforms that wish to work with more decentralised, open-source methods should be encouraged to co-create a strong economy that safeguards civil liberties in the digital age. After all, challenges in dealing with this are not confined to EU borders but shared by many governments and people throughout the world. The war in Ukraine is a crisis that should not be wasted. It further highlights the urgency of the matter and the divisions that we need to bridge, and proves that we need to not just win the war, but also not lose the peace.

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Europe and the Cultural Dimension of New Geopolitical Conflicts

THOMAS MEYER

DIVERSE GLOBAL TRENDS OF CULTURAL REVIVAL

Donald Trump, Marine Le Pen, Victor Orbán, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Narendra Modi and now, topping the list, Vladimir Putin, all belong in the global rogue's gallery. In various ways, each illustrates the fact that populist movements and authoritarian leaders from many different civilizations exercise growing influence and power, threatening not only Western-style democracy and the rule of law but the very foundation of modern political culture. Le Pen, Orbán, and Putin subvert the underpinnings of peaceful regional cooperation. Others, like Trump, challenge the very pillars of the present world order (with Xi Jinping and ascendant China representing a special case). The unprecedented MAGA phenomenon in the United States has developed its own momentum, reaching far beyond Trump himself; it is both a result and a catalyst of the decay of civic culture in a land that once claimed to be a global beacon of freedom and a guarantor of a liberal world order, but since has become a wild card, sowing confusion, destabilization, and insecurity both at home and abroad. In all these cases the key actors instrumentalize the *cultural factor*, claiming to be righteous defenders of their country's identity against its opponents.

Meanwhile, the European Union, despite aspiring to serve as an agent of international peace and a bulwark against “negative globalization,” recently has gotten dragged into a multi-dimensional crisis. It is beset by the fallout from the United Kingdom’s Brexit decision as well as by the growing clout of emergent right-wing populism in all its member states, especially those in portions of Eastern Europe. Everywhere, substantial segments of the population seem enamored with ethnic identity politics in conjunction with the new authoritarianism.

For its part, India, for many decades billed as the “world’s largest democracy,” is increasingly in the grip of the populist BJP (the *Bharatiya Janata* or *Indian People’s Party*), which displays features of both political-cultural fundamentalism and aggressive religious nationalism. China is reversing the direction of the reform agenda inaugurated by Deng Xiaoping in the 1970s, as it moves internally from a general opening toward closure. While its international agenda, committed to an open and multilateral world order, remains intact, domestically the People’s Republic seeks to establish the legitimacy of its social order and governmental power by harking back to the values and habits of its unique cultural traditions. Turkey, since the 1920s a pioneer of secular and democratic modernization among Muslim countries, shows signs of backsliding toward re-Islamization and increasingly authoritarian rule.

Russia lately has sought to recover its former great power status. For centuries, the country vacillated between the cultures of East and West, Asia and Europe. But its leader shocked the world by justifying his blatant war of annihilation against Ukraine, and the obvious war crimes that have accompanied it, by marshalling cultural-fundamentalist arguments whose ethical delusions and warped logic are all too reminiscent of 20th-century European fascism. Putin

relies on the ideology of an ethnically and religiously homogenous “Russian World” embracing all Eurasian Russian-speakers to claim a historic or even metaphysical mission to serve as their political and cultural defender. History itself, as interpreted by his ideological advisers like *Ivan Iljin* and *Vladimir Dugin*, has ordained that he should assume this responsibility with utmost resolve.¹ Domestically, Putin is reshaping Russia’s political culture in an extremely authoritarian—almost totalitarian—manner, as grounded in an idiosyncratic definition of “*Eurasianism*”. The latter fused the ideal of a homogenous, closed, ethnically-defined nation with a rejection of all forms of cultural and political pluralism and free public discourse as well as an uncompromising friend vs. foe attitude toward all forms of liberalism and “Western” influence. In practice, that ideology has forced several million people to flee the ruthlessly invaded and devastated Ukraine simply to save their lives, while tens of thousands of Russian citizens continue to escape the increasingly harsh new regime it has fostered.

Do these warning signs suggest that what political scientist Samuel Huntington dubbed a “clash of civilizations” has become the new normal in the 21st century? Do such cases all represent one and the same cultural-political phenomenon? A closer inspection reveals the interaction, partly overlapping, of three distinct developments, all supercharged by the impact of politicized cultural identity. First, elites in a growing number of less-developed countries claim the right to follow an alternative, non-Western path to modernization. Nevertheless, some of them (e.g., China and Turkey) continue to show at least partial respect for the core values of modern civilization as such. Second, in places that still maintain the besieged

¹ ILJIN I.A., *Unsere Aufgaben*, Paris, 1956; DUGIN A. G., *Die Vierte Politische Theorie*, London, Arktos, 2013.

institutional framework of liberal or Western-style democracy (e.g., the USA, Hungary, and Poland), we witness a conspicuous process of rebalancing the relative cultural and political weight of modern and anti-modern socio-political milieus. Finally, even where modern political culture has struck roots, we often detect a tendency to dismiss universalistic norms and values for the sake of cultural regionalism or particularism and to embrace aggressive political/religious fundamentalism in the form of uncompromising identity politics (e.g., Russia and India). Despite some striking similarities, these developments must be distinguished with care because their consequences for domestic and foreign policy may differ significantly. All three of them must be seen against the backdrop of widespread disappointment with recent trends in the West and, in light of those, a re-examination of its colonial past. People from countries all over the globe once welcomed the age of modernity due to its promise of true cosmopolitanism, equal human rights for all peoples, and hopes for permanent progress and peace. But the prospects for fulfilling those promises have grown much dimmer due to the serious economic and cultural crises besetting the arch-modernizing West. Those include everything from anthropogenic threats to the planet's ecological stability and the destructive power of an untamed market economy, both of which threaten social cohesion and security, to increasing socio-economic inequality and cultural alienation and a new wave of racially-tinged identity politics. It often seems as though large corporations dominate politics and society at the expense of social disintegration, in particular with respect to the relation between the rich global North and the still-impoorished global South. As a result of these interlocking problems, the credibility of the West is at risk, along with the universalist aspirations of its norms and values.

Across the globe various actors and cultural-political currents have enjoyed growing success as they challenge the Western model of modernization and its cultural underpinnings, both from within and without. They maintain that the present crisis furnishes conclusive evidence of the inherent contradictions or even the bankruptcy of the Western way of life across all dimensions, particularly for the establishment of just and inclusive governance. They claim, further, that the shortcomings of Western modernity show that the world needs fundamentally different models of development, culture, and political legitimacy.

In particular, during the present phase of global reorientation the cultural factor — i.e., the differences among and growing impact of cultural world-views, identities, and the use that leaders make of them — play a highly ambivalent, even contradictory role in politics, ideological debate, and intellectual discourse worldwide. We need to fashion clearer concepts in order to analyze and understand these unprecedented developments and their role in today's world. A host of new questions arises. What exactly is modernization? To what degree does that process affect the cultural heritage of different societies? How much opportunity exists for cultural and political agency? Is there a common core of multiple modernities across various cultural contexts? Under current conditions, how should we define anti-modernism? And can we pinpoint the root causes, forms, and consequences of the new authoritarian neo-populism afflicting liberal democracies?

One of the key challenges of the emerging political constellation concerns the fate of “normative universalism”: the elemental rights and rules that should provide the basis for urgently-needed multilateral cooperation in matters affecting humankind as a whole. To play

a generative role in the new “multiplex” world order², which inherently tends to nourish or aggravate emerging rivalries and revitalize or overcome ideological conflicts, the EU must redefine its role as a power of peace and become an honest multilateral broker for mutual understanding amid culturally-charged disputes.³ In order to demonstrate that it can continue serving as a bridge between the superpowers, the EU must redefine its agenda in accordance with changed circumstances. The long-accepted notion of the so-called liberal world order, which aimed at incorporating ever more countries into the normative model of “Western” political culture, has forfeited most of its persuasiveness.

Correspondingly, the USA seems to have lost the power, will, and normative credibility to guarantee that order, of which it was the principal founder and most influential champion. The American government’s recent effort to restore its position as leader of the world’s democracies thus far appears to be little more than symbolic stage management. Meanwhile, even in the USA itself the cultural and legal foundations of democracy have been under siege. Even when they do manage to function, their quality is often low. Authoritarian populism of the Trumpist variety attracts a huge following and spawns many “wanna-bes” on the political right who aspire to imitate their master. The USA’s erstwhile exemplary political culture of cooperation is being replaced by a pronounced cultural civil war between its dominant socio-cultural milieus. Tensions are running so high that democratic government as such no longer can be taken

² ACHARYA A., *The End of the American World Order*, New York, Polity Press, 2014.

³ TELÓ M., DING C. and XIAOTONG Z. (eds.), *Deepening the EU-China Partnership*, London/New York, Routledge, 2018.

for granted.⁴ The soft power that once enabled the country to play a leadership role has been spent.

CULTURES MATTER IN GLOBAL POLITICS

Most major common challenges of the present day force the world community to cooperate more closely than ever. The vital issues that we face include preventing a global climate catastrophe, taming emergent pandemics, securing peace, combatting terrorism, coping with mass migration, and taming the risks inherent in the emerging cyberworld. The West's long-cherished conceit held that modernization inevitably would result in universal "Westernization" with respect not only to industry and technology but to civil and political cultures as well. This regnant illusion of the post-war era, revived with such high hopes in the 1990s, gradually has been vitiated by the reality of co-existing multiple modernities, all of which continue to be shaped by the developments that occurred during the so-called Axial Age of 800-200 B.C.E.⁵ That exceptionally fruitful historic period gave birth to all of the great world civilizations that, to one degree or another, continue to endure.

Ever since the publication of Israeli sociologist Shmuel Eisenstadt's pioneering research, mainstream social science has come to recognize that, despite the global process of deep modernization affecting most countries, the diversity of civilizations will not culminate in convergence upon the Western model⁶. In venues such

⁴ LEVITSKY S. and ZIBLATT D., *How Democracies Die*, New York, Crown, Penguin Random House, 2018.

⁵ JASPERS K., *Vom Ursprung und Ziel der Geschichte*, Zürich, Artemis, 1949.

⁶ EISENSTADT S.N., *The Origins and Diversity of Axial Age Civilizations*, New York, State University of New York, 1986.

as China and India, substantial features of traditional lifeways will be maintained and integrated into the process of modernization, accompanied by a new cultural self-confidence. That pattern stands in sharp contrast to Samuel Huntington's view, which foresees the emergence of a global multiplicity of inflexible cultural identities, separated by permanent, unbridgeable fault lines that resist modernization and cooperation. The displacement of the Huntington thesis by "multiple modernities" has had unexpected consequences for the foundations of global politics, since it suggests that there may be an optimal meeting-point between persistent cultural divergences and a level of normative convergence required for global cooperation. The related academic discourse has been gathering steam for several decades, with scholars such as Bellah and Joas⁷ drawing upon Eisenstadt's groundbreaking work. Between 2016 and 2019, a distinguished group of Western researchers, in dialogue with partners from other continents, significantly advanced this endeavor in a series of conferences held in Macau on the topic of "Multiple Modernities and the New Multilateralism." They both deepened and widened this alternative vision, applying it to ongoing debates on globalization, modernization, and cultural conflict, which bore fruit in four volumes published by Routledge Press.⁸

⁷ BELLAH R. and JOAS H. (eds.), *Axial Age and its Consequences*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012; JOAS H., *The Sacredness of the Person: A Genealogy of Human Rights*, Georgetown, University Press, 2013.

⁸ MEYER Th. and DE SALES MARQUES J. (eds), *Multiple Modernities and Good Governance*, Abingdon, Routledge, 2018; MEYER Th., DE SALES MARQUES J. and TELÓ M. (eds), *Cultures, Nationalism and Populism*, Abingdon, Routledge, 2019a; MEYER Th., DE SALES MARQUES J. and TELÓ M. (eds), *Regionalism and Multilateralism. Politics, Economics, Culture*, Abingdon, Routledge, 2019b; MEYER Th., DE SALES MARQUES J. and TELÓ M. (eds), *Towards a new Multilateralism: Cultural Divergence and Political Convergence?*, Abingdon, Routledge, 2021.

Needless to say, those who have contributed to the growing literature on multiple modernities are mindful that enduring cultural particularities are sometimes instrumentalized by leaders trying to legitimize problematic forms of authoritarian rule and norm-setting. By the same token, we must recognize that other political actors in the West often instrumentalize “universal” values — chiefly by applying double standards — to bolster their global credibility and promote their own political and economic advantage. Consequently, it is quite common for observers in the wider world, such as Indian historian Pankaj Mishra⁹ and Singaporean diplomat and political scientist Kishore Mahbubani,¹⁰ to perceive these values in their current fashion as not much more than a cover for Western interests. Europe, both traditionally and in the present day, always has displayed highly articulate, internal cultural diversity and has found ways to manage it. Consequently, it has accumulated enough experience to seem suited to act as a mediator and bridgebuilder. Europeans are in a position to contribute significantly to consolidating the rules-based global order, trust-reliant multilateral cooperation, and conflict prevention.

To understand the role of culture in the process of global modernization, we must bear in mind that cultural units, whether they are large (civilizations and societies) or small (milieus), are never monolithic, closed systems. To varying degrees such units are always open, contradictory, and dynamic spaces of discourse in which the validity of given traditions is permanently being renegotiated among competing groups with different economic, social, and

⁹ MISHRA P., *From the Ruins of Empire. The Revolt Against the West and the Remaking of Asia*, London, Penguin, 2011.

¹⁰ MAHBUBANI K., *Has China Won? The Chinese Challenge to American Primacy*, New York, Public Affairs, 2020.

cultural positions, interests, views, and resources. However, some of their core features are forces of “longue durée”;¹¹ other, more peripheral ones may evolve from generation to generation, but even in the aftermath of a political revolution, cultures never change overnight, on demand or command. Huntington’s theory concerning an unavoidable “clash of civilizations” as the characteristic feature of the 21st century is flawed, because it hinges utterly on a misleading naturalistic notion of culture.¹² Yet he does get one thing right: cultures matter in world politics because of the social durability of some of their core features. The global dominance of the grand political and ideological conflicts of the Cold War (1947-70s) and the semantics of its basic conceptual apparatus focused our attention almost exclusively on the systemic political and economic antithesis between “democratic capitalism” and “totalitarian communism.” As a result, there was no room to give due weight to the socio-cultural dimension of states, societies, and politics. In that phase of history, the true purpose of human rights—the creation of a world committed to human dignity—seemed to be determined by economic and social realities, whereas the cultural dimension appeared as a dependent variable, superfluous and self-liquidating in the course of unavoidable economically-driven modernization. This constellation gradually began to change after 1991, when the Soviet imperium disappeared from the world stage without triggering developments anticipated in Huntingtonian theory. Instead, the cultural factor revived, and (with the exception of some complicated local exceptions) new patterns of a multiplicity of cooperating civilizations emerged.

¹¹ BRAUDEL F., *A History of Civilizations*, New York, Penguin Books, 1993.

¹² HUNTINGTON, S., *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1996.

The multiple modernities approach teaches that modern cultures do have a common substantive core or logic insofar as they are truly “modern,” as opposed to traditionalistic. Modernization implies that they are not reproducing their traditional values and normative features spontaneously as “objectively” given social realities beyond the power and competence of reflecting subjects. It begins to occur when cultural “objectivism” is gradually replaced by subjectivism and reflexivity as the ground for socio-political agency and legitimacy¹³. However, the salient point of the multiple modernities approach is the recognition of the fact that these revolutionary principles may be expressed across a broad range of values, semantics, cultural frameworks, social ontologies, and institutional patterns. Following German sociologist Richard Münch,¹⁴ Eisenstadt’s “Western” version of the common core can be reformulated succinctly as a culturally-neutral “logic of modernization,” encompassing the principles of rationalism (critical reflection), secularism (separation of religion and state), individualism (emphasis on human agency), and universalism (efforts to address a potentially unlimited community). It seems obvious, given the diversity of civilizations, that the way the modernization process plays out will differ depending on its speed, its cultural setting, the historical and social conditions that pertain, and the point in time at which we observe it. Thus, Chinese, American, Russian, Iranian, Indian, South African, French or British modernization will resemble one another in certain respects while diverging in many others. Yet it is also clear that when it comes to the political dimension, in which decisions are taken that bind all citizens, none of the differences among them can be

¹³ EISENSTADT S.N., *The Origins and Diversity of Axial Age Civilizations*, *op. cit.*

¹⁴ MÜNCH R., *The Ethics of Modernization*, Lanham, M.D., Rowman & Littlefield, 2001.

justified simply on the basis that the country in question wishes to remain “different.” Any such differences must be accessible to justification in terms of modernity’s central principle: their voluntary confirmation and support by the members of the respective society.

The multiple modernities paradigm is both dynamic and relatively open. As mentioned above, what decides which modernized version of a respective tradition will be handed down to the next generation depends not only on the content of that tradition, but also on the balance of forces among the competing socio-cultural milieus and political elites engaged in interpreting and reconstructing it¹⁵. Thus, the resulting body of tradition for which coalitions of potentially hegemonic actors succeed in winning acceptance always remains provisional. It is constantly being questioned by other actors who offer competing alternatives. Even when it seems as though an entire society clings rigidly and dogmatically to certain cultural legacies, closer examination invariably shows that its elites, and the socio-cultural elements that support them, are involved in a constant defensive struggle.

Unquestionably, when the defenders of a particular reading of the cultural tradition come out on top, their success most probably bespeaks a high degree of concordance between their version of tradition and the lived experience of dominant sectors of their society. Otherwise, the tensions between the latter and the claims of their opponents would become untenable in the long run. Cultures cannot simply be enforced from above. Both globalized channels of communication and changing lifeways in the society in question inevitably will cause the traditions to mutate, even though this process may happen at an almost subliminal level.

¹⁵ WEBER M., *The Sociology of Religion*, Boston, Beacon Press, 1993.

In this respect, it is worth recalling the findings of earlier academic studies of political culture. They indicate that, when a significant gap arises between the dominant political culture and the established political institutions of a given society, the outcome tends to be either chronic crisis or institutional change that re-establishes a rough equilibrium.¹⁶ Even though the state and other centers of power can influence whether cultural change or stagnation ensues, the crucial contribution of real daily experience to cultural development prevents them from controlling that outcome. For instance, the Weimar Republic in Germany collapsed in 1933 due to a contradiction between democratic political institutions and an undemocratic mass political culture. By contrast, in 1989, the end of the communist system in Eastern Europe occurred for the opposite reason: the contradiction between an increasingly dominant democratic mass culture and inflexible non-democratic institutions. Speaking more generally, elites typically succeed in legitimizing their power by invoking particular versions of their cultural legacy only when they find sufficient social resonance for it in the broader society. A sufficient degree of resonance between the mass culture and the institutional setting of a society is required to create enough contentment for its proper functioning and, above all, its stability. Normally, this happens only when a large majority of the governed believe that their most crucial and higher-order needs are being met, at least when compared to the past and to the achievements of other countries. Therefore, the degree of contentment is one of the indicators of a balanced relation between a country's mass culture and its governmental institutions.

¹⁶ ALMOND G.A. and VERBA S., *Civic Culture. Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*, Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 1963.

The antipode of Huntington's "essentialist" misunderstanding of culture is the "radical constructivist" error of the classical modernization theory, one that is perhaps even more problematic in its social and political repercussions. We encounter that mistake whenever it is assumed that cultures are reducible to the cognitive, expressive, and normative outcomes of current public discourses. Under that assumption, the broad outlines of such discourses are susceptible to being changed within a short span of time, irrespective of their cultural context. Thinking of culture this way means losing sight of the deeper social and emotional dimensions that give it staying power (*longue durée*). Those enduring features unceasingly are reproduced and reinforced in processes of individual socialization, the entire system of societal institutions, and the rituals and practices of everyday life. The result of such radical constructivism is that cultures seem not to matter much because they depend entirely on the currently dominant discourses and existing set of institutions.

As noted above, Eisenstadt defines the common core of all forms of modernity as the principle of "subjectivism," or "reflexivity." By those terms he means "the autonomous participation of members of society in the constitution of the social and political order, or the autonomous access of all members of the society to these orders and to their center".¹⁷ Peter L. Berger has coined the well-fitting formula, that modernization is the step "from fate to choice".¹⁸ Clearly, Eisenstadt's paradigm contains the idea that the members of a society must be the chief determinants of the direction that its evolution should take. In any given social order, the process of modernization will be influenced by the specific cultural context in which it occurs and can be measured in degrees of "more" or "less." The multiple

¹⁷ EISENSTADT S.N., "Multiple Modernities", in *Daedalus*, 129/1, 2000, p. 5.

¹⁸ BERGER P. L., *The Heretical Imperative*, New York, Doubleday, 1979.

modernities approach still entails, among other things, the acceptance and institutionalization (in some form) of socio-political pluralism and participation, both at the level of debate about the common good and at the level of political decision-making. However, these core requirements of modern politics might assume a variety of institutional forms and conceptual expressions. Furthermore, they may vary along several axes: the prevailing historical situation, the essential stability of the social order, and respect for divergences in cultures and traditions.

All in all, then, the concept of multiple modernities cannot and does not stipulate anything approaching the uncompromising cultural relativism that characterizes Huntington's view. Instead, the unresolved question that remains is this: which semantic and symbolic expression does the "common core" find in different civilizations and their internal discourses, and how can the basic normative consensus of those societies be expressed in ways that are broadly accepted?

TWO WORLDS OF HUMAN RIGHTS WITHIN THE "WEST"

In addition to these considerations of principle, those who engage in public debates insisting upon the absolute validity of the universality of human rights often suppress the fact that there is substantial dissent about this issue even *within* the very culture of the "West" itself. Close examination of official documents issued since the 1948 Universal Declaration enables us to recover that dissenting view. Outstanding in this respect is the *Preamble* to the *UN Covenant on Basic Rights of 1966*. As emphasized by thinkers like Isaiah Berlin and political leaders like Franklin Roosevelt, the Preamble stresses strongly and unequivocally that "freedom"—the crucial

value underlying the fundamental rights laid down in the five chapters of the Covenant—must display both its negative and its positive aspects in order to have a practical, real-world effect: that is to say, a *factual use-value for all people*. Positive and negative freedoms must be respected and actualized simultaneously without compromising their respective substantive meanings and essential parity: “Recognizing that, in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the ideal of free human beings enjoying freedom from fear and want can only be achieved if conditions are created whereby everyone may enjoy his *economic, social and cultural* rights, as well as his *civil and political* rights.”

It is undisputed in the European political/cultural mainstream that modern democracy means more than formally free elections plus free markets; additionally, it requires the entire panoply of individual basic rights as guaranteed by international law. Importantly, the *Covenant* is a binding treaty, as opposed to merely an appealing “declaration.” Its philosophy draws substantially upon the 20th-century experience that in the absence of positive freedom, neither aspirations to democracy nor aspirations to human dignity can be guaranteed. Social, economic, and educational inequalities of a certain magnitude prevent the disadvantaged sectors of society from making full use of their political or civil rights. In terms of their real capabilities, those groups are socially and politically “excluded” from, or handicapped in the exercise of, their share in societal and political participation. Excessive social and economic inequalities inevitably translate into severe political inequalities.¹⁹ As Thomas H. Marshall put it, “the right to freedom of speech has little real substance if, from lack of education, you have nothing to say that is worth saying, and no means of making yourself heard if you say it.

¹⁹ DAHL R.A., *On Political Equality*, Yale University Press, 2006.

But these blatant inequalities are not due to defects in civil rights, but to lack of social rights”.²⁰ It was Marshall who developed the concept of “social citizenship” that underlies the UN’s 1966 Covenant. Control over the means of securing fundamental rights needs to be recognized as being just as universal as the validity of the rights themselves. Accordingly, the Covenant enacts five categories of basic rights—civic, political, cultural, social, and economic—which are posited to be of equal value, mutually supportive, and limiting.

In this context, we must highlight the fact that two opposing versions of fundamental rights and democracy are competing in the core regions of the “West” itself and in other parts of the world for spiritual and political dominance (often in one and the same country). While both versions claim to be appropriate strategies for the institutional implementation of human rights, they contradict each other in essential institutional options beyond certain minimum requisites of civil rights and democratic elections. In fact, they represent two distinct political cultures, each of which respects human rights to varying degrees. Normatively, and in real, practical terms, the USA’s model is characterized by its acceptance of the civil and political rights *alone* (“libertarian democracy”) whilst denying the validity of the fundamental social and economic rights as set forth in the UN Covenant. According to the libertarian view, the political institutions of a liberal democracy consist in free elections and a free market economy plus the free ownership of the means of production—the only arrangement that creates the “Constitution of Liberty”.²¹ Consistent with this philosophy, Ronald Reagan refused

²⁰ MARSHALL T.H., *Class, Citizenship and Social Development*, Garden City, N.Y., Doubleday, 1964.

²¹ NOZICK R., *Anarchy, State and Utopia*, New York, Basic Books, 1974; HAYEK F.A., *The Road to Serfdom: Text and Documents*, ed. by Bruce Caldwell, Chicago,

to sign the relevant UN Covenant in the name of the United States on the ground that there is no such thing as social basic rights.

By contrast, the European social model of democracy builds on the concept of “social citizenship” and is characterized by an acceptance of the unabridged UN covenant with its stress on social and economic rights. This concept is deeply rooted in Europe’s history of the last two centuries and today enjoys broad support in the political culture of all parts of the continent. Its guidelines include a rights-based, comprehensive welfare state, a coordinated social market economy, and a participatory form of multi-party democracy. The social welfare state acts as a kind of shock absorber, damping down the insecurities generated by market capitalism by underwriting state-sponsored security guarantees that are independent of the market. It provides a minimum income to individuals and families, while offering effective protection against sickness, unemployment, and poverty in old age. The main aim of the comprehensive welfare state is to guarantee the full societal inclusion of all citizens, and thus their capability to act as free and equal democratic citizens in all relevant circumstances.

CIVILIZATIONS AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Jürgen Habermas has shown in his most recent work, *This too a History of Philosophy (Auch eine Geschichte der Philosophie)*²² that certain basic cultural traits of the great civilizations have helped shape their entire development from their emergence in the *Axial Age* to the present day. In the West since late antiquity, the leading role of Christianity gradually fostered the idea of the absolute

University of Chicago Press, 2007.

²² HABERMAS J., *Auch eine Geschichte der Philosophie*, Berlin, Suhrkamp, 2019.

primacy of the individual person—first in the religious doctrine of salvation (soteriology), later in the realm of political philosophy, and finally as enshrined in basic law. This development has given rise to the unique *sanctification of the individual person* in the West as described by one of the founding fathers of sociology, *Emile Durkheim*. According to his account, the social arrangements of modern society were understood to have emerged from the free decisions of initially singular, self-sufficient individuals. Both civil society and the state were believed to have been created by an arbitrary act of these individuals to conclude a social contract enabling them to live together peacefully from then on. This intellectual construct, which imagines the social sphere to be a secondary phenomenon derived from the primacy of the absolute individual person, underlies all modern Western thinking and constitutions. Obviously, in regard to social ontology, this is in every respect an untenable fiction, but it successfully served the purpose of justifying the absolute supremacy of the rights of the individual. It is also the origin of the primacy, even the independence, of the input over the output side of the political process, which is common in the West.

In a remarkable but nearly forgotten sidelight of history, *Helmut Schmidt*, a former chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, joined forces in 1997 with an impressive group of outstanding former leaders from both East and West, North and South (the “*Interaction Council*” including, among others, Gro Harlem Brundtland, Koh Choak Tong, Romano Prodi, Susilo Yudhoyono, Gerhard Schröder, Sayed Khatami, and Bill Clinton) in an attempt to restore a viable balance between individual rights and social obligations. Together they proposed that the UN should amend the 1948 Declaration of Human Rights by adding a number of substantive references to Eastern traditions such as those associated with Gandhi and Con-

fucius and enlisting the aid of co-authors representing those traditions. The group intended to submit their “Declaration of Human Responsibilities” to the UN General Assembly. It remains worthwhile to include this idea in the current debates on multiple modernities in order better to understand certain premises of Eastern cultures and their perception of human dignity and rights. The proposed amendment should be included among the key sources for a new global dialogue on basic rights.

A brief glance at some features of China’s civilizational background might be helpful for our present discussion.²³ As lucidly explained by the influential political philosopher *Zhao Tingyang*, from the chief Chinese social research institute CASS in his indispensable book *All Under Heaven*, the basic social-cosmological unit underlying the Confucian worldview is not the isolated individual person, but rather the *multipolar social relations unit* in which all individuals necessarily are embedded from the outset²⁴. Only within pre-existing multiple social relations can individuals become and remain individuals. From this perspective, individual persons pictured as existing outside social relations which they then subsequently must generate exist only in the fictions of Western culture and political theory, not in the real world.²⁵ By now this realistic

²³ For a more complex analysis cf. HEBERER Th. and MÜLLER A., *Entwicklungsstaat China*, Bonn, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2020.

²⁴ ZHAO T. (2021. See also: *Julia Tao* (2018).

²⁵ Of course, both the official Catholic social doctrine and, in more recent times, the philosophy of communitarianism always have argued in favor of the social ontology and continue to do so. This tendency is embodied in their concept of the social “person” as differentiated from the isolated “individual.” Yet, in the mainstream of Western thinking and political culture since the period of metaphysical nominalism, the social contract theory of the state and its constitution, and the paradigm-building moral philosophy of Immanuel Kant, it was always the atomistic social ontology which dominated the background

socio-cosmological premise has served as the central pillar of the Confucian-influenced cultures in East Asia, and in particular of their ethics and political philosophies. They understand the topic of basic rights to be a question of distributing rights and obligations between individual persons and their relevant social collectivities, from the family up to the state and the world community. In this worldview, individual rights and the social duties of human beings are equally “primordial” and interdependent. This basic norm applies in particular to the rights and duties of political rulers, thus giving rise to a characteristically strong output orientation in matters of political legitimacy. As long as the output of their rule obviously serves the interests and values of both the individuals and the community, their rule will count as legitimate; however, as soon as they fail to deliver, they lose the legitimacy to govern and the support of the society. The concept that is nearest to this approach is that of “good governance,” which comprises both input and output criteria. To be sure, human rights always must be included among the key yardsticks for assessing the degree to which good governance is being practiced in a given country, whether East or West. But they must be understood in their entirety, as a complete set, rather than in isolation. Above all, output effects on social life and individual living conditions must be taken into account alongside those rights.

Addressing the example of China, we must first recall that the country’s compliance with the UN’s list of basic rights is incomplete and ambiguous. Furthermore, it has changed in recent years. Until just a few years ago, the argument advanced by Chinese scholars in academic and political debates often went like this: We already ratified the social and economic rights of the *1966 U.N. Covenant*, we

paradigm of the cultural mainstream. (My thanks to Professor Hans Joas of the Free University of Berlin for clarifying comments in this context.)

signed the Civil and Political Basic Rights Covenant, and we hope to be ready to ratify the latter in the near future. Three separate reasons were presented to justify postponing the ratification of Civil Basic Rights: (1) There is an overwhelming need to overcome absolute poverty and the lack of education, particularly in rural areas (in conformity with the Basic Right to Development). (2) China is a huge country of 1.4 billion inhabitants lacking any democratic tradition or cultural inclination towards it, at least among the majority. Moreover, it exhibits extreme social, economic, and civilizational diversity. The presence of sizable ethno-cultural minorities, among the largest of which aggressive fundamentalist identity politics and irredentist aspirations have emerged, indicates that a functioning democracy cannot be introduced overnight, as if by divine “fiat.” (3) Because we are dealing with a country in which disorder, instability, civil war, and irredentism have been common features throughout a history stretching over two millennia, people expect that the main thrust of governance should be to maintain domestic peace, unity, and stability by way of an output-centered mode of centralized albeit moderate authoritarian rule.

There is no doubt that all three of those arguments deserve both respect and a frank debate. More recently, however, the grounds offered for the delay in guaranteeing basic civil rights have shifted. The preferred opinion now seems to be that the UN formulation of basic rights is biased by the cultural priorities of the Western world and lacks sufficient concern for Eastern and Third World cultural, economic, and political conditions. Therefore, the criteria for legitimate and successful governance in China should rather be derived from China’s own *normative traditions*, which tend toward compliance with the strong output-expectations of its own people, as well as an appropriate recognition of the country in the international

arena. Thus, the country should resort more consistently to concepts with deep cultural roots like “*all under heaven*” (service for and inclusion of the entire society), “*harmony*” (mutual responsibilities and rights), and “*modest wealth for the whole people*” (a stress on social and economic rights). All of these are notions derived from the moral universe of Confucianism. Only this course would guarantee both stability and the rapid growth of inclusive wealth, maintaining trust in government and broad support for it. The deliberate revival of certain key elements of long-standing normative traditions *in a context of modernization* is different from the political *fundamentalism* practiced by a country like Saudi Arabia, which has tried to immunize its traditions from outside scrutiny and the influence of modernization. It differs likewise from the strategy of a country such as Iran, which declares a certain phase of a given culture’s past to be as a whole the repository of an absolute truth that is not open to debate and modern re-interpretation.

Obviously, from a Western perspective, such a claim is open to skepticism and cries out for critical debate. But there is little doubt that, in the case of China, several strong points can be adduced in its favor. For instance, the Chinese regime has succeeded in lifting more than 500 million people out of poverty in just three decades, ended absolute poverty within its borders while attaining one of the world’s highest levels of trust in the government (85%), and registered a continuous rise in its scores on the Human Development Index designed by Indian economist Amartya Sen and American philosopher Martha Nussbaum, which measures mainly government performance in matters touching on positive freedom (freedom as “capability”). Yet it cannot be ignored that the CPC’s way of legitimizing its authoritarian “Chinese” mode of governance has become increasingly ambiguous. Presently, four different justifications

coexist, sometimes even in a confusing mix. These include the traditional (Confucian) governance ethics, which is becoming increasingly prominent; a new nationalism; a still-selective reference to the U.N. covenants;²⁶ and a halfhearted, rather ritualistic return to a rudimentary form of Marxism (as witnessed in the campaign to revitalize the study of historical materialism). Still, on a de facto basis, the Confucian elements discussed above — modest wealth, social harmony, and all-inclusive good governance — continue to do the regime’s normative heavy-lifting. Elements of the rule of law are in place as well as a certain political pluralism, mainly in the discussions between scholars and academic institutes concerned with social and political topics.

China’s claim to be a modernizing country that is following its own unique way has a long tradition. Ever since the mid-1800s (if not earlier), when China was carved up among the colonial powers, there has been lively debate about how to select a modernization path best suited for the country—one that steers a course between East and West (Gransow 2006: 152).²⁷ In the second half of the 19th century, intellectuals in the Yangwu movement proposed to preserve the substance of the traditional culture while adopting the West’s most stellar technological and military achievements. In order to attain levels of affluence comparable to those of the West, some proposed in addition to adopt key elements of its market economy and entrepreneurial style. The *Meiji Restoration* in Japan served as another point of reference for this idea of a third path of modernization. Under the formula of “*tiyong*,” traditional Chinese doctrines would serve as the substance of a new mixture whereas Western

²⁶ The ILO Convention of 1930 against forced labor and the one of 1957 abolishing forced labor will be ratified in 2022 as announced by Press Agency Xinhua.

²⁷ HEBERER Th. and MÜLLER A., *op. cit.*

elements would function as mere practices or applications (*Zhang Zhidong*). The new approach would cast the Chinese component as the main issue of modernization (the “way”) and the Western parts as a series of side issues (the “instruments”). The overall objective for the right blend between East and West was always “wealth” for the people and “strength” for the country. Although the concepts of modernization and Westernization were carefully differentiated, the famous reform movement of 1898 rejected this dualistic approach and shared only the overall objective of wealth and strength. The same can be said about the so-called *Movement of May 4*, 1919. Both argued that China would have to adopt the full program of Westernization in order to achieve its goals. This latter position persists in current debates, but is no longer prominent.

In some respects, all of the terms in these debates have remained roughly similar ever since, reflected even in Deng Xiaoping’s concept of the “Four Modernizations” (1978). The latter was understood as a way to carry out selective Westernization in regard to agriculture, industry, science/technology, and military/defense. Yet, in each of these fields, what actually happened resembled not so much a purely Western style of modernization as a synthesis between Chinese traditions and Western achievements. In contrast to the Western modernization theories that prevailed in the second half of the 20th century, the choices that the principal Chinese actors made in any given episode of their modernization process have not been institutionally determined such that they would have to embrace the complete package of Western “modern” institutions in order to make the arrangement work. In this regard, the decision of the Chinese leaders about how to pursue the kind of modernization they prefer is “modern” according to the perspectives of *Shmuel Eisenstadt* and *Max Weber*. However, one question remains a matter of

dispute: whether the recent Chinese approach to modernization is also modern in the sense of achieving good governance in a universalistic sense.

As noted above, whatever cultural differences happen to exist, nothing can justify persistent violations of the UN's core human rights which all parties in principle have affirmed. However, frequent experiences of one-sidedness and weaponizing uses of the human rights argument by Western actors have triggered an unfortunate trend: Voices that seek to relativize or dismiss the UN human rights project altogether as the expression of prolonged "Western domination by other means" are being amplified. In order to pave the way for a renewed consensus, international multidisciplinary research and scholarly dialogue can suggest some helpful conceptions that take the multiplicity of vital civilizations into account and *reconstruct the concept of universal basic rights in this framework*. To begin with, in any given case, it matters what kind of relativizing is being advocated in respect to the full list of basic rights. The UN system of fundamental rights does in fact allow limited room for several types of relativizing and derogation. In terms of the distinction between social and civil rights, for example, the legal principle of equal validity remains in effect, albeit with a crucial distinction: the former imposes *obligations of conduct* (implementation according to available resources), while the latter imposes *obligations of result* (immediate and full implementation). Concerning civil and political rights, it is also common to draw a distinction between those that are derogable and those that are non-derogable, which leaves some leeway for justified restrictions or postponements of rights-enforcement under certain circumstances, a qualification that need to be discussed in the relevant multilateral UN commissions. The Chinese government, among others, has also referred to the UN Covenant

on Development that defines social and economic development as such as a human right, as demanded in parts of the *Bangkok Declaration of Asian States* of 1993.

In 1998, an *Advisory Council to the Dutch Government* reached the following conclusion: “*Since abstractly phrased international human rights norms have to be applied in a variety of social, economic, and cultural contexts, states have a certain degree of latitude in making policy...We need a more moderate relativist standpoint which calls for tolerance of differences in the specific implementation of human rights.... The importance of implementing the right completely must always be weighed against other significant interests of society.*” Or, to put it more simply: “*Universality does not mean uniformity.*”²⁸

After ratifying Part I of the 1966 Covenant in 1998 (something that the USA still has not done), the People’s Republic of China signed over 20 agreements that deal with human rights. In addition, it engages in long term “human rights dialogues” with partners such as the EU and the Federal Republic of Germany. Nevertheless, it has ratified neither Part II of the Covenant, which concerns civil and political rights, nor the ILO convention on labor rights. In this context, the Chinese leadership likes to refer indirectly or directly to the “rights of civilizations” argument. The crucial question arises: How does the leadership imagine the exact relationship between universal basic rights and the particular civilization of their country? Do they have in mind an effort to integrate the former conceptually and via interpretation into the latter, hoping to overcome the current situation in which the space of human rights has been misused so often for polemical purposes and weaponized for political ends? Do they

²⁸ ADVISORY COUNCIL ON INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE NETHERLANDS, *Universality of Human Rights and Cultural Diversity*, The Hague, 1998.

wish for the basic rights to be reformulated in a globally more inclusive manner? Or do they want to turn away from the entire idea and semantics of a normative universalism that transcends civilizational boundaries? Either forthcoming EU-China summits will pave the way for new dialogues on this, or the twenty-year-old partnership will continue to depend on mutual misunderstanding, or on the priorities of third actors.

At present, another major power that represents impressive civilizational heritages of its own, India, is headed by politicians and intellectuals who call for a revival of their countries' unique traditions in order to justify deviating from the Western path of modernization and normative universalism. Yet, in this regard they are not in the crosshairs of the normative attacks of the USA and other countries of the "West." India continues to profit from some of its special characteristics, including its still-low level of economic competitiveness on the world market, the historically close ties between some segments of its postcolonial elites and the ruling elites of the Western world, and the undiminished embrace of Western political norms and institutions in its institutional design. Nevertheless, those characteristics should not distract from the fact that some of its current leaders and highly powerful political/cultural organizations (such as the RSS, a Hindu *nationalist volunteer organization* to which, among others, Prime Minister Modi belongs) aggressively support a brand of religious and nationalist fundamentalism that has both provoked and justified severe human rights violations. The influential Indian historian *Pankaj Mishra* has published well-received books with titles like *From the Ruins of Empire: The revolt against the West and the remaking of Asia*.²⁹ He recalls the traditions of *Tagore* and *Gandhi*, pleading for a distinctive Indian, non-Western way of

²⁹ MISHRA P., *op. cit.*

modernization different from both Hindu fundamentalism and the West. Russian president Vladimir Putin, on the other hand, follows a distinguished line of argument in his public statements, in which he tries to justify permanent, severe human rights violations in his country and, since February 2012, his war against the Ukraine. While not flatly denying the validity of universal UN norms or “Western values” of liberal democracy and human rights, he complains that Western countries implement them in ways that are too extreme and not suited to Russian conditions. The Russian people, he insists, do not wish to imitate the (allegedly) self-destructive Western way of life, but practice their own Slavic version of the Christian tradition. Instead, he champions a fundamentalist version “illiberal democracy” and nationalism, contending that this path alone can maintain the stability of the country and the consent of its people. Due to its objective of a politically homogenous society and extremely severe punishment of even minor deviance from the politics of the dictator, some have even called the new *Putinism* “fascist” in nature (*Tim Snyder*.)” Putin’s strategy has become a matter of critical debate in Europe, given that it already has begun to affect some Eastern European member countries of the EU, where a more liberal political culture has been in place for some time now and is supported by large majorities of those societies. As shown above, the concept of multiple modernities does not stipulate anything approaching the uncompromising cultural relativism that characterizes Huntington’s view. Instead, it aims to renew the common normative core of all the different types of modernity willing to share it. Eisenstadt’s proposal for defining such a core has been widely accepted in scholarly

circles. It could serve as a useful platform for carrying on a dialogue concerning human rights and cultural differences.³⁰

VARIETIES OF AUTHORITARIANISM

With regard to the global South, both concepts — multiple modernities and good governance — suggest that it is neither informative nor justified to draw a single, black and white demarcation line between countries that stick to the Western set of political institutions and those that do not. In the real world, there are only shades of grey on both sides. Our transnational approaches should become more nuanced and sophisticated or (as the Indian professor at Washington University, *Amitav Acharya*, argues) more “multiplex” by taking the “*cognitive priors*” of different paths to modernization more seriously. Western institutions, while fulfilling more or less well the input norms of formally “free elections,” often fail to deliver at the output end when it comes to criteria like poverty reduction, social security, educational justice, and provision of the public goods and services that good governance and the social basic rights scheme require. On the other hand, some important non-Western countries fall short of the “Western” norms at the input side of the political process while still coming remarkably close to good governance norms in regard to outputs.

“Illiberal” or authoritarian rule can take very different shapes and produce widely divergent results. In some countries in which the very maintenance of public order appears as the most pressing need, authoritarian rule may be rooted in strong and popular cultural

³⁰ Kocka J., “Plural Modernity and Negotiated Universals”, in Th. Meyer and J. de Sales Marques (ed.), *Multiple Modernities and Good Governance*, Abingdon, Routledge, 2018, p. 161-168.

traditions, as is the case in China or even somewhat in India. China exemplifies what the distinguished China expert Thomas Heberer (University of Duisburg/Essen) characterizes as the “developmental state”. Here, political authority is institutionalized and exercised in a manner that enables responsible elites to pursue policies of obvious social and economic inclusion and try to realize the common good of the country as a whole over a long stretch of time. In this way they may meet most of the output criteria for good governance and earn very high marks for “trust in government.” By contrast, in many Third World countries “extractive authoritarian rule” is practiced and the formal framework of general elections and parliamentarism is only a means to secure clan or coterie interests while ignoring broader social and public interests. In those versions of authoritarian rule, public security, the rule of law, infrastructure, education, health, and social security usually are severely neglected. Such “extractive” politics lacks both input and output legitimacy; hence it is always tantamount to a total absence of good governance across the board. An analytical or normative concept that is not able to illuminate and assess such tremendous differences among different types of formally “authoritarian” rule cannot be the basis for meaningful evaluations.

In addition, India presents circumstances that may help to clarify another vital issue: where to draw the line between the right to diversity claimed by different civilizations as they attempt to modernize and the intentionally aggressive anti-modernism of political fundamentalism? The assassination of Gandhi five months after India gained its independence in 1947 offers some insight into the differences. In contrast to Jawaharlal Nehru, who was committed to Western ideas of modernization and the “*Fabian*” model of democratic socialism in a Westminster frame, Gandhi was a staunch advo-

cate of a unique Indian way of development that would remain true to the *rural* cultural and economic traditions of India and cherish the long periods in the country's past in which peaceful coexistence between Hindus and Muslims prevailed within a unified state. The Indian road to development that Gandhi envisioned would be the true continuation of the civilization that had long existed on the old subcontinent. He was assassinated by a member of the political-cultural organization RSS, noted above, which was hostile to Gandhi's attachment to the cultural tradition of religious pluralism and fought (and continues to fight) it in the name of an intolerant nationalistic Hindu fundamentalism aiming at the oppression of Indian Muslims. The Hindutva ideology of the RSS opposes both Nehru's Westminster Fabianism and the tolerant form of "modernization with Indian characteristics" embodied by Gandhi. The fact that India is currently ruled by a party (Indian People Party, BJP) and a prime minister closely associated with the same RSS clearly demonstrates the risk of a fundamentalist backsliding of India's fragile democracy. Unsurprisingly, liberalism, tolerance, and the principle of equal rights for all religions are increasingly restricted in public life and at the universities since Modi took over political power in the country. It goes without saying that a fully Hindu fundamentalist India would, as in the cases of Iran and Saudi Arabia, have no recognized place in a community of cooperating civilizations.

It is evident that for many developing countries, modernization is not a transition from one clear-cut system to another, but an open process of trial and error, the gradual discovery of what suits the country best, what type of political elites are dominating the political process, and what the quality of the mass media and the civil society may be. Intellectuals and politicians across the global South recognize that they participate in the worldwide modernization

process and therefore find themselves in an intrinsically reflexive situation. Inevitably they have to draw upon the resources latent in their particular traditions. They must take cognizance of the shape of modernization in the West in full awareness of its crises, undesirable outcomes, and downsides. Finally, they must provide feasible solutions to the immediate social, economic, national, and political challenges their countries are facing if they wish to win legitimacy in the eyes of their people.

The contemporary world also features certain *inclusive* authoritarian regimes that rely on traditional norms and values to legitimize their power and governmental actions while delivering unimpeachable service outputs to their entire societies (e.g., eliminating poverty, raising living standards, ensuring social welfare provision and access to education). They should be assigned to a separate category distinct from authoritarian regimes that are *extractive or exclusive* and serve only the interests of the ruling elites themselves. That judgment is especially apt when solid empirical reasons exist to conclude that the former regime type enjoys the consent of the large majority. Nevertheless, even in this case one cannot waive the strict application of the transculturally valid norm that dissidents and their right to question those in power always must be treated in ways commensurate with basic rights.

The normative foundations of a new world order in the age of multiple modernities would be best secured if their universal values and rights, and thus also the *limits* of the civilizations' own rights, were jointly established. To clarify that point we may consider the exemplary role played by the increasing recourse of Chinese politics to the Confucian tradition. Here, we refer once again to a set of beliefs that has been well rehearsed ever since the Axial Age, the implications of which for universal basic rights remain an open

question. The uncertainty here concerns two issues: the conceptual integration of social obligations into the understanding of individual liberty, and the crucial role played by direct output services in enhancing citizens' quality of life and their confidence in government. Moreover, the code of this culture is *inner-directed*; that is, Chinese officials and intellectuals do not aspire to export it globally as a model for other countries. In international politics the country is concerned with political/cultural recognition and a truly multilateral global order. The ideology recently fabricated and peddled by Russia under Vladimir Putin is an entirely different matter. The president's vision of a "Russian world" with religiously inculcated "basic Eurasian values" and his self-proclaimed mission to include all Russians living presently in neighboring countries under his umbrella of protection has revealed its aggressive potential in Russia's reckless war against Ukraine. Putin's dogma holds that the true, historic Russia exists everywhere that collectivities of Russian people live and their language is spoken, and that they are all a part of one homogenous people and culture, the historical/natural center of which is located in Moscow and the Kremlin. Today, in Putin's view, this way of life is existentially threatened by "the misled West" and the excesses of its increasingly decadent culture. This baleful Western influence, combined with the malevolent actions of "enemy agents," allegedly weaken Russian identity from the inside by disrupting national spirit and from the outside by NATO's aggressive expansion. Ukraine, according to Putin, is the outpost of Western decomposition in the otherwise healthy flesh of the Russian world. Therefore, as supposedly confirmed by his pet philosopher *Ivan Ilyin* (whose writings he has distributed to his country's leading officials) and his current fascist-affiliated instigator *Alexander Dugin*, the president has a mandate to roll back all Western influences upon the Russian

World by any means necessary, a sacred duty that has been ritually blessed by Moscow Metropolitan *Kyрил*. Domestically, this ideology translates into a hermetic, merciless dictatorship and the obliteration of all free civic life. Abroad it entails the subordination of all Russian-speaking territories, henceforth to be treated as protectorates in which Moscow will call the shots. The means to accomplish this project are, internally, the “self-purification of the Russian body” through the complete stifling of public opinion and a draconian system of punishment; externally, it means intervention and war where the so-called historical mission demands it. This seems to be the essence of Putin’s understanding of Moscow’s obligations as the leading power of his “Eurasian Civilization.”

In view of such Russian distortions, the “proper law of civilizations” needs some crucial clarifications. Cultural identities in modern times cannot *per se and directly* be used to legitimate political rule. As demonstrated above, they all are unavoidably open, inherently contested, and therefore dynamic spaces of discourse in which competing social and political milieus permanently struggle for interpretive dominance. This means there is no “clash of civilizations” as such between cultural blocs in the modern world, but only — as *Amartya Sen* has observed — struggles for the dominance of interpretive communities *within* cultures and countries. In consequence, legitimate political rule must face up to this openness and seek to build majorities from among the more influential socio-cultural currents. At the same time, to respect one’s own culture means to protect its internal plurality and accompanying political expressions to make sure that it will be understood fully and appropriately. Coercion and violence, especially when used to select a specific interpretation of a given culture to justify political rule, reveals the sheer arbitrariness of political fundamentalism.

Cultures can develop only on their own terms and in accord with the ways in which successive generations practice them in their life-worlds. The scope for cultural development and practice therefore must be guaranteed by basic rights, so that culture does not mutate into imposed ideology. The culture of a society is not what political leaders proclaim, but what is experienced in the everyday life of its major milieus. In the modern world, the political misuse of cultural tradition should not be countenanced, either in one's own country or in the world community as a whole. A dialogue of cultures, in which that insight shines through clearly and provides fresh authentication for the basic normative order binding on all countries, is thus an essential building block to construct a legitimate role for civilizations in the global political arena.

BUILDING BRIDGES INSTEAD OF GLOBAL SPLITTING

It seems highly advisable to reconstruct the normative foundations of cooperation in a world of multiple modernities in such a way that they are again accepted and respected by all involved parties in the global arena. Following *Francesco Vittorio*, the founding father of the law of nations and leading light of the Salamanca School of the 16th century, we must work toward a new “consensus omnium” concerning universal basic norms and rights. The fundamental challenge is to rethink the way in which our public debates are conducted when it comes to normative conflicts. The following approaches might be useful in achieving that goal.

Respecting the context. Public controversies on human rights and the legitimacy of governments from divergent system types promise to become much more substantial in their content, justifiable in their outcomes, and constructive in their political effects, when they

are better contextualized. Rather than focusing on isolated, one-off events, they need to be conducted within a broader horizon that includes more relevant political aspects of and viewpoints on the situation.

Expanding the scope of the UN Dialogue on Human Rights. An all-inclusive round of multilateral discussions on universal basic rights in the light of strong civilizational traditions could help determine where real differences exist, where semantic variations need to be understood, and where misunderstandings prevail. In the best-case scenario, the consensus on basic rights could be renewed and/or hedged in by conditions. At the least, it would serve to clarify which fundamental common interests require trust-based cooperation beyond all value disputes, a step that would accord well with the CSCE's politics of détente and constructive dialogue. In addition, such a dialogue would deepen our understanding of the other parties' views and underlying philosophies, thereby laying the groundwork for reconstructing the normative foundations of multilateralism.

Broadening the political context. In view of recent experience, international debates over rights should focus squarely on matters with strong causal links to the intentions and contents of the most basic rights-related policies. Doing so will help overcome the distorting and often arbitrary tendency to zero in on isolated practices or events. We need to direct more attention to relevant elements of the civilizational frame that lends meaning to those occurrences. In particular, it seems advisable to highlight the following considerations.

First, instead of looking at human rights only from the angle of political inputs (civil rights), we also should attend to political outputs: that is, how public policies affect the entire society and

the vulnerable groups within it (social and economic rights). The concept of good governance seems well-suited to that task precisely because it is not defined in terms of any particular type of regime and therefore is amenable to synthesizing both kinds of rights. If just one of those two poles is inclusive, the classification has to be mixed; that is, a given political system would then be judged as embodying neither altogether good nor altogether bad governance. Only when both poles are predominantly exclusive would the assessment be unambiguous: bad governance.

Second, a more productive dialogue would attend closely to the level of trust in government displayed by the populace. That highly accessible yardstick assesses both the democratic inclusiveness of government and the degree of correspondence between the cultural and political norms and interpretations of both government and society.

Third, dialogues on basic rights should take into account the *Human Development Index* that Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum devised to assess the degree of human dignity and positive freedom a society has managed to achieve, beyond any given institutional settings: i.e., real human capabilities across all social and economic dimensions. The only “Western” bias the index retains is a preference for high average income levels. But a different kind of bias typically reveals itself in media coverage of countries’ global performance. In some Western nations, closely-watched electoral campaigns suggest elevated degrees of political participation and well institutionalized civil rights. By contrast, other (usually non-Western) nations have made historical progress in achieving “positive” human rights in existential matters, such as the overcoming of absolute poverty or even starvation and the improvement of subpar

health services. But all too often those accomplishments are not considered to be worth reporting.

Fourth and finally, political double standards must be eliminated. The bulk of the Western media are inclined to play down or to forget too quickly the practice of double standard politics, as typified by the government of the United States in particular. To cite a recent high-profile example of this duplicity, we need only recall the time that the George W. Bush administration accused China of arbitrarily imprisoning and torturing people even while committing the same atrocities itself. In fact, that administration did not even shy away from legalizing torture (cf. counsellor *John Yoo's* infamous memo), which could be judged a far more serious breach of human rights norms. In a country like China, whose human rights performance is meticulously monitored and quickly pilloried in less drastic cases by various U.S. actors, such hypocrisy is rarely overlooked. In fact, it is kept in the forefront of public attention by the country's political commentators and officials. A brand of human rights politics deployed by the same government that never hesitates to take refuge in double standards devalues the entire project of rights protection and indeed makes it seem like a weapon of "hybrid warfare."

As noted previously, a consequence of that duplicity is that it has emboldened a remarkable number of politicians and political intellectuals from some of Asia's most prominent cultures to advance principled counterarguments against the principle of universal human rights. This is particularly the case with China, which has often borne the brunt of such sustained American attacks. Undoubtedly, scolding that country for human rights violations may be appropriate on occasion. But heavy criticism is rarely accompanied by offers of dialogue and cooperation; instead, it often carries overtones of ignorance, self-proclaimed civilizational superiority,

or even flat-out hostility. Thus, these broadsides smack heavily of power politics carried on with the obvious intention of weakening the West's most formidable economic and technological competitor and strategic competitor. What is worse, such unidirectional criticism does not really reflect the reality of high moral aspirations of some Western countries. Moreover, it raises eyebrows when rights criticism is not applied with equal vigor to the preferred political partners of Western powers, such as Pakistan or Saudi Arabia. In fact, it often appears as if some heavyweights in the West are unabashedly claiming nothing less than a cultural prerogative to practice double standard politics. The basically tactical approach to human rights and democracy by the USA, even when a Democratic president like Joseph Biden is in office, is revealed by a brief glance at the list of invitees to the "Summit of Democracies" held on December 12, 2021. The Carnegie *Endowment for International Peace* keeps statistics on the democratic credentials of the invited countries. On the scale published by *Freedom House*, almost one third of the invitees were adjudged either only "partly free" (28%) or "not free" at all (3%). And on its more balanced Democracy Index, *The Economist* magazine classified the host of this ambivalent gathering itself rightly as a "flawed democracy."

To avoid misunderstanding: The aim of a new multi-civilizational dialogue on human rights — one well designed to move beyond this deplorable state of affairs — should *not be to relativize human rights or diminish the importance of UN documents* that certify them. Rather, it should help to establish credible links between those rights and the contemporary world of multiple modernities, possibly in a revised form with supplementary specifications. Likewise, such a new dialogue could enhance our understanding of the ways in which basic rights are embedded and understood in distinctive cul-

tural, national, and regional traditions. Finally, that dialogue might strengthen the commitment of all participants to enforce the list of core rights that do not allow for much leeway in interpretation or application.

The world needs a fresh start to *renew the “consensus omnium.”* Achieving such a consensus may lend more credible weight to binding norms; moreover, it could facilitate a candid appraisal of how well or poorly the world’s countries have implemented them. One must concede to German historian Jürgen Kocka³¹ the point that there are universal principles that constitute a common core of modernity despite the diversity of paths leading to it, and that these must be re-negotiated in a trans-cultural forum, not decreed from within just one of those paths. Yet, no matter how differently they might be formulated, the principles of human dignity and of good, inclusive governance need to establish limits that regimes should not transgress. Otherwise, the very ideas of both human rights and good governance will be robbed of all content in international politics. The *United Nations Association of Civilizations* (UNAOC) might be the appropriate platform to launch such a fresh initiative, and the EU seems better situated to play a key role in that undertaking than any other global actor.

Unsurprisingly, the new constellation of a world of multiple modernities has long since been acknowledged by the UN. It established the UNAOC as a new suborganization in 2005 on the initiative of Secretary General Kofi Annan, with the early and enthusiastic support of Spain and Turkey. This body sponsors frequent global forums that include representatives from many different civilizations under the motto, “Unity in Diversity.” However, thus far its focus mostly has been on overcoming Islamic fundamentalism through

³¹ KOCKA J., *op. cit.*

intensified dialogues with representatives of that faith. With respect to all other civilizations, the UNAOC seems to assume and celebrate the supposed “unity of civilizations” within the established framework of the UN instead of actively forging, shaping, and promoting such unity in its annual conferences. To embark on that project by launching a dialogue on normative universalism could constitute a significant contribution by this institution to the challenge of multiple modernities.

THE DISTINCTIVE ROLE OF THE EU

To be sure, the EU is and will remain a pillar of the “West” both culturally and politically. Furthermore, most of its member states will remain loyal members of NATO. The EU sees itself as a non-aggressive, peaceful, and peacemaking political, economic, and societal power.³² Today, the EU would like to think that it has shed Europe’s erstwhile cultural arrogance and ethnocentrism in both its vision for the globe and its relations to other continents. Presently, all the members of the EU share with the USA a commitment to fundamental civil and political rights and pluralist multiparty democracy under the rule of law. Among the relevant normative ways in which Europe differs from the USA are its unwavering support for the UN’s social and economic basic rights (*social citizenship*) as well as its strategic preference for *war-avoiding diplomatic* and *multilateralist* politics. It has a strong preference for *détente* and non-aggressive approaches to conflict resolution. Thus, with respect to the present-day world of multiple modernities, the EU is well positioned to pursue a strategy of mutual understanding, acknowledge different cultural identities,

³² TELÓ M. and VIVIERS D. (eds.), *USA, China and Europe, Alternative Visions of a Changing World*, Brussels, Académie royale de Belgique, 2020.

and support a renewed dialogue designed to update the normative foundations of a fair and multilateral world order.

The EU should champion fresh initiatives that may yield genuine progress on human rights, both in conceptual and in real terms. France with its outstanding role in the EU, can be expected to emphasize human rights — notably the campaign against the death penalty — as distinctive features and aims of the organization's international identity. The dawning awareness of the ineradicable persistence of multiple modernities suggests the possibility of a new multilateral, bilateral, and interregional (e.g., between the EU and ASEAN or the African Union) dialogue that might bridge the widening gap between rhetoric and reality, and offer all parties the chance to account for the cultural foundations of how they interpret and enforce human rights. Even if such a dialogue might not yield substantial changes in or complements to valid UN documents, it would most probably serve as a trust-building process, because it would allow actors to understand one another's viewpoints and create a new basis for accountability, reliability, and stability. Achieving that goal will necessitate a good faith effort by every participant. And of course, for Western actors, the central task would be twofold: not only to articulate and defend their own positions with self-confidence, but also to listen intently to the counterarguments and experiences presented by their interlocutors in a spirit of openness and communicative understanding. One of the leading objectives of EU foreign policy in the coming decades must be to prevent an escalation of the incipient, renewed Cold War. Of course, participants in a fresh dialogue on human rights — one that ought to include representatives of all major civilizations — would have to begin by addressing the sorts of open questions that were raised above.

As far as the current relationship between the EU and China is concerned, the danger is growing that some “Western” states, above all the U.S., are talking themselves into a Cold War 2.0, which might reproduce some of the most dangerous features of the conflict between the West and the Soviet Union. The USA is trying to draw as many countries as possible into this maelstrom in order to recover its lost global leadership role, no matter the cost (as in last year’s “Summit of Democracies”). This development threatens to acquire a risky ideological momentum of its own, detached from global realities. For many people, especially politicians and journalists, a new Cold War narrative *has already begun* to frame their perception of the world. Right now, we urgently need some carefully crafted verbal and intellectual enlightenment about realities and intentions on both sides.

In its latest paper on this issue, entitled “A New EU-China Strategy,” in the beginning the EU seems to rely mainly on the wisdom of an earlier and quite successful *détente* effort, the one embodied in Willy Brandt’s Eastern Policy (Ost-Politik). In the 1970s, that set of policies effectively ended the most virulent phase of the original Cold War. In Brandt’s strategy, the crucial first step was for both sides to define jointly their common interests and then to establish guidelines setting forth the fields and forms of political cooperation, and identifying the conflicts in need of settlement. What is not so well known is that Brandt doggedly championed the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and, in the 1980s, a joint East-West project establishing guidelines for a “New Culture of Argument.” The latter was intended to draw up rules for a constructive normative dispute between *regimes with contradictory ideologies*.

However, in one crucial respect the EU-China paper cited above does seem to revive one of the premises of the first Cold War when

(following a chain of appropriate observations) it culminates in a misleading conclusion about the consequences that should be drawn from most recent developments. While correctly highlighting the fact that China is a cooperating and negotiating *partner* and “an *economic competitor*” for the EU, it goes on to describe the PRC as “a *systemic rival*” because it is “promoting alternative models of governance.” The phrase “systemic rival” suggests a zero-sum game logic and tends to underestimate the crucial differences between the political ideologies and practices of the Soviet Communist regime and those of contemporary China. Almost until the collapse of the USSR, its government insisted upon an only slightly modified doctrine of “world revolution,” which implied the intention of actively exporting the Soviet model to “capitalist” countries, mainly by supporting domestic revolutionary forces in countries that seemed ripe for it. In the early 21st century, this strategy, with reversed signs, roughly corresponds to the ideas of those sectors of the US foreign policy establishment that are influenced by the ideology of “regime change” espoused by *neoconservatives*. Contrary to what the EU paper on China suggests, such expansionist ideas seem not to be part of the factual views or practices of the Chinese Communist Party, either within its sketchy Leninist component, which anyway has been demoted to the status of an empty ritual, or in its Confucian dimension, which is poised to become its core element. Instead, the CPC would like to garner both domestic and international respect for its path to modernization with “Chinese characteristics” while seeking recognition of its role in the multilateral world order as a *peer* among the other great powers. *Xi Jinping* repeatedly has insisted that China does not aim to become *the* leading power in that order, but only *a* leading power side by side with the USA

and others.³³ Naturally, this qualification cannot prevent selective violations of rights and interests both within China and in its dealings with other countries. Although in certain instances such behavior may justify the EU's resolute criticism, it does not support the broad inference that China is a "systemic rival," a phrase which is very close to an *enemy attribution*. This notion has an intrinsic tendency to mislead EU politics and engenders estrangement instead of understanding. It is not helpful in this context, since it carries connotations of hostility, division, zero-sum gambling and final defeat.

One risky blind alley here is certainly a proposal tendered by the renowned British-American historian *Niall Ferguson* in his latest book.³⁴ On the one hand, his deeply pessimistic analysis foresees the decline of the West, because its socio-moral energies have been so drained that it cannot keep its allegedly superior political and economic claims and institutions intact. Nevertheless, he concludes, the West must defend the global supremacy of its civilization "at all costs" so that no other civilization, such as that of Islam or China, can occupy the dominant role that the West has to abandon. It is hard to see how this strange *Huntingtonian* advice, which resembles American strategy as currently understood (minus the pessimistic diagnosis of the decline of Western countries), could generate any peaceful or beneficial outcome. It implies that, if the West cannot win by dint of "soft power" (global persuasion), it will have to triumph through brute force. But in this case, it would hardly be "Western civilization" that triumphs, but only its weapons systems, as was the case in the 19th century.

³³ HEBERER Th. and MÜLLER A., *op. cit.*

³⁴ FERGUSON N., *Doom. The Politics of Catastrophe*, New York, Penguin Random, 2021.

The EU should initiate an effort to find new answers to the controversial question of protecting human rights at the crossroads between the universalism of various UN declarations and their diverse cultural interpretations and conditions. The conceptual and political aspects must be combined with the analysis of various “background cultures” and “cognitive priors”³⁵, legal definitions, and forms of governance at the regional and multilateral levels. As the French president Emmanuel *Macron* reiterated on the occasion of his EU visit to China (together with *Ursula von der Leyen*) on April 2, 2023, the EU must refuse to follow the US blindly in its risky anti-China maneuvers in East Asia and instead define its own role as a sovereign strategic player independent of the superpowers in the global arena.

Additionally, the EU also would be well positioned to launch projects exploring common normative ground in concrete policy fields of considerable interest to both sides, such as climate change/environmental degradation and the existence of ABC (atomic, biological, and chemical) weapons. Neither of these threats can be addressed unilaterally, even by the strongest national Leviathan. Moreover, each is a multi-actor problem, in which regions and participatory networks can spur innovation. *These are areas* in which the EU should strive to provide leadership. International trade is another. While once serving as a driver of interdependence and growth, trade is now threatened by the imposition of tariffs and similar defensive and/or retaliatory measures. There are certainly links (though never guarantees of success) between the upgrading of trade and investment regimes, on one hand, and political cooperation and conflict prevention, on the other. Similar linkages exist between trade wars, the security implications of containment, and exclusionary poli-

³⁵ ACHARYA A., *op. cit.*

cies. The *World Trade Organization* is the body most responsible for addressing those issues, but the future of global trade goes far beyond anything the WTO could accomplish on its own. The EU has a role to play by taking further initiatives to spur interregional trade and investment and solidifying economic ties.

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A sea between us, but a sea of incomprehension? Reflection on the fall of two walls

JEAN-PIERRE FILIU

It has now been more than ten years that a question has haunted me and I am sincerely grateful to the Brussels International College for giving me the privilege to address this issue in front of such a distinguished audience of European movers and shakers. This question is: why the Europeans who reacted empathically to the fall of the Berlin Wall did not understand, in 2011, that the fall of the “wall of fear” in the Arab World had also a long-term impact on their very future as Europeans? Nobody in his right mind would have dared to claim in 1989 that “stability” and “security” were dependent on the preservation of the communist rule, since the democratic transition was perceived as the only way, not only to end the authoritarian nightmare, but also to ensure long-term stability through the rule of law. But in 2011, and until today, many European voices were heard, and are still heard, advocating the dictatorial status quo in the Arab world as the only option to safeguard a “stability” that became synonymous with the denial of popular demands.

Of course, I could refer back as a historian to a long legacy of European denial of Arab rights. While the Arabs had chosen, during WWI, to join the French and the British in the Middle East to fight the Ottoman army, advised and sometimes led by German officers,

they were not treated as allies after the victory and the subsequent collapse of the Ottoman Empire. On the contrary, the constitutional Arab kingdom that was established in Damascus in 1918 was toppled two years later by the French who carved up the region with the British in the League of Nations “mandates”. However, despite this imperialist *coup de force*, Arab elites and societies managed for decades to run political systems that allowed a modicum of party pluralism, parliamentary elections and freedom of the press. But those elites, instead of being supported by the European powers, were, because of their nationalism, victims of a kind of war of attrition that left them exhausted when they reached the long-awaited independence. They were therefore too weak to resist the hijacking of those Arab independences by military cliques who, starting in 1949 in Syria, then in 1952 in Egypt, took the pretext of the ongoing conflict with Israel to liquidate the parliamentary system and establish a one-party rule. This cycle of coups ended in 1969 in Libya when Colonel Qaddafi toppled King Idris al-Senussi who had secured, not only the independence, but also the unity of the country in 1951.

It is logical that those despots did their utmost to erase the very memory of their far more tolerant predecessors. It is more puzzling that, in Europe, the cliché that Arabs have no historical precedents of pluralistic and/or parliamentary experiences is still so widespread. This cliché has nurtured serious misconceptions that has led in turn to serious miscalculations. The so-called “Arab springs” were not a fleeting season of popular lyricism, they were part of a region-wide “Arab revolution”, a series of democratic uprisings whose standard slogan was “The people want to topple the regime”. This explicitly revolutionary stand stemmed from the collective desire to re-open the gates of democratic transition that had been closed by decades of dictatorial rule. It was a popular call to revert to full-fledged

national independences, after their military hijacking had frustrated for generations the various people from their right to self-determination. In Libya, the insurgents in February 2011 raised the flag of the Senussi dynasty, not because they dreamt of restoring the monarchy, but because they wanted to liquidate the legacy of four decades of Qaddafi-only rule. The following month, the Syrian protesters raised the three-starred flag of their national independence against the two-starred flag of the Assad regime (those two stars represent Syria and Egypt that were merged in the short-lived and Cairo-run “United Arab Republic” from 1958 to 1961, therefore denying the very autonomy of Syria, that should be absorbed in a wider Arab entity).

Everybody in Europe had understood, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the patriotic surge that accelerated the collapse of the pro-Soviet bloc in a domino effect where Hungarians, Czechs or Lithuanians defended their right of self-determination against bankrupt regimes and eventually toppled them, in regional dynamics that never erased the national peculiarities. But very few on our continent grasped the long-term dynamics of Arab popular movements that aspired, beyond the toppling of the local dictators, to fulfill at last their right of self-determination, after decades of the ruling clique treating the country and its national resources as private property. The wall of fear had fallen and it was a historical turning point in the Arab world where the one-party (or hegemonic party) rule had been imposed for so long through the brutal control of the *mukhabarat*, literally the “intelligence” services. This Arabic word is generally translated as “security services”, while “insecurity services” would be more appropriate, assuming that their central mission was to spread insecurity at the very heart of the civil society. Peaceful marchers had risked their lives in defying the terror machine of the ruling clique; hundreds, even thousands, had died but their resolve had forced

first Ben Ali, in Tunisia in January 2011, then Mubarak, the following month in Egypt, to flee, inspiring protest movements in many other countries.

Confronted with such a political tsunami, High Representative Catherine Ashton and Commissioner Stefan Füle launched, on behalf of the European Union in March 2011, a “Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity south of the Mediterranean”. Interestingly what is supposed to be shared in the nearest future is the “prosperity”, while the core values of the rule of law and democratic freedoms are not spontaneously “shared”. Contrary to the massive help that had followed the fall of the Berlin Wall, no new financial instrument was planned to complement the existing Neighborhood Policy tools. “More for more” was the mantra that was supposed to offer additional help to countries that followed the path of reforms. The “new strategy” announced by the European Commission in May 2011 called for a “deep and sustainable democracy”, one of the five pillars of which was the “democratic control of armed and security forces”. The colossal challenge that such a “democratic control” represented was not even addressed in detail, it was a mere benchmark of democratic performance, even though the multi-faceted interference of the military apparatus was, and remains, the major threat in many Arab countries. Along with revolutionary Tunisia and Egypt, Morocco and Jordan were also privileged by the European decision-makers because of the “advanced status” of their partnership, a bias that could be justified by the new constitution endorsed by popular referendum in Morocco in July 2011, while the Jordanian monarch opposed even limited reforms. Also in July 2011, Catherine Ashton launched in Cairo the 300 million euros SPRING program, SPRING standing for “Support for Partnership, Reform and Inclusive

Growth”, with 40% allocated for democratic reform and 60% for sustainable development¹.

Those very prudent moves fell obviously far below the minimum that was required from Europe to meet such a historical challenge. However, the inertia was less bureaucratic than ideological, which brings me back to my haunting question. Long before the fall of the Berlin Wall, the then European Community had lavishly financed the post-authoritarian transitions of Spain, Portugal and Greece, before eventually integrating them. But the same reasoning seemed not to apply to the Arab world and the very idea that the same destiny, based on the same values, was to be shared on both sides of the Mediterranean appeared incongruous, or even blasphemous, to many. There had been one time when European and Arab opinions had vibrated together, echoing the same refusal of the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. But such a massive meeting of minds had suffered from the political divide between the leaderships of France and Germany, adamant in their opposition to the war, and those of Great Britain, Italy, Spain or Poland, joining the occupying coalition in Iraq. Another political divide, strikingly different, occurred in February 2011 when French and British forces joined the NATO campaign in Libya, while Germany and Italy opposed this war.

So, divisions at the top could explain the European collective cautiousness. But I do believe the problem is much deeper and stems from the relative lack of empathy after the fall of the “wall of fear” in the Arab world, especially compared with the spontaneous and active solidarity with the East-European societies who were fighting for their freedoms after the fall of the Berlin Wall. It had to be a “spring” and it had to end as soon as possible in order to restore

¹ EUROPEAN COMMISSION, “The EU’s response to the Arab Spring”, in *MEMO/11/918*, Brussels, 16 December 2011.

the much-awaited “stability”. Instead of welcoming the diversity of opinions and the multiplication of parties as an indicator of a sound and vibrant civil society, some nurtured a clear nostalgia of the *ancien régime* where GONGOs, the infamous “governmental NGOs”, saved the time of checking the solidity of potential partners. While the process of institution-building is always long and complex, with its ups and downs, others tended to favor an “instant democracy” that was not essentially different from the one Washington tried, and failed lamentably, to promote in Iraq.

The basic mistake of equating democratic transition with quick elections was widespread. The only concern that slowed down such a push for ballots was the fear of an Islamist victory. The European Union had proved in the past that, despite funding and certifying the results of a free and fair election, it was not always ready to work with the winner: Hamas had clearly and unexpectedly won the Palestinian parliamentary elections in January 2006, but the European leaders made their working with the local Islamists conditional on their recognition of Israel, their endorsement of previous Israeli-Palestinian agreements and their renunciation of violence. Those three conditions were all reasonable, but they should have been imposed on any party joining the EU-sponsored election, not just on the unexpected winner. The Palestinian and Arab opinion was that Europeans were twisting the democratic rules, agreeing to deal with an elected body only when it fit their own standards. And the dilemma was even tougher in 2011, when Islamists were expected to win the first free elections in Tunisia and in Egypt. Such an announced victory was grounded on the strong networks of the Islamist parties, while newly formed groups were lacking such a grassroots base. On top of that, Islamists could appeal to the revolutionary voters, as the

historical opponents to the regime, and to the conservative voters, as the best safeguard of some kind of a “moral order”.

But, and there was a big but, while European leaders were focusing on the Islamist “elephant in the room”, they forgot that past experiences had proven that Islamists could win the first election, but would lose the second, because of the clash between their own dogma and the daily ruling of a country. In Jordan, where the Muslim Brothers and their allies had scored a relative majority at the parliamentary elections in 1989, they had been defeated four years later. And in Tunisia, Ennahda lost one third of its voters between the October 2011 elections to the Constituent Assembly and the October 2014 parliamentary elections. In Egypt, the countershock was even more impressive for the Muslim Brotherhood, which lost half of its voters between the 2011 parliamentary elections in the fall and the first round of the presidential elections in May 2012. If they managed to win the second round, it was only because of the polarization of such a vote between the Islamist candidate and a former general who had been Mubarak’s last Prime Minister. So, it was less an Islamist vote than an anti-Mubarak vote that gave 51,7% to Mohamed Morsi, the first Egyptian president elected in a free and fair election. But, instead of governing as the ruler of all Egyptians, Morsi acted like a party leader, trampling on public liberties. Such a dismal record would have spelled defeat for the Muslim Brotherhood in the following elections. But General Abdelfattah al-Sisi, whom Morsi had appointed Minister of Defense, preferred to topple Morsi on July 3 2013, brutally closing the thirty-month parenthesis of post-Mubarak transition.

Catherine Ashton, the EU High representative for foreign policy, and the founder of the European External Action Service, proposed her mediation between Morsi and Sisi, along with her US counter-

part, John Kerry. Those joint European-US efforts collapsed on August 14, when Sisi decided to liquidate the pro-Morsi gatherings in two Cairo squares. The bloodbath, with hundreds of people killed, was the worst one since General Bonaparte had invaded Egypt in 1798 and crushed a nationalist uprising in the capital city. One week later, Bashar al-Assad, emboldened by Sisi's impunity, ordered chemical weapons to be used, mixed with classical rockets, against rebel-held suburbs of Damascus, killing some 1,400 people, overwhelmingly civilians. This mass murder was only the culmination of a constant escalation of the war waged by the Syrian dictator against his own people, with the unconditional support of Russia and Iran. Confronted in March 2011 with an unprecedented wave of peaceful protesters, Assad had consistently labelled them as "terrorists" and launched a ruthless repression on any kind of dissent. The grass-roots and horizontal network of local "coordination's committees" that structured the revolutionary movement was able to survive this repressive campaign, but such a structure, once the regime's brutality left armed struggle as the only option, led to a fragmentation of local militias, strongly entrenched in their own constituency, but unable to join a clear-cut chain of command. The European (and American) refusal to grant international recognition to the anti-Assad political body, contrary to what had been done in Libya with the anti-Qaddafi "transitional council", only increased the military fragmentation. This was why Assad believed he could deliver a deadly blow to the Syrian resistance through the chemical strikes.

US President Barack Obama had claimed a year before that any use of chemical weapons in Syria would mean crossing a "red line" and call for the appropriate American retaliation. The anti-Assad coalition had then reacted quite negatively against what it described as a "blank check" that allowed the regime any

kind of mass destruction, providing it refrained from using gas. But when gas was indeed sprayed on Syrian civilians, Obama decided to back down² and, since the House of Commons had voted against any British participation, the French President François Hollande was left on his own. Even though France was able militarily to strike alone against the Assad regime, it could not do so politically as the former mandatory power over Syria, since any isolated French move would have been targeted and resented as a blatant form of “neo-colonialism”. So, Assad’s impunity in Syria now matched Sisi’s impunity in Egypt, the latter echoing Bonaparte’s massacres in the streets of Cairo, two centuries earlier, while the former could only be compared with the Timur/Tamerlane bloodbaths in Syria, at the very beginning of the 15th century³. Nowhere had the Arab counter-revolutionary wave been able to restore the status quo prevailing before the fall of the “wall of fear” in early 2011. Sisi’s regime was far more brutal than Mubarak’s, with the repression against Islamists soon targeting any kind of opposition, even liberal and/or secularist, while Assad junior had achieved an even more bloody record than his already ruthless father.

The fall of the “wall of fear” had left the Arabs, and also the Europeans, with the historical alternative between, on one side, democratic transition in the Arab world or, on the other, escalating violence to unprecedented levels of horror. The dictatorial impasse became therefore the breeding ground for the jihadi challenge. The Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), established a few months before the Damascus chemical attacks, used them as a major tool of recruitment, especially in Europe, claiming that Muslims could

² RHODES B., “Inside the White House during the Syrian ‘red line’ crisis”, in *The Atlantic*, 3 June 2018.

³ FILIU J.-P., *Le Miroir de Damas*, Paris, La Découverte, 2017, p. 134.

only be defended by Muslims, since such mass killings had triggered no military reaction from the Western democracies. So, ISIS ranks began to swell with foreign “volunteers”, allowing this jihadi outfit to launch its European terror campaign in May 2014 in Brussels; it would extend, over the next three years, to France, Germany, Sweden, the UK and Spain, with Brussels being struck again in March 2016. On top of that, the descent of Syria into hell triggered the so-called “refugee crisis” in the summer of 2015, with hundreds of thousands of people desperate enough to cross over Europe by any means. The direct intervention of Russia in Syria, from September 2015 onwards, only aggravated the dynamics of mass migration from the Middle East to Central and Western Europe.

While Arab dictators had claimed, to sometimes welcoming European ears, that they were the only rampart defending Europe from chaos and terror, it became now crystal clear that those dictators were in fact the main cause of chaos and terror that not even Europe would be spared from. In addition, Russian President Vladimir Putin had been convinced by Obama’s refusal to implement his own “red lines” that the West was now too weak to stand by its own principles. Six months after the Damascus’ chemical bombings, Russian tanks moved into the Ukrainian province of Crimea, eventually annexing it in March 2014. And the current invasion of the rest of Ukraine that started on February 24 2022, saw the Russian military massively use, against the Ukrainian resistance, war techniques that had been successfully tested in Syria: systematic bombing of civilian institutions in order to force the civilian population to flee, “humanitarian corridors” that become deadly traps for desperate refugees, “carpet-bombing” propaganda to caricature the enemy as “Nazi” in Ukraine, the same way as the whole Syrian opposition was labelled

“terrorist”, and so on and so forth⁴. The catastrophe of an all-out war spreading from the south of the Mediterranean to Eastern Europe was only enhanced by the European inability to assimilate the long-term shockwave of the fall of the Berlin Wall with the long-term shockwave of the fall of the “wall of fear” in the Arab world - an inability whose collective price is still to be paid in full.

The self-proclaimed “realists”, who pretended that, in Syria, Europe had “no dog in this fight”, are therefore exposed as dramatically disconnected from the trans-Mediterranean reality, now that the ordeal of Mariupol in 2022 is routinely compared to the one Aleppo endured in 2016, under a comparable Russian shelling. The challenge is not anymore about “shared prosperity”, but about shared destiny between the two shores of the Mediterranean, and how the people of the Southern shore could be assisted into benefiting from the values they aspire to share with the people in the North, namely the rule of law and public liberties. Once this perspective is genuinely accepted — and the urgency is obvious — the European Union has yet to fathom a policy that will meet such a challenge and try to compensate for all the time lost since the historical opportunity of the fall of the Arab “wall of fear” was missed. A minimal option and a maximal one can be outlined in the central realm of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, first because the EU has repeatedly stressed its strategic commitment to the two-state solution, second because any gesture towards the Palestinian people will resonate among all the Arab people, who are less keen than many of their leaders to abandon the Palestinian cause. An indication of that grassroots sensitivity to the fate of the Palestinian people is the fact that the Palestinian flag is often the second one to be raised alongside the local

⁴ PARKER C., “Russia’s Ukraine war builds on tactics it used in Syria, experts says”, in *Washington Post*, 31 March 2022.

national flag during popular protests. And it is now time to correct the conventional wisdom according to which, in the Middle East, “US decide, UN feed and EU pays”⁵.

The minimal option would see the opening, under European supervision, of a sea route between the Gaza Strip and Cyprus that would represent a limited, but much-welcomed alternative to the two current land gateways of Erez, towards Israel, and Rafah, towards Egypt. Such a gesture would demonstrate that the European Union is concretely committed to alleviate the plight of more than two million Palestinians, collectively besieged since 2007, with an overwhelming majority of them knowing only the “strip” as the permanent horizon of their whole existence. This is especially true for the Gazan students and youth, whose life experience is now defined by the barbed-wire walls and electric fences delimiting this Palestinian territory. The European Union has been financing, since 2005, a Border Assistance Mission, EUBAM Rafah, whose action at the gateway to Egypt was suspended in 2007 when Hamas took over the Gaza Strip militarily, expelling the Palestinian Authority and brutally imposing its sole rule on the territory. EUBAM Rafah’s mission should be reoriented to the monitoring of a sea international terminal at the Gaza port that would operate only to Cyprus. As was the case in Rafah from 2005 to 2007, EUBAM would operate in close coordination with Israel and the Palestinian Authority, without any official recognition of Hamas. Israel has a vested interest in defusing the pressure inside the Gaza Strip, and the Palestinian Authority could therefore manifest a concrete solidarity with the Gaza population, which feels largely neglected by Ramallah. This would give unprecedented credit to the Europeans in Gaza and strengthen

⁵ MUASHER M., “The EU’s passive approach to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict”, in *Carnegie Europe*, 6 May 2021.

their repeated call for the disbanding of the Hamas armed wing, the Qassam brigades.

A maximal option would be the suspension of any aid to the Palestinian Authority until general elections are held for the first time since 2005, for the presidency, and since 2006, for the Parliament. The European Union, as the main funder by far of the Palestinian Authority, should not tolerate the denial of any democratic accountability by the current Palestinian leadership in Ramallah. The Palestinian Authority, far from being the basis of a future Palestinian state, has mainly become a bankrupt and corrupt entity associated with an all-intrusive security apparatus. Only general elections can revivify this otherwise dysfunctional and extremely costly political structure. The scheduling of those elections in 2021 led to a massive wave of voters' registration, a clear indication of popular interest and potential participation. It is also worth recalling that the postponement *sine die*, and *de facto* cancellation, of those elections by the Palestinian leadership in April 2021, contributed to the escalation that led, the following month, to a new and destructive cycle of Israeli-Palestinian violence⁶. The European Union should not shy away from this showdown with the Palestinian Authority nor accept the blame for a potential "humanitarian catastrophe". It is the ongoing status quo that is actually fueling such a catastrophe, since it is forbidding any decent development of the Palestinian territories. On top of that, if the European Union moved from being a benevolent, but discreet, banker to asserting its central role in any negotiated process, it would greatly enhance its profile in the whole region.

⁶ IMBERT L., "Des violences s'accumulent à Jérusalem sur fond d'un dangereux vide politique", in *Le Monde*, 8 mai 2021.

These two options, along with many others, are on the table if only the European Union considers that any euro spent south of the Mediterranean is not a generous gift, but a contribution to the long-term European interests, north and south of the Mediterranean. In this modest presentation, I hope I could at least outline a way out of the sea of incomprehension that still remains between us.

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The difficult emergence of an EU common strategic culture: the implications of internal diversity for security and foreign policy cooperation¹

KAREN E. SMITH

In June 2021, Germany's foreign minister Heiko Maas bluntly remarked that, "We can't let ourselves be held hostage by the people who hobble European foreign policy with their vetoes. If you do that then sooner or later you are risking the cohesion of Europe. The veto has to go, even if that means we can be outvoted".² His outburst came after Hungary had wielded the veto on several foreign policy issues that spring. But frustration with the increased use of the veto has been growing, particularly with Hungary's frequent threats to veto EU measures against Russia after its invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. This frustration has sparked a renewed effort to introduce more qualified majority voting (QMV) in EU foreign policy-making. The plenary of the Conference on the Future of Europe, for example, called for increased use of QMV in the Common Foreign and Secu-

¹ I am very grateful to Giovanni Grevi, Katie Verlin Laatikainen, and Mario Teló for their constructive and useful comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

² REUTERS 2021, "EU veto 'hostage'-taking on foreign policy must end — Germany's Maas", in *Euronews*, 7 June 2021, [accessed 17 Apr. 2023, <https://www.euronews.com/2021/06/07/us-germany-hungary-eu>].

rity Policy (CFSP), though some plenary members called for other alternatives to unanimity.³ This debate about QMV is just the latest of many attempts to try to overcome the “logic of diversity” within the EU.

This paper analyses the implications of the logic of diversity for the development and implementation of EU foreign and security policy, and assesses some of the various proposals and developments that try to minimise the negative implications. It does so in three parts. The first part lays out Stanley Hoffmann’s original 1966 argument about the logic of diversity and demonstrates how it is still relevant. Indeed, there is a burgeoning new research agenda on the implications of diversity in EU foreign policy-making, and the findings of recent research are summarised here. In the second part, the paper considers how institutional reforms may have created or exacerbated the effects of the logic of diversity. The third and final part assesses some of the ways forward that have been proposed, or identified, to try to lessen the negative implications of diversity.

THE LOGIC OF DIVERSITY IN EU FOREIGN POLICY-MAKING

Over half a century ago, Stanley Hoffmann published “Obstinate or Obsolete? The Fate of the Nation-State and the Case of Western Europe”.⁴ Writing as French President Charles de Gaulle challenged the European integration project and transatlantic relations, Hoffmann argued that it was clear that the nation-state was not obso-

³ CONFERENCE ON THE FUTURE OF EUROPE, *Report on the Final Outcome*, May 2022, p. 64, 67, [accessed 17 Apr. 2023, <https://futureu.europa.eu/pages/reporting>].

⁴ HOFFMANN S., “Obstinate or Obsolete? The Fate of the Nation State and the Case of Western Europe”, in *Daedalus*, vol. 95, no. 3, 1966, p. 862-915.

lete, and that we needed to understand why the political unification of Western Europe had not succeeded. He pointed to three reasons. The first is the logic of diversity: there is a “diversity of domestic determinants, geo-historical situations, and outside aims” among the units in any international system.⁵ Second, the units continued to be nation-states — rather than larger blocs — because of the legitimacy of the principle of national self-determination and the deep appeal of nationalism. This meant that unification would not work through “national self-abdication”. Third, the balance of terror, of mutual assured destruction, during the Cold War meant that territorial agglomeration was impossible through the use of force.⁶

Hoffmann’s arguments still resonate strongly. Despite half a century of regional institution building, the “diversity of domestic determinants, geo-historical situations and outside aims” of the European Union’s member states is quite apparent, and nationalism arguably an even stronger force. Seven of the EU’s 27 member states became independent states in the early 1990s, for example, and can be expected to defend fiercely national self-determination, while the UK left the EU after the success of the “take back control” narrative in its 2016 referendum on EU membership.

Diversity itself is to be expected: “domestic determinants, geo-historical situations and outside aims” are of course going to vary across EU member states. The problem for the EU — or any organisation — is how to balance diversity with the need for unity (to set and accomplish collective goals, for example). This is particularly tricky in an organisation — such as the EU’s foreign policy “machinery” — that is essentially voluntary: member states can still pursue

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 864.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 865-866.

their own foreign policies outside the EU framework and cannot be compelled to conduct foreign policy through the EU at all.

Despite this, it is a remarkable achievement that over the past fifty years the member states have created enduring institutions and norms in the field of foreign policy. Rarely are there defections from the system (the UK being the obvious exception here): instead, the impulse after disappointments with decision-making has been to try to improve, strengthen, or even add institutions and rules. In 20 years after the Berlin Wall fell, the EU agreed four major revisions of its founding treaties, and the institutional set-up in the foreign policy field is substantially different: for a start, it is more institutionalised (for example, diplomatic cooperation increasingly embedded in formal institutions), “Brusselised” (key institutions are increasingly based in Brussels, so decision-making is centred in Brussels)⁷ and “legalised” (a process whereby standards and rules are increasingly clarified, codified and invested with status of law).⁸ In the same period, the EU has more than doubled its membership, from 12 member states in 1989 to 27 today. The member states have also managed to agree an impressive array of common policies, for example, a raft of decisions on sanctions with over 40 regimes currently in place (see EU Sanctions Map). Andrew Moravcsik even goes so far as to classify the EU as a “superpower”.⁹

⁷ See ALLEN D., “‘Who Speaks for Europe?’ The search for an effective and coherence external policy”, in John Peterson and Helene Sjursen (eds.), *A Common Foreign Policy for Europe?*, Routledge, 1998.

⁸ See SMITH M.E., “Diplomacy by Decree: The Legalization of EU Foreign Policy”, in *Journal of Common Market Studies*, vol. 39, no. 1, 2001, p. 79-104.

⁹ MORAVCSIK A., “Europe is Still a Superpower”, in *Foreign Policy*, 23 April 2017, [accessed 17 Apr. 2023, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/04/13/europe-is-still-a-superpower/>].

There is a lively and extensive body of literature explaining these institutional developments and their impact on EU foreign policy decision-making, including a substantial literature exploring the extent of Europeanisation in this area.¹⁰ Yet there has perennially been disappointment that the increasing capabilities of the EU in the field of foreign policy have not matched the expectations that the EU will exercise influence in international affairs.¹¹ After all, the EU consists of some of the richest, most stable democracies in the world, and has a wide range of resources and instruments (from a common trade policy to military missions) that it could use to further its foreign policy objectives. Disappointment with the “capabilities-expectations gap”¹² has spurred persistent attempts to create better capabilities.

The EU member states have confronted a number of crises in the past fifteen years or so (the global financial and euro crisis, the “refugee crisis”, Brexit, Covid-19, and the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine), have accepted that they needed to respond together, and have tried to hammer out solutions in the European Council.¹³ They have also agreed broad, sweeping strategic objectives, notably in the 2016 EU Global Strategy and the 2022 Strategic Compass for Security and Defence. What still hasn’t happened, however, is the development of a shared strategic culture, which Christoph Meyer defines

¹⁰ For an overview, see TONRA B., “Europeanization”, in Knud Eric Jørgensen, Åsne Kalland Aarstad *et al.* (eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of European Foreign Policy*, Sage, 2015.

¹¹ HILL C., “The Capability-Expectations Gap, or Conceptualising Europe’s Foreign Policy”, in *Journal of Common Market Studies*, vol. 31, no. 3, 1993, p. 305-328.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ VAN MIDDELAAR L., *Alarums and Excursions: Improvising Politics on the European Stage*, Newcastle upon Tyne, Agenda Publishing, 2019.

as “a pool of sufficiently shared norms, beliefs and ideas regarding the means and ends of defence policy”¹⁴ but includes here also the means and ends of foreign and security policy. The EU Global Strategy set out agreed objectives, but did not prioritise them or provide an assessment of the means that would be needed to reach them.¹⁵ The development of the Strategic Compass in 2022 was an attempt to remedy this in the realm of security and defence policy, and may help further the development of a shared strategic culture. But the problem with grand strategies, for the EU and other international actors, is that the devil is in the detail of implementation.

Certainly the “logic of diversity” is still apparent — and having damaging implications for the EU’s influence in the world. Two examples may suffice to illustrate these implications. On 5 January 2022, the *Financial Times* reported that the EU had been sidelined from talks between the US, NATO and Russia over Ukraine, and cited EU officials who blamed intra-EU divisions regarding Russia for its lack of foreign policy “clout”.¹⁶ In May 2020, the EU’s High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borell, noted that “Developing a joint EU approach to superpowers is never easy, as each member state has its own viewpoints and sensitivities. And

¹⁴ MEYER C.O., “Convergence Towards a European Strategic Culture? A Constructivist Framework for Explaining Changing Norms”, in *European Journal of International Relations*, vol. 11, no. 4, 2005, p. 524.

¹⁵ See SMITH K.E., “A European Union global strategy for a changing world?”, in *International Politics*, Special issue on Europe and the World, vol. 54, no. 4, 2017b, p. 503-518.

¹⁶ FOY H., “EU demands seat at Ukraine talks as Moscow prepares to meet US and Nato”, in *Financial Times*, 5 January 2022.

the China case is no exception. What's more, China is not shy about sometimes playing on these differences".¹⁷

In the past five years or so, scholarly attention has increasingly turned to investigating the implications of nationalism and right-wing populism (a shared tenet of which seems to be opposition to European integration) for EU foreign policy-making.¹⁸ There is a new and growing research agenda on "de-Europeanisation",¹⁹ norm resistance and contestation,²⁰ and the implications of illiberalism and politicisation.²¹ De-Europeanisation goes further than just contestation of or resistance to cooperation norms and process. According to Müller, Pomorska and Tonra, the process of de-Euro-

¹⁷ BORRELL J., "Trust and reciprocity: the necessary ingredients for EU-China cooperation", 15 May 2020, [accessed 17 Apr. 2023, https://eas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage_en/79355/Trust%20and%20reciprocity:%20the%20necessary%20ingredients%20for%20EU-China%20cooperation].

¹⁸ See BALFOUR R. (rapporteur), *Europe's Troublemakers: The Populist Challenge to Foreign Policy*, European Policy Centre, 2016.

¹⁹ MÜLLER P., POMORSKA K. and TONRA B., "Introduction: The Domestic Challenge to EU Foreign Policy-Making: From Europeanisation to de-Europeanisation?", in *Journal of European Integration*, vol. 43, no. 5, 2021, p. 519-534; SMITH M., "De-Europeanisation in European foreign policy-making: assessing an exploratory research agenda", in *Journal of European Integration*, vol. 43, no. 5, 2021, p. 637-649.

²⁰ MAURER H. and WRIGHT N., "How much unity do you need? Systemic contestation in EU foreign and security cooperation", in *European Security*, vol. 30, no. 3, 2021a, p. 385-401; SAURUGGER S. and TERPAN F. (eds.), "Resisting European Norms in Foreign and Security Policy", in Special issue of *European Foreign Affairs Review*, vol. 20, No. 2/1, 2015.

²¹ JUNCOS A. and POMORSKA K., "Contesting Procedural Norms: The Impact of Politicisation on European Foreign Policy Cooperation", in *European Security*, vol. 30, no. 3, 2021, p. 367-84; MEUNIER S. and VACHUDOVA M.A., "Liberal Inter-governmentalism, Illiberalism and the Potential Superpower of the European Union", in *Journal of Common Market Studies*, vol. 56, no. 7, 2018, p. 1631-1647.

peanisation (or re-nationalisation) consists of three elements: “the reconstruction of professional roles in exclusively or predominantly national terms”; “a regression from a commitment to well-defined procedural and substantive EU norms”; and the disbandment or degradation of collective policy making institutions.²²

Daniel Thomas has argued that de-Europeanisation means that the process of foreign policy decision-making at the EU level will be better explained by intergovernmentalist theories of bargaining, “while weakening the explanatory power of more sociological theories of normative suasion, policy learning, normative entrapment and cooperative bargaining”.²³ The decision-making outcomes predicted by intergovernmentalism are deadlock (no agreement) and lowest-common-denominator outcomes (those that converge on what the most reluctant member state will permit).

Are these outcomes more common now? In at least the past five years, there have been multiple occasions where one or more member states have used vetoes in EU foreign policy-making (see Box 1). Hungary may exercise the veto the most frequently but is not the only member states to do so. What is also clear is that smaller member states predominate in this list (though France, for example, has exercised a veto over EU enlargement to North Macedonia) — perhaps because the larger, more powerful member states have more influence in the policy-making process, including before the decision-making stage, as liberal intergovernmentalist theories predict.²⁴

²² MÜLLER P., POMORSKA K. and TONRA B., *op. cit.*, p. 524-526.

²³ THOMAS D.C., “The Return of Intergovernmentalism? De-Europeanisation and EU Foreign Policy Decision-making”, in *Journal of European Integration*, vol. 43, no. 5, 2021, p. 629.

²⁴ See MORAVCSIK A., “Preferences and Power in the European Community: A Liberal Intergovernmentalist Approach”, in *Journal of Common Market Studies*, vol. 31, no. 4, 1993, p. 473-524.

Box 1: non-exhaustive list of recent vetoes in EU foreign policy-making

- June 2021: Austria blocked new sanctions on Belarusian banks, but lifted veto a few days later¹
- May 2021: Hungary refused to support EU call for ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, and refused to approve the new post-Cotonou agreement with the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States²
- April 2021: Hungary blocked EU statement condemning China’s new security law in HK³
- February 2019: Hungary blocked EU-Arab League conclusions because draft mentioned migration⁴
- January 2019: Italy blocked a common EU position recognising the opposition leader as president of Venezuela; 19 EU member states then did so separately (so nine member states did not join them)⁵
- March 2019: the Romanian prime minister announced that Romania would follow the US and move its embassy in Israel to Jerusalem, contradicting a settled EU position⁶
- December 2018: The EU was divided over a UN Pact for Migration, with three EU member states voting against it (alongside the EU), five abstaining and rest voting in favour⁷

¹ NOYAN O., “Austria ends opposition to EU-Belarus sanctions”, in *Euractiv*, 21 June 2021, [accessed 17 Apr. 2023, https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/short_news/austria-ends-opposition-to-eu-belarus-sanctions/].

² REUTERS 2021, *op. cit.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ POLITICO 2019, [accessed 17 Apr. 2023, <https://www.politico.eu/newsletter/brussels-playbook/politico-brussels-playbook-black-monday-another-messy-day-in-brexit-trolling-romania/>].

⁵ RETTMAN A., “Italy gags EU on Venezuela crisis”, in *EUObserver*, 5 February 2019.

⁶ GURZU A., “Romania to move Israeli embassy to Jerusalem”, in *Politico*, 24 March 2019.

⁷ CERULUS L. and SCHAART E., “How the UN Migration Pact Got Trolled”, in *Politico*, 3 January 2017, [accessed 17 Apr. 2023, <https://www.politico.eu/article/united-nations-migration-pact-how-got-trolled/>].

- May 2018: Hungary, Czechia and Romania blocked an EU statement condemning Trump administration's decision to relocate US embassy to Jerusalem⁸
- June 2017: Greece vetoed an EU statement at the UN Human Rights Council because it condemned China⁹

⁸ KOENIG N., "Qualified Majority Voting in EU Foreign Policy: Mapping Preferences", in *Berlin: Hertie School Jacques Delors Centre*, Policy Brief, 10 February 2020.

⁹ SMITH H., "Greece blocks EU criticism at UN of China's human rights record", in *The Guardian*, 18 June 2017.

Lowest-common denominator outcomes are also apparent:

- in February 2017, a Member State blocked the renewal of the arms embargo against Belarus until all other Member States finally agreed to exempt a certain category of small arms to avoid the embargo expiring altogether;²⁵
- in October 2017, a Member State blocked a draft EU Statement to be delivered at the UN General Assembly Third Committee, forcing all others to accept what was generally deemed a disproportionate reference to a specific case both in substance and in length when compared to all other references in the Statement;²⁶
- in February 2018, a number of isolated objections from a limited number of Member States substantially delayed and ultimately forced all others to accept to water down the adop-

²⁵ EUROPEAN COMMISSION, "A stronger global actor: a more efficient decision-making for EU Common Foreign and Security Policy", in *COM 647*, 12 September 2018, p. 5-7.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

tion of the yearly annual priorities on Human Rights to be pursued by the EU in United Nations for a;²⁷

- in 2018, the extension of a capacity building mission in the Sahel was blocked by one Member State until another Member State dropped its reservations on a separate mission to Iraq;²⁸
- in 2021, the EU’s sanctions on Belarus excluded measures (such as sanctions on the export of potash) that would have had damaging effects on the economies of some member states;²⁹
- in 2022, the EU’s sanctions on Russian oil had to include opt-outs for Hungary, Slovakia and Czechia, after Hungary threatened otherwise to veto the measures.³⁰

Of course, the history of EU foreign policy is littered with examples of member states “behaving badly”. Greece in the 1980s blocked agreement on European Political Cooperation (EPC) declarations on several occasions, often forcing a lowest-common-denominator outcome. One of the most notorious examples is that Greece refused to allow EPC to “condemn” the Soviet Union for downing Korean Airliner 007 in September 1983.³¹ In December 1991, Germany recog-

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ FLEMING S., FOY H. and SHOTTER J., “Will EU inflict sanctions ‘pain’ on Putin?”, in *Financial Times*, 8 February 2022.

³⁰ ABNETT K., STRUPCZEWSKI J. and MELANDER I., “EU agree Russia oil embargo, gives Hungary exemptions”, in *Reuters*, 31 May 2022, [accessed 17 Apr. 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/best-we-could-get-eu-bows-hungarian-demands-agree-russian-oil-ban-2022-05-31/>].

³¹ NUTTALL S., *European Political Co-operation*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1992, p. 194-195.

nised the independence of Slovenia and Croatia, immediately diverging from a common position on recognition that had only just been agreed; to maintain unity, the other member states agreed to follow suit in January 1992.³² The member states, and candidate countries, spectacularly, publicly and rancorously fell out over the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. The EU enlargement process has frequently seen member states block or slow down the accession process of neighbouring states because of their own national concerns, or explicitly link progress to concessions made elsewhere.

But these past examples stand out: in other words, while there is no denying that it can frequently be very difficult to reach agreement — and the outcomes can frequently disappoint — there have been remarkably few cases of outright blocking behaviour, and member states have generally learned that blocking decision-making for national interests could backfire, if only because the reputation as a trouble-maker is uncomfortable. Yet as Juncos and Pomorska (2021) argue, the blocking behaviour is now categorically different. Member state representatives in EU foreign policy-making processes noted that blocking was taking place even in the absence of a discernible vital national interest, and the same member states (principally Hungary and Poland) were blocking decisions, and did not seem to mind that they were isolated, were viewed as trouble-making, and were having a negative impact on consensus formation at the EU level.³³ Hence the European Commission and Germany's Foreign Minister Maas — among others — calling for the increased use of qualified majority voting in foreign policy-making.

³² HILL C. and SMITH K.E. (eds.), *European Foreign Policy: Key Documents*, London, Routledge, 2020, p. 374.

³³ JUNCOS A. and POMORSKA K., *op. cit.*, p. 373-376.

There are many reasons for the trouble caused by diverging interests within the EU: the rise of illiberal, right-wing populist governments; the fact that enlargement in and of itself multiplied the number of potential veto points; the external context. For Hoffmann back in 1966, the external context was crucial: the use of force to capture territory was out of the question (lest it spark a war between the nuclear-armed superpowers). But the role that the US played in fostering, encouraging, even requiring European integration is arguably even more significant³⁴. The US did so for a number of reasons, but mostly to bolster the defence of Western Europe against the Soviet bloc. At the end of the Cold War, indeed, there were predictions that European integration would reverse because the US no longer needed a united Europe, and without a US security guarantee, European states would revert to mistrust and competition³⁵. That the EU expanded and deepened shows that commitment to European cooperation was much stronger than expected by neo-realists, but nonetheless, the loosening of the transatlantic link may mean the logic of diversity is even stronger.

INSTITUTIONALISATION AND RESISTANCE: TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN?

However, there seems to be a genuine puzzle here: on the one hand, a process of institutionalisation in the field of foreign policy-making; on the other, member state resistance to common policy-making. Institutionalisation is intertwined with increased member state

³⁴ See LUNDESTAD G., *'Empire' by Integration: The United States and European Integration, 1945-1997*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998.

³⁵ MEARSHEIMER J., "Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War", in Sean Lynn-Jones (ed.), *The Cold War and After: Prospects for Peace*, Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press, 1991.

defiance. As Christian Lequesne has argued, “in European integration, the institutionalization of any policy produces simultaneously convergence and resistance from the member states”.³⁶ In my work on EU cooperation on human rights issues at the UN,³⁷ I found that stronger central EU foreign policy institutions led to increased diplomatic activity by the member states outside of the EU coordination process at the UN.

To try to understand this puzzle, we need to look closer at the specific reforms that have been agreed in successive Treaty revisions, and particularly those that affect the role of the member states in the CFSP. In principle, institutions should enable and foster international cooperation between states,³⁸ because transparent and clear rules mean that rule-breakers can be identified and possibly disciplined, and therefore states can learn to trust each other. This implies an equality of participation in the institution, but also an equality of responsibility (all must comply with the rules). The extent to which states feel they are equal participants contributes to socialisation into the practices and norms of an institution.

Back in 2000, Simon Nuttall pointed out that European Political Cooperation (an informal institution for foreign policy cooperation)

³⁶ LEQUESNE C., “At the Centre of Coordination: Staff, Resources and Procedures in the European External Action Service and in the Delegations”, in Rosa Balfour, Caterina Carta, and Kirsti Raiki (eds.), *The European External Action Service and National Foreign Ministries: Convergence or Divergence?*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2015, p. 54; see also SAURUGGER S. and TERPAN F. (eds.), *op. cit.*

³⁷ SMITH K.E., “EU member states at the UN: A case of Europeanisation arrested?”, in *Journal of Common Market Studies*, vol. 55, no. 3, 2017a, p. 628-644.

³⁸ KEOHANE R., *International Institutions and State Power: Essays in International Relations Theory*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1989.

produced a feeling of solidarity through a process of socialisation. Notably, he argued that socialisation in EPC had occurred through:

“the practice of holding EPC meetings in the capital of the Presidency. Successive Presidencies vied with each other to provide agreeable and prestigious surroundings, and if possible excursions to savour the national heritage...expertise in entertaining facilitated personal contacts and fostered the club atmosphere.”³⁹

The reforms that have happened since the CFSP replaced EPC have affected the context in which socialisation could occur. For Nuttall, Brusselisation — “CFSP became definitively a Brussels activity, not one of the national capitals”⁴⁰ — had the effect of producing a decline in socialisation.

However, socialisation had been evident within the Political and Security Committee (PSC), which replaced the Political Committee in the early 2000s. Unlike the Political Committee, which was “decentralised” in that it was composed of political directors from national foreign ministries who met once or twice a month and then returned to their capitals, the PSC consists of ambassadors based in Brussels who meet at least twice weekly. Within this context, procedural norms such as consensus-seeking and the “coordination reflex” (the instinct to consult with fellow EU member states before acting unilaterally) have developed.⁴¹ It is therefore not Brusselisation itself that may negatively affect socialisation and hence the propensity of member states to contest norms of cooperation through blocking behaviour.

³⁹ NUTTALL S., *European Foreign Policy*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 273.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 273.

⁴¹ JUNCOS A. and POMORSKA K., *op. cit.*, p. 372.

The Lisbon Treaty further Brusselised the CFSP, but in addition, as Juncos and Pomorska point out, it can be considered to be quite revolutionary in the field of foreign and security policy, becoming even supranational in some aspects. The High Representative and the European External Action Service were given agenda-setting powers, “posing a key challenge to national diplomatic services”.⁴² The Lisbon Treaty eliminated the role of the rotating Council presidency in the CFSP. Instead, the High Representative chairs the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC), and European External Action Service (EEAS) personnel chair the committees underneath the FAC, including the Political and Security Committee. The High Representative also represents the EU for CFSP matters, thus largely eliminating the presidency’s representative role in meetings with third countries and in international negotiations. The presidency system continues on issues outside the remit of the Foreign Affairs Council.⁴³ The Council presidency can assist the High Representative but it is deputising for, not replacing, the High Representative.

The elimination of the rotating presidency in the CFSP reflected criticism over the years that EU enlargement had not only increased the number of small member states that were less able to handle the demands of the presidency but also lengthened the amount of time between any member state’s presidencies. Third countries did not have a “single phone number” to call when they wanted to know the EU’s position on this or that international issue. In other words, the reform was supposed to redress problems of continuity and capacity.

However, many member states, especially the smaller ones, took the opportunities posed by the rotating presidency very seri-

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 370.

⁴³ It also continues at several international organisations (though not the World Trade Organisation, where the European Community already had a seat).

ously, and insisted on the equal right of all member states to hold the presidency.⁴⁴ Holding the presidency allowed a member state to push specific priorities through agenda setting (even though certain agenda items roll over or are set months if not years in advance, for example, scheduled meetings with external actors). The presidency system was a system of *equal participation* and *equal responsibility*. Its disappearance arguably weakens the ties between the EU and national levels in the area of foreign policy. National officials do work in the EEAS, which is composed of national officials, former Commission officials, and former Council secretariat officials, and is responsible for helping the High Representative to develop CFSP proposals and implement decisions. But this is not a direct route for member states to influence the EU level of foreign policy agenda-setting or policy-shaping: national officials are seconded to the EEAS, they do not act as representatives of their member states within the EEAS.

Arguably, post-Lisbon, member states are less involved in the EU foreign policy-making system, less able to push for their priorities or protect their interests, though they may try to exercise influence through “informal”, ad hoc measures such as core groups. As Delreux and Keukeleire⁴⁵ note:

“In the absence of informal division of labour, member states can feel irrelevant in EU foreign policy-making when they face difficulties in having an impact in meetings with 28 member states around the table (together with representatives of the EU institutions); when the formal representation tasks of the High Representative, the Commission or the Presidency imply that member states’ role

⁴⁴ TONRA B., *The Europeanisation of National Foreign Policy: Dutch, Danish and Irish Foreign Policy in the European Union*, Aldgate, 2001, p. 258.

⁴⁵ DELREUX T. and KEUKELEIRE S., “Informal division of labour in EU foreign policy-making”, in *Journal of European Public Policy*, vol. 24, no. 10, 2017, p. 1484.

in international negotiations is limited to that of silent observers; and when they experience that some of their major foreign policy priorities are disregarded by most other member states who do not want to commit resources to tackle these policy issues.”

What the Lisbon Treaty’s institutional developments point to is a weakening link between the national and EU levels in the field of foreign policy. For Juncos and Pomorska,⁴⁶ ‘The replacement of the rotating Presidency has had the effect of decreasing the sense of ownership among EU member states and previous expectations of reciprocity and solidarity.’ As Maurer and Wright have argued, within the PSC, having a permanent chair has weakened the ability of member states “to exercise *day-to-day* control over EU foreign policy-making”.⁴⁷ They also suggest that this *could* affect socialisation within the PSC: “the rotating chairmanship created a particular form of interaction between [the member states’ ambassadors] leading to an increased willingness to find a consensus and show support for the chair”; a permanent chair “removes this important source of socialization, and the evidence here suggests a weakening in the collective ‘we feeling’”.⁴⁸ There is less “ownership” of EU foreign policy by member states, less equality of opportunity to influence and lead it, less equality of responsibility for furthering it. As a result, member states have disengaged and worked outside the EU framework. They can easily be passive bystanders, not participating actively in policy-making processes dominated by others.⁴⁹ What I argue further is

⁴⁶ JUNCOS A. and POMORSKA K., *op. cit.*, p. 377.

⁴⁷ MAURER H. and WRIGHT N., “Still Governing in the Shadows? Member States and the Political and Security Committee in the Post-Lisbon EU Foreign Policy Architecture”, in *Journal of Common Market Studies*, vol. 59, no. 4, 2021b, p. 868.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 867.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 869.

that as a result of these institutional developments, member states have been left with fewer avenues to influence foreign policy-making other than through blocking behaviour.

WHAT CAN BE DONE ABOUT THE LOGIC OF DIVERSITY?

Contestation is not inherently a bad thing; proposals for EU foreign policy outputs may need significant improvement. There's a grain of truth in Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's complaint that the EU's proposed declaration condemning China's security law on Hong Kong was "politically inconsequential and frivolous" and that there "must be an end to the preoccupation in Brussels with concocting and flaunting declarations".⁵⁰ It may be that expectations of EU influence have to be reduced, which in and of itself may sober up the member states: after all, the EU provides an unmatched opportunity to exercise influence internationally (all EU member states are small states in a system dominated by China and the US). Give that up, and the consequences may prove to be highly undesirable.

If the above analysis regarding the implications of the Lisbon Treaty reforms for member state involvement in foreign policy-making is even partially correct, then this suggests that potential reforms that further reduce member state ownership or control over EU foreign policy-making could backfire.

For example, the proposal to increase the use of QMV in foreign policy decision-making should be considered carefully but also critically. It is of course the case that where the EU has been most dynamic in international affairs are those areas where QMV is used: trade policy (the EU has been negotiating and concluding a number of new trade agreements in the past five years); climate policy;

⁵⁰ REUTERS 2021, *op. cit.*

and areas such as digital privacy (the GDPR). The problem in the CFSP, however, is that the member states may have an obligation to support the Union's external policy, but are not obliged to agree one in the first place. They can still act unilaterally, or with states from outside the EU, as they do in the UN,⁵¹ or in other multilateral fora. The EU runs the risk of isolating or alienating member states, if they feel they have constantly been in the minority, and thus further reducing commitment to the EU's foreign policy system. If the problem is that the link between the national and EU levels has been weakened in the past decade, then QMV could exacerbate it. Pascal Lamy noted that "new, non-unanimous rules for making decisions cannot produce solidarity overnight. However, confidence in them and trust in one's negotiating partners builds over time as such rules are repeatedly used. Trust is the cement that binds an institution into a social contract which, implicitly, constitutes the foundation of the structure".⁵² It is not clear that there is enough trust in the EU foreign policy system yet.

Another way to try to overcome the logic of diversity could be through actively encouraging the use of constructive abstention instead of blocking. Constructive abstention evolved from the practice of allowing "footnotes" in EPC declarations, where member states (usually Denmark, Greece or Ireland) could declare they were not bound by particular paragraphs in the declarations. Although it was introduced by the 1997 Amsterdam Treaty, there has only been one use of constructive abstention in CFSP: in 2008, Cyprus "constructively" abstained from a decision on the EU's rule of law

⁵¹ SMITH K.E., "EU member states at the UN: A case of Europeanisation arrested?", *op. cit.*

⁵² LAMY P., "Europe and the Future of Economic Governance", in *Journal of Common Market Studies*, vol. 42, no. 1, 2004, p. 16.

(EULEX) mission in Kosovo.⁵³ This suggests that member states are not willing to allow decisions to go ahead “in the name of the EU” if they cannot wholeheartedly support them; it seems that a belief in the common good is not strong enough to enable abstention rather than blocking. Member states have instead preferred to block decisions rather than constructively abstain from them. The reluctance to use constructive abstention appears to be another case of the weakness of trust among the member states, which Pascal Lamy argued is necessary to enable non-unanimous decision-making.

Yet another way forward would be to increase the role and responsibility of member states in the EU’s foreign policy system. There certainly seems to be appetite for increasing the visibility of national diplomacy in the name of the EU: we saw this vividly in the procession of national leaders from EU member states to Kyiv following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. The first three prime ministers to visit were those from Poland, Czechia and Slovenia on 15 March; Czech Prime Minister Petr Fiala tweeted that “the aim of the visit is to express the European Union’s unequivocal support for Ukraine and its freedom and independence” — though the three leaders were not there officially on behalf of the Council of the EU or European Council.⁵⁴

⁵³ BENDIEK A., KEMPIN R. and VON ONDARZA N., “Qualified Majority Voting and Flexible Integration for a More Effective CFSP?”, in *SWP Comment* no. 25, Berlin, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, 2018, p. 3-4; KOENIG N., *op. cit.*

⁵⁴ BOFFEY D. and RANKIN J., “‘Europe Stands With You’: EU leaders vow support for Ukraine during Kyiv visit”, in *The Guardian*, 16 March, 2022, [accessed 17 Apr. 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/15/polish-czech-and-slovenian-prime-ministers-travel-to-kyiv-ukraine>].

EU member states also try to take the lead in informal groups. Aggestam and Bicchi⁵⁵ argue that member states can act outside EU institutions, but in ad hoc, smaller groups among themselves, hoping to pave the way for more collective action. Member states have undertaken diplomacy that may not quite be in the “name” of the EU, but almost is, as in France and Germany’s participation in negotiations with Ukraine and Russia (the Normandy format), or in the above-mentioned visits by national leaders to Kyiv in 2022. The “Quint”⁵⁶ — composed of the US, UK, France, Germany and Italy — may even become a more important “directoire” given the UK’s involvement in it, provided the UK shifts strategic direction and engages more with the EU and Europe in general on foreign and security policy.

These developments have been labelled “informal division of labour”⁵⁷ or “differentiated cooperation”⁵⁸ in foreign policy. Under certain conditions, they may strengthen the legitimacy and effectiveness of EU foreign policy, because they can generate consensus within the EU and spur collective action when “differentiation initiatives adhere to *common European values and identity* (as expressed

⁵⁵ AGGESTAM L. and BICCHI F., “New Directions in EU Foreign Policy Governance: Cross-Loading, Leadership and Informal Groupings”, in *Journal of Common Market Studies*, vol. 57, no. 3, 2019.

⁵⁶ GEGOUT C., “The Quint: Acknowledging the Existence of a Big Four-US Directoire at the Heart of the European Union’s Decision-Making Process”, in *Journal of Common Market Studies*, vol. 40, no. 2, 2002, p. 331-344.

⁵⁷ DELREUX T. and KEUKELEIRE S., *op. cit.*

⁵⁸ SIDDI M., KARJALAINEN T. and JOKELA J., “Differentiated Cooperation in the EU’s Foreign and Security Policy: Effectiveness, Accountability, Legitimacy”, in *The International Spectator*, online first, 2022; GREVI G., MORILLAS P., SOLER I LECHA E. *et al.*, “Differentiated Cooperation in European Foreign Policy: The Challenge of Coherence”, in *EU IDEA Policy Paper*, no. 5, 2020.

in the established EU foreign policy discourse) and build on *long-standing common EU positions*".⁵⁹

When those conditions are not met, however, differentiated cooperation "can undermine EU foreign and security policy".⁶⁰ There may not be long-standing EU common positions, or they may have broken down precisely as the logic of diversity plays out. For example, Kovář and Kočí⁶¹ note that an EU consensus on the Middle East Peace Process does not necessarily exist anymore, as four member states (the Visegrad group members) have positions that differ substantially from the EU's previous stance. And diplomats from smaller member states may not view differentiated cooperation or the informal division of labour uncritically, especially as they may be unable to block them; ad hoc groups have almost always been initiated or led by the large member states. Furthermore, "such practices are seen by some as attempts to externalise national foreign policy positions of the large states and upload their foreign policy interests and discourses to the EU level, thereby bypassing the formal EU foreign policy-making process... As small EU member states often lack the power to set the CFSDP's agenda, they can easily find themselves facing a *fait accompli* through the activities of informal groupings".⁶²

It is thus clear that informal, ad hoc groups trying to foster a consensus by forging ahead has drawbacks. Above all, it is not always clear these are *EU* initiatives, capable of fostering EU action, involving all the member states. For example, are France and Germany

⁵⁹ SIDDHI M., KARJALAINEN T. and JOKELA J., *op. cit.*, p. 4; emphasis in original.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ KOVÁŘ J. and KOČÍ K., "Informal Differentiated Integration in EU Foreign and Security Policy: Perspectives of a Small Member State", in *EU IDEA Policy Brief*, no. 5, 2022, p. 6.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 6.

representing the EU in the “Normandy format?” How can other member states ensure that they do? Ideally there is a lot of consultation going on between member states involved in such informal attempts to lead the EU and the rest of the EU, but how can this be guaranteed other than through some informal understanding that this should happen?

Informal norms and cooperation can be a way to limit the logic of diversity in the short-term, but institutionalising a stronger role for *all* the member states in the EU’s foreign policy architecture would be preferable — if only to ensure equality of responsibility and equality of opportunity to influence the agenda for all member states and not just the larger ones. For example, the rotating presidency could be involved more in agenda and priority setting in foreign policy.⁶³ This would be desirable anyway because of the clear links between CFSP and those areas of external action where the rotating presidency can help set the agenda, such as climate, migration and trade policies. The advantage of the presidency system is that it provides equal opportunity to lead, with a clear rota system, unlike ad hoc decisions to delegate certain tasks (e.g. mediation roles in international disputes, or representation in certain international negotiation settings) to one or more member states.

In sum, the Lisbon Treaty reforms have restricted the ability of all member states to influence the EU foreign policy-making process and to represent and lead the EU. Designed to try to ensure the continuity of leadership within the EU and representation of the EU globally, the reforms have unwittingly diminished the equal participation of member states in the foreign policy system and the equal

⁶³ HELWIG N., IVAN P. and KOSTANYAN H., *The New EU Foreign Policy Architecture: Reviewing the First Two Years of the EEAS*, Brussels, Centre for European Policy Studies, 2013, p. 13-14.

sharing of responsibility for leadership, representation and leadership in the system. They leave member states, particularly smaller member states, with few ways to lead and set the agenda (and thus try to ensure their preferences are met), and may thus be a contributing factor to the use of the veto as their most powerful means of influencing the system.

There are obviously no easy ways out of the dilemmas created by the logic of diversity. But it is unlikely to abate with further supranationalisation of the EU's foreign policy system, as would be the case if qualified majority voting were introduced in this area. The paradox of increasing institutionalisation and increasing defiance may need to be lessened with a different balance between the Brussels-based foreign policy architecture and the national capitals, in which member states play a larger role that is institutionalised, rather than ad hoc. If the EU is to build a *common* strategic culture, the member states need to be able to share an equal opportunity to lead and influence the CFSP agenda-making and decision-making process in Brussels.

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Convergence and divergence in EU foreign and security policy

GIOVANNI GREVI

INTRODUCTION

Few would deny that Russia's invasion of Ukraine marked a watershed moment for Europe. Many wonder whether the European Union (EU) and its member states will match the formidable threats posed by this war with a fundamental shift towards a more united and stronger Europe. Josep Borrell, the EU foreign policy chief, proclaimed that the war in Ukraine "marks the birth of a geopolitical Europe".¹ In the aftermath of Russia's invasion, Europeans summoned the political will to act together, notably by adopting multiple packages of sanctions against Moscow. Nine months on, the common European front broadly holds. However, EU institutions and member states face very difficult choices, with the risk that creeping divisions among them erode their united stance. The high prices of energy and other commodities, supply chain disruptions and the risk of further military escalation impose a stiff stress test on Europe. Whether this test will ultimately forge a more united and sovereign Europe, or deliver a more fragmented and vulnerable one, is difficult to anticipate. Surely, the outcome will be decisive for the

¹ BORRELL J., *The future of Europe is being defined now*, Blog Post, 3 March 2022, [accessed 17 Apr. 2023, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/future-europe-being-defined-now-0_en].

future of Europe. To address this vital question, it seems useful to take a step back and relate the current war to broader patterns in the evolution of EU politics and institutions.

First, while posing an unprecedented threat to Europe's security, the Ukraine war is only the latest in a series of crises that have hit the EU over the last 15 years. Each successive round of challenges has fuelled the countervailing forces of convergence and divergence among EU member states, whose interplay determines the quality, scale and effectiveness of Europe's response. The dynamic tension between convergence and divergence affects policy decisions across the board. The fulcrum of the debate depends on the focus of the crisis — whether that mainly concerns fiscal, social, migration, health or security matters. If different domains require separate consideration, however, these challenges are closely interconnected, as the links between the Ukraine war, hybrid threats, energy security, economic growth and political cohesion demonstrate.

Second, the war in Ukraine raises with a new sense of urgency long-standing questions concerning EU foreign policy and Europe's role in the world at large. These concern the balance between convergence and divergence between national strategic cultures and priorities, the role of EU institutions in fostering convergence and coherence in EU external action, and the potential for flexible forms of cooperation among member states to advance the European agenda. The link between strategic culture, institutions and resources is critical. Without a shared assessment of the threats and challenges facing the EU, and of common European interests, the best institutional mechanisms and capabilities are of limited use.

A strategic culture encompasses both a worldview — the perception of the main trends at play, of threats and opportunities, and of the role of force within the larger toolkit of external action — and

a self-view. The latter is about the conception that an international actor holds of itself, the values that define it, its core interests, and the role that it aspires to play on the international stage. A shared strategic culture is thus an important factor for consensus-building at EU level. For many years, efforts to promote the convergence of national positions around common ones have focused on institutional reforms. Over the last decade or so, however, these reforms have proceeded in parallel to the waning of political cohesion among member states. Accounting for this apparent paradox requires shifting the focus from institutional issues to the implications of an ever more volatile international context for national and EU politics. The war in Ukraine is a major instance of how external developments can impact convergence and divergence within the EU.

At a time when the EU faces war at its borders, and the shockwaves that it produces, this book chapter takes stock of the connection between external events on the one hand, and EU politics and institutions on the other, in generating convergence or divergence in EU foreign policy. First, it looks at the factors affecting unity among EU member states, reviewing the cascading crises that have hit the Union and the recurrent mismatch between political problems and technical fixes. Second, it assesses the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic and of Russia's aggression against Ukraine — two highly disruptive crises in the space of three years — on Europe's political cohesion and strategic culture. Third, the paper turns to the institutional enablers of convergence among EU member states, illustrating their contribution to sustain progress towards a shared strategic culture and joint action, as well as their limits. Fourth, options to foster cooperation among subsets of EU member states, when consensus at 27 cannot be achieved or prompt action is required, are

assessed in terms of their implications for pursuing a shared EU foreign policy agenda.

THE SHIFTING POLITICAL CONTEXT OF EU FOREIGN POLICY

The entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon in 2009 was expected to herald a new stage of deepening institutionalised cooperation in EU foreign policy. This was the last milestone of a long process of institutional reform in the domain of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). Successive rounds of reform aimed to strengthen the central EU foreign policy institutions. The latter would not challenge the primacy of member states in foreign affairs but would support and inform the proceedings of a wide range of Brussels-based intergovernmental working groups and committees, leading up to decisions by the Foreign Affairs Council.² The resulting, intensive policy-making process, involving EU and national officials in a seamless sequence of meetings and exchanges, would progressively generate common reflexes, codes of conduct and conceptual maps. In other words, it was supposed to engender a common policy-making and, in time, strategic culture.

The Lisbon reforms were directed to enhance coherence (among all EU external policies as well as between national foreign policies and the CFSP) and continuity, by scrapping the role of the six-monthly

² SMITH M.E., *Europe's Foreign and Security Policy: The Institutionalization of Cooperation*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004. For an overview of the various strands of institutionalist literature applied to EU foreign policy, and related expectations, see DELREUX T., "Bureaucratic politics, new institutionalism and principal-agent models", in K.E. Jorgensen *et al.* (eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of European Foreign Politics*, SAGE Publications, 2015.

rotating presidency of the EU Council.³ The “triple-hatted” position of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the Commission (HRVP), who is also the permanent Chair of the Foreign Affairs Council, embodied the aspiration to better connect all areas and levels of EU foreign policy and external action. The creation of the European External Action Service (EEAS), including both EU officials and seconded national diplomats, to assist the HRVP in fulfilling his/her mandate, was intended to scale up foreign policy expertise within EU institutions and to foster a shared esprit-de-corps at staff level. The EEAS would help filter and process different national perceptions and priorities to deliver shared assessments and proposals, which would pave the way for common positions.

Clearly, the implementation of the Lisbon reforms has met numerous challenges, which have largely frustrated the original expectations. The experience of the last decade has exposed growing strains in CFSP policy-making. In part, that depended on inter-institutional struggles. This is hardly surprising, since new institutional positions and bodies were established in a very crowded bureaucratic environment. More importantly, in the course of the 2010s differences among member states on some important foreign policy issues have either widened or become more visible.⁴ This may not amount to a definite, consistent trend, reversing the incremental Europeanisation of national foreign policies and ushering in a new

³ See the analyses by Christian Lequesne, Caterina Carta and Hartmut Mayer in TELÓ M. and PONJAERT F. (eds.), *The EU's Foreign Policy. What Kind of Power and Diplomatic Action?*, Ashgate, 2013.

⁴ MÜLLER P., POMORSKA K. and TONRA B., “The Domestic Challenge to EU Foreign Policy-Making: from Europeanisation to de-Europeanisation?”, in *Journal of European Integration*, vol. 43, no.5, 2021.

phase of de-Europeanisation.⁵ However, multiple instances of policy divergence have signalled the reluctance of many member states to invest in EU foreign policy and to pursue compromise with fellow EU members. Conversely, member states have appeared more prepared than in the past to veto or dilute common positions, such as on issues related to human rights vis-à-vis China, or delay them, such as on sanctions against Belarus.

The question is how to account for the breakdown of the deeper-institutionalisation-leading-to-consensus conveyor belt that some envisaged. Explaining the mismatch between the goals of institutional reform for one, and political divergence among member states for another, requires departing from a focus on EU institutions. Institutions are not the main part of the solution to political fragmentation in EU foreign policy because they are not the main part of the problem. Institutions are an important variable, but not the principal one, in affecting the degree of unity and coherence among EU countries on CFSP issues, and in generating a shared strategic culture.

It is therefore useful to broaden the scope of this assessment well beyond institutional matters and consider three sets of factors influencing convergence or divergence among member states in the foreign policy domain. These are institutional structures themselves, political developments within and between member states and the external context — the EU's strategic environment. These three clusters can be further grouped in two categories: supply-side and demand-side. Supply-side factors are those that shape the EU's foreign policy offer, namely the positions that it takes, or not, and

⁵ SMITH M., “De-Europeanisation in European foreign policy-making: assessing an exploratory research agenda”, in *Journal of European Integration*, vol. 43, no.5, 2021.

the resources that it mobilises. These factors include “domestic” EU politics (at the national and EU level), institutional processes and available assets. Demand-side factors are those pertaining to the external context — the set of challenges, opportunities and choices facing the EU and requiring it to take a position, or to take action.

This paper argues that the root cause of convergence or divergence among member states in foreign policy (and beyond) is to be found at the connection between demand-side and supply-side factors. More particularly, it lies at the conjunction between the external context and domestic politics. For one, it is often stated that foreign policy starts at home. Depending on various interpretations, it is the expression of respective strategic cultures, of the interests of predominant socio-economic groups, or of the main cleavages in domestic politics. For another, it can be argued that domestic politics starts (at least in part) abroad. Major external trends can shape political agendas, while crises or shocks can reshuffle domestic debates and priorities, empowering new actors. This applies at EU level too, with external factors weighting heavily on European cohesion and on prospects for further European integration.⁶

Since the global financial crisis hit the EU in 2008, “outside-in” variables have prevailed over “inside-out” ones in shaping, and often challenging, EU foreign policy.⁷ Multiple cascading crises have severely tested the EU’s resilience. The financial crisis generated a banking, fiscal and social crisis that threatened to tear apart the Eurozone, and exacerbated economic divergence among EU

⁶ GREVI G., “European integration starts abroad”, in *FRIDE Commentary*, no.24, July 2015.

⁷ For an extensive analysis of the recent evolution of EU foreign policy as mainly driven by the need to respond to external challenges, see YOUNGS R., *The European Union and Global Politics*, London, Red Globe Press, 2021.

member states. The Arab uprisings in 2010-11 and the ensuing conflicts set the stage for a steep rise in the number of refugees and migrants heading to Europe, sharpening tensions among member states over sharing responsibility for managing these flows. Russia's occupation of Crimea and intervention in the Donbas region since 2014 exposed and widened fractures in the EU's Eastern neighbourhood well before the current war. Economic uncertainty and controversy around migration issues have deepened malaise within societies and between EU countries, eventually generating a populist surge that further polarised European politics. Populist politics paved the way to a double shock in 2016: Brexit in Europe and Trump's election in the US. The advent of a populist administration in Washington carried multiple implications across the pond, given the vast influence of the US in all EU member states and Trump's affinity with Eurosceptic forces in many of them. The rise of populism and nationalism, alongside the heavily contested impact of China's massive state-led economy on global flows and norms, began to affect economic globalisation. Trade wars and the prospect of US-China economic decoupling reflected a broader trend towards renewed great power competition, which challenged Europe's reliance on economic openness and multilateralism. This was the worrisome state of play in early 2020, when the COVID 19 pandemic locked the world down.

Until then, the cumulative impact of Europe's "poly-crisis" had been to normalise the "national reflex" in European politics. Of course, all countries have always articulated their national interests and sought to act accordingly. However, the poly-crisis sharpened the focus on respective national emergencies and priorities, often sidelining broader systemic considerations about shared interests and public goods at the European level. National narratives have

framed narrow debates about common European challenges that required a shared strategic approach, backed up by a suitable mix of solidarity and responsibility.

National responses to successive asymmetric shocks became increasingly politicised. Polarisation within and between countries reduced the scope for joint efforts. Faced with growing contestation at home, national politicians have mostly chosen damage limitation over taking hard political choices at EU level.⁸ By providing technical fixes to deeply political questions — such as the issues of creating a fiscal capacity at EU level or moving towards a common asylum policy — national leaders have kept the EU afloat, but often adrift. Combined with the sense of vulnerability induced in the public sphere by cascading crises, piecemeal responses at EU level have opened up wide political space to nationalist and populist narratives. Importantly, therefore, in the course of the 2010s the politicisation of the European agenda has not proceeded in parallel to the Europeanisation of the debate.

This political context sheds light on the roots of the paradox highlighted above, namely the simultaneous institutionalisation and fragmentation of EU foreign policy. In other words, the rise of divergence while stronger mechanisms for convergence were being set up. The problem is twofold. First, given the deep connection between external and internal challenges, foreign policy has been increasingly engulfed in domestic controversies, such as those con-

⁸ This author has defined this approach as “muddling downwards” in GREVI G., *Strategic autonomy for European choices: the key to Europe’s shaping power*, Discussion Paper, European Policy Centre, July 2019. For a different and broader analysis of the dynamics shaping crisis response and cooperation at EU level, see JONES E., KELEMEN R.D. and MEUNIER S., “Failing forward? Crises and patterns of European integration”, in *Journal of European Public Policy*, vol. 28, no.10, 2021.

cerning the impact of free trade or of migration flows.⁹ Second, the mainstreaming of the national reflex has affected foreign policy debates and processes too. In a context where EU-level solidarity was questioned, member states felt entitled to block common decisions, or voice dissent from established positions, in the name of their particular interests. At a time when they differed on fundamental issues of economic governance and political integration, member states found little motivation to truly invest in the common foreign policy and its institutional structures. Besides, weakened by the economic crisis, some countries proved more vulnerable to external interference too.

The wider background outlined here helps explain why the implementation of the reforms introduced by the Lisbon Treaty in the CFSP domain met considerable challenges and under-delivered, compared to the sometimes lofty aspirations. Political problems do not lend themselves to institutional fixes. However, institutions can help achieve consensus, deal with dissent, improve coherence and empower joint action when the political stars align. The COVID-19 crisis and Russia's aggression against Ukraine seem to have been strong enough shocks to create a new political context, shifting the calculus at national level and leading to convergence around momentous decisions. At the same time, the grinding war in Ukraine and its severe security and economic consequences for EU member states continue to test Europe's unity and resilience.

⁹ BIEDENKOPF K., COSTA O. and GORA M., "Introduction: shades of contestation and politicisation in CFSP", in *European Security*, vol. 30, no.3, 2021, p. 325-343.

THE PANDEMIC AND THE WAR: A TURNING POINT?

The disruptive impact of the COVID 19 pandemic and of the war in Ukraine has triggered unprecedented shifts in EU politics and policies. In both cases, the EU and its member states have dropped hesitations, broken taboos, shaped new narratives and joined forces to deliver meaningful results. The common denominator of these two otherwise very different crises is that they fundamentally and directly threatened the security and prosperity of the Union — and of each EU member state. In contrast with the financial crisis, no member states could set the conditions to rescue others in need, while eluding deeper imbalances. In contrast with the refugee crisis, no group of countries could hope to insulate themselves from the struggles of others. The pandemic and the war could not be effectively tackled without pooling political capital and adequate resources. Responsibility for that needed to be taken at the highest level — the heads of state and government — where authority ultimately lies.¹⁰

Yet another common feature to the two crises is that they have exposed and, unfortunately, accelerated deeper trends at play on the international stage. In particular, the return of great power competition and the manipulation of interdependence for strategic purposes, which undermines globalisation and challenges multilateralism. Conversely, an important difference between the two crises concerns transatlantic affairs, given the gulf between limited mutual EU-US engagement in response to the pandemic and close cooperation, alongside proactive US leadership, in response to Russia's aggression.

¹⁰ For this observation and a broader analysis of the EU's change of pace in dealing with successive crises and the pandemic, see VAN MIDDELAAR L., *Pandemonium — Saving Europe*, Agenda Publishing, 2021.

Europeans soon realised that they needed to rely on themselves to deal with the health and economic shock of COVID-19, as they watched the US failing to provide multilateral leadership, China seeking to politicise health-diplomacy, and the two superpowers engaging in ever deeper competition. At first, the reaction of EU member states was disjointed, leading to disruptions in the flow of medical goods and threatening free movement in the Schengen space. By spring 2020, however, convergence prevailed. Reversing decades of resistance to joint debt issuance, member states eventually agreed in July 2020 on the path-breaking €750bn-strong Next Generation EU programme on top of various other important measures.

Concerning Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Europeans, the Biden administration and other allies have worked closely together to shape a firm and common stance. Within the EU, all member states felt that they needed to close ranks in the face of war in Europe — a clear threat to their security, to shared values and to global stability. Having failed to deter Russia's attack, the EU adopted various heavy sanctions packages in quick succession after the conflict started. On the military level, while some member states had already done so before the war, most EU countries started delivering armaments to Ukraine and the EU mobilised the European Peace Facility for the same purpose. Germany's decision to establish a €100bn fund to boost defence spending, on top of pledging weapons to Ukraine, signalled a major break with the country's traditional reluctance to invest in military power. The vast majority of EU member states have committed to rapidly expanding their defence budgets. Finland and Sweden quickly reversed their long-standing neutral stances and applied to join NATO. On the EU side, the decision was taken to grant candidate status for EU membership to Ukraine and Moldova and,

subject to further reforms, to Georgia. While the implementation of this decision will take many years, this was a powerful political signal of commitment to the three Eastern partners.

It may be a cliché to quote Jean Monnet’s intuition that “Europe will be forged in crises, and will be the sum of the solutions adopted for those crises.”¹¹ However, this insight helps explain Europe’s renewed cohesion. Confronted with two existential common challenges, Europeans have so far been able to take joint responsibility, to a large extent through the EU. These crises have also shifted the terms of the public debate across Europe. While the approach to earlier crises was largely framed in (often diverging) national terms, the response to the pandemic and to the war in Ukraine has been framed as the defence of shared interests and values, requiring solidarity and joint action at EU (and, in the case of the war, NATO) level. The developments observed since the spread of the COVID 19 pandemic appear to confirm that the interplay between an increasingly volatile external context and domestic politics is critical to trigger convergence or divergence among member states, and to the evolution of the EU’s strategic culture.

Nine months into the war in Ukraine, the question is whether Europe will stay the course with convergence towards joint action, or whether powerful exogenous forces will heighten divisions among member states. This question intersects with the narrative that has broadly surrounded Europe’s mobilisation to deal with the pandemic and that remains central to the EU’s foreign policy debate, while also reflecting a mix of convergence and divergence among member states.

¹¹ MONNET J., *Mémoires*, Paris, Fayard, 1976: “L’Europe se fera dans les crises et elle sera la somme des solutions apportées à ces crises.”

Well before the COVID 19 pandemic, uncertainty over the future course of American foreign policy and concerns with an increasingly assertive China led leaders like President Macron and Chancellor Merkel to call for Europeans to take charge of their own future. This aspiration largely informed the priorities of the “geopolitical” Commission that took office in 2019,¹² leading the newly appointed HRVP Borrell to state that Europe should “learn to use the language of power”.¹³ In short, the argument goes, in a more dangerous and volatile world Europeans need to become more strategic in defending their interests and less dependent on others. With a view to that, while cooperating with partners whenever possible, they should develop the assets and capabilities needed to make their own choices and achieve their goals. Numerous politicians, officials and pundits have since contributed to this pan-European debate, often framing it as the pursuit of strategic autonomy or European sovereignty.¹⁴

¹² VON DER LEYEN U., *Speech by President-elect von der Leyen in the European Parliament Plenary on the occasion of the presentation of her College of Commissioners and their programme*, Strasbourg, 27 November 2019.

¹³ EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, *Hearing of Josep Borrell, Vice-President Designate of the European Commission, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy*, Brussels, 7 October 2019.

¹⁴ See, for example, “The Macron Doctrine. A Conversation with the French President”, in *Le Grand Continent*, 16 November 2020; MICHEL C., *Strategic autonomy for Europe — the aim of our generation*, Speech to the Bruegel think tank, 28 September 2020. Among experts’ contributions, see LIPPERT B., VON ORDANZA N. and PERTHES V. (eds.), *European Strategic Autonomy: Actors, Issues, Conflicts of Interests*, SWP Research Paper 4, German Institute for International and Security Affairs, March 2019; LEONARD M. and SHAPIRO J., *Strategic Sovereignty: How Europe Can Regain the Capacity to Act*, Policy Brief, European Council on Foreign Relations, June 2019; and GREVI G., *op. cit.* in note 8.

This debate has proven controversial on various grounds. Critics have argued that strategic autonomy would undermine the Transatlantic Partnership, would depart from the traditional tenets of Europe's soft power, or would neglect and forfeit the benefits of interdependence.¹⁵ At the same time, since the outbreak of the pandemic in early 2020, there is new awareness across the Union that challenges of a different scale from the past, and underlying global trends, require adequate responses that elude the resources of any individual country, and call for joint responsibility.

This argument applies across all dimensions of internal and external policies, from technological innovation to industrial strategies, from strengthening Europe's supply chains to enhancing its military capabilities. In the defence area, the process that led to the adoption of the so-called Strategic Compass for Security and Defence on 21 March 2022 mirrored the aspiration that Europeans take more responsibility for their security, the limits of their efforts to that end, and lingering divisions among member states.¹⁶ The exercise was directed to clearly define the objectives of EU defence policy and the consequent capability requirements, as well as to improve Europe's operational capacity. It explicitly aimed to "develop the common European security and defence culture."¹⁷ The outcome document outlines many sensible, if hardly path-breaking, policy recommendations. Their full and timely implementation would represent a significant upgrading of the EU as a security and defence actor. Given the timing of its adoption, the Strategic Compass expresses a strong

¹⁵ YOUNGS R., *The EU's Strategic Autonomy Trap*, Carnegie Europe, 8 March 2021.

¹⁶ COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, *A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence - For a European Union that protects its citizens, values and interests and contributes to international peace and security*, 7371/22, Brussels, 21 March 2022.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

sense of urgency due to the “return of war in Europe” — the opening words of the document.¹⁸ The Compass asserts the common resolve of Europeans to defend the European security order, which “requires us to make a quantum leap forward and increase our capacity and willingness to act, strengthen our resilience and ensure solidarity and mutual assistance.”¹⁹

At the same time, the response to the war in Ukraine has starkly highlighted Europe’s dependence on the US for its security and defence. Europeans have not stood still. Beyond consequential diplomatic and economic measures, they have pledged to quickly boost their defence expenditure, have subscribed to new ambitious targets in the EU and NATO contexts, and have committed to support Ukraine’s war effort by delivering weapons and training troops. At the same time, the extent of this support widely varies among member states. Besides, it is to be seen whether bold statements will be followed by hard facts to boost Europe’s defence capabilities, and whether related decisions will contribute to strengthening Europe’s defence policy and industrial base.²⁰ These discrepancies in part reflect lasting differences in the assessment of the threats posed by the war, of the best approach to bring it to an end and, more broadly, of the role of Europeans in providing for Europe’s defence within the transatlantic alliance.

The balance between convergence and divergence among Europeans is mixed, and fluid. EU countries converge in regarding Russia as a top security threat and in pursuing energy and economic decoupling from it, albeit at different speeds. However, differences persist on key

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ GIUSTI S. and GREVI G. (eds.), *Facing War: Rethinking Europe’s Security and Defence*, ISPI Report, 24 November 2022.

issues such as how to pave the way for peace negotiations between Ukraine and Russia and the broader re-ordering of the European geopolitical space. Member states in Central and Eastern Europe are not convinced of the determination of countries in Western Europe to advance with the process of enlargement to Eastern neighbours. Besides, the war appears to have polarised views on the debate on Europe's sovereignty, with Eastern Europeans questioning the judgment of their western partners on how to deal with Russia and doubling-down on reliance on the US and NATO for their defence.

At the time of writing, it is hard to anticipate whether Europe's resolve will stand the test of time. In the coming months, a lot will depend on the costs of the war for Europe, on how they will be distributed, and on how much solidarity Europeans will practice in dealing with them. And yet, the case can be made that Europeans have, so far, risen to the challenge of coping with an unprecedented pandemic and of responding to Russia's war in Ukraine. Faced with extreme danger, Europeans have not only defined themselves as a community of destiny but have also, to some extent, acted accordingly. After a decade of crises eroding Europe's cohesion, the pandemic and the war have, so far, boosted it, despite recurrent frictions among the member states.

To the extent that strategic culture is the product of shared experiences, and often of tragic ones like conflicts, the pandemic and the war could become the basis for further convergence among EU countries. Clearly, this will not amount to fully overcoming their differences, but it may help in reducing them, or anyway reducing the incentives to convert differences into blocking behaviour. These developments may also pave the way to member states further engaging through common institutions to pool their efforts. If institutions cannot be the trigger or the main driver of strategic conver-

gence among member states, they can offer substantial added value to support this process and deliver a more effective EU foreign policy.

THE INSTITUTIONAL FACTOR: LIMITS AND ADDED VALUE

Institutions cannot impose convergence among Member States, but they can help foster it. Besides, they can maximise the effectiveness of common decisions by mobilising the large EU toolbox and coordinating national resources. Institutional debates have mostly focused on treaty-level provisions and reforms. This is essential because the treaties define the basic terms of interaction between member states and EU bodies and the rules by which decisions are taken at the political level — namely unanimity for CFSP issues. The debate on treaty-level institutional reform is likely to remain high on the agenda. On top of the shortcomings of EU (economic, asylum, health) governance exposed by successive crises, the prospect of enlargement to a Union of well over 30 member states inevitably requires revising the EU's decision-making rules and competences, or facing a high risk of paralysis. The shift from unanimity to some form of qualified majority voting for most EU foreign and security policy decisions is a critical reform priority.

It remains uncertain, however, whether EU member states will agree to launch this process, convening a Convention and then an Intergovernmental Conference to negotiate and agree a substantial reform package. In May 2022, as the Conference on the Future of Europe delivered its final recommendations on EU reform, two groups of member states signed competing letters — one cautioning against rushing into institutional reforms that would detract from focusing on concrete issues, and the other stating openness to necessary treaty changes.

While this debate continues, less attention has been paid to how EU bodies can sustain the elaboration of EU policy decisions. Surely, as stressed above, the most sophisticated policy-making processes count for little if broader political and geopolitical variables take member states apart. However, the quality of the policy-making processes below the waterline of Council voting procedures is an important factor to provide EU countries with the best possible platform for their decisions, and with incentives to take joint action.

Successful joint action at EU level requires pooling information, as the basis for shared assessments and decisions, and pooling assets to acquire critical mass. The aim to draw on the combined experience and expertise of EU and national officials was one of the main drivers behind the creation of the EEAS. The expectation was that the EEAS would perform as a catalyst of knowledge and information. To some extent, and not without complications, progress in this direction has been made at the level of EU delegations in third countries. Equipped with larger human resources, including national diplomats and specialised advisers, and with a stronger mandate to work with national missions, share information, report to headquarters and represent the Union, EU delegations have become an important source of insight and instrument of outreach. At the central level in Brussels, however, various factors have constrained the pooling and sharing of information among EU institutions and member states. These include competing institutional cultures and priorities, little ownership by member states and, on a practical level, inadequate communication systems to share sensitive information.²¹

²¹ BLOCKMANS S. and HILLION C. (rapporteurs), *From self-doubt to self-assurance. The European External Action Service as the indispensable support for a geopolitical EU*, Report of the Task Force EEAS 2.0, CEPS/SIEPS/FES, January 2021.

From this standpoint, the threat assessment exercise carried out in 2020, setting the stage for the elaboration of the Strategic Compass and engaging the intelligence and security communities of all member states, was a significant stepping stone. Building on that, the Strategic Compass envisages that the Single Intelligence Analysis Capacity (SIAC) will review the EU threat analysis by the end of 2022 (given the profound impact of the war in Ukraine) and then at least every three years. Besides, the Strategic Compass calls for strengthening the resources of the SIAC itself and adopting more stringent rules to allow for the safe exchange of intelligence.

Pooling adequate information is an essential first step, but it is equally necessary that such information is translated into joined-up advice and an integrated approach. Efforts have been made in this direction, such as when working at the interface between security and development issues, seeking to devise a comprehensive approach to successive refugee and migration crises or tackling the challenges at the nexus between climate change and security. In response to the destabilising impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the EU and the member states have launched the so-called “Team Europe” approach to enhance the impact and visibility of flagship programmes in support of partner countries.²² That said, inter-institutional tensions, inadequate resources and ambivalence from member states, ever suspicious of the European Commission gaining a bigger say in foreign policy matters, have stifled the potential of the Lisbon Treaty to generate an integrated approach and political convergence.

The rise of multidimensional competition among major powers, however, makes it imperative for Europe to draw on all its assets to

²² JONES A. and TEEVAN C., “Team Europe: Up to the Challenge?”, in *Briefing Note*, no. 128, ECDPM, January 2021.

ensure the security and prosperity of Europeans. It is widely understood that the EU can no longer draw a neat distinction between economics and security affairs, or between interdependence and geopolitics, because most policy domains are contested and increasingly weaponised.²³ Competing powers mobilise political, normative, economic, technological, and military tools as interconnected levers to achieve their goals. Besides, the war in Ukraine clearly shows that challenges and threats to the EU and its citizens are becoming much more pressing than they were perceived to be until recently.

Various avenues can be explored to scale up the contribution of EU institutions to joint policy making. Enhancing the role of foresight in EU policy-making is one of them.²⁴ Sure enough, foresight is no panacea: political choices inevitably depend on a wide set of short-term inputs and variables. However, better connecting the growing institutional capacity for foresight at the EU and national level with the policy-making cycle can help to anticipate, and prepare for, emerging challenges or potential shocks. To take but one example, until 24 February 2022 European leaders could scarcely conceive of the return of inter-state war on the European continent and did not adequately prepare for that, whether by enhancing their military capabilities or by lowering their energy dependence on Russia. The problem is both to create venues and incentives for more out-of-the-box thinking within the institutional system and to ensure that such exercises better inform contingency and strategic planning.

²³ LEONARD M. (ed.), *Connectivity Wars. Why migration, finance and trade are the geo-economic battlegrounds of the future*, European Council on Foreign Relations, 2016.

²⁴ On the role of strategic planning and foresight, see DELPHIN H., “Above the Fog and the Fury: EU Strategic Policy Planning and the EU’s Future in Times of Global Uncertainty”, in *European Foreign Affairs Review*, vol. 26, no 1, 2021.

Beyond security affairs, this of course applies to many pivotal issues for Europe's external action, such as technological innovation or the increasingly tangible implications of climate change.

Another innovation that deserves further consideration is the creation of an EU Security Council. The reference here is the US National Security Council. This is about establishing an institutional capacity that draws on the model of the US body advising the President on national security and related issues. This body would not have executive functions but would be the focal point collecting analysis from across the whole EU institutional architecture as well as national sources, and generating integrated policy advice for EU and national leaders meeting in the European Council. The remit of the Security Council would of course extend well beyond the security and defence agenda proper to include all the areas that affect the security of the EU and its member states, such as matters of economic or energy security. Various institutional formats can be envisaged to set up this structure, each with its drawbacks and advantages, but the underlying purpose remains to consolidate and upgrade the institutional capacity to sustain convergence and coherence in EU policy-making.

Enabling effective action, all the more so in crisis situations, is also how EU institutions can best support the emergence of a shared European strategic culture. Much scholarly attention has been paid to processes of socialisation among officials working in EU institutions or intergovernmental committees. The question is to what extent, and for what reasons, they have progressively developed shared norms or conceptual maps, and learnt to deal with dissent.²⁵

²⁵ JUNCOS A.E. and POMORSKA K., "Manufacturing Esprit de Corps: The Case of the European External Action Service", in *Journal of Common Market Studies*, vol. 52, Issue 2, 2014; MICHALSKI A. and DANIELSON A., "Overcoming Dissent:

The experience of the last decade shows that socialisation between national and European officials within the EEAS, and between the EEAS staff and that of other institutions, has advanced mainly concerning the procedural norms by which officials interact. However, it has not made major strides in generating a common sense of institutional belonging or strategic culture.

From an institutional standpoint, this calls for two additional considerations. First, there should be more investment in the common training of those officials tasked with shaping EU foreign policy and external action. The current incremental steps towards the creation of a European diplomatic academy should be supported, as an important contribution to a shared strategic culture among officials and diplomats from different national and bureaucratic backgrounds.²⁶ Alongside that, adequate career incentives should be available for those national diplomats choosing to invest several years in EU policy-making structures.

Second, the limited results of socialisation in generating a shared strategic culture point to the fact that the latter is the product of joint action rather than countless meetings. Just like the EU is supposed to be forged in crisis, strategic cultures have been forged through shared experiences, efforts, triumphs and failures at national level, which have shaped a common memory and a sense of shared destiny. In this sense, the best contribution of EU institutions to fostering a shared European strategic culture is enabling member states to take meaningful action together, in particular in crisis situations. Hence the importance of the decision to issue common debt in response to

Socialization in the EU's Political and Security Committee in a Context of Crises", in *Journal of Common Market Studies*, vol. 58, Issue 2, 2020.

²⁶ EEAS PRESS TEAM, *European Diplomatic Academy: EEAS launches a pilot project*, 26 August 2022.

the COVID-19 pandemic, and of adopting unprecedented measures to sanction Russia following the war's outbreak.

DIFFERENTIATED COOPERATION: BEYOND CONSENSUS OR TOWARDS CONSENSUS?

EU institutions can sustain and operationalise convergence among member states. They can provide incentives for countries to cooperate, narratives to frame their joint action and norms to guide it. However, whether consensus can be achieved among member states does not depend primarily on these institutions. This is even less the case in a domain like foreign policy, which is inherently reactive to events that often affect issues salient to respective national interests and even identities. Until the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, some member states have proven increasingly ambivalent in their engagement to shape a common foreign policy. Those championing it have perhaps invested more in words than in deeds, while some member states proved ready to veto joint action or dilute common positions. The question is therefore what to do when convergence fails, and unanimity cannot be achieved at EU level. There are three ways of dealing with dissent in EU foreign policy. The first is doing nothing, or too little, which has been sometimes the case and, in a very challenging world, would seal the “strategic shrinkage” of the EU.²⁷ The other two options that can pave the way to overcoming dissent are majority voting and differentiated cooperation.

The debate on qualified majority voting in EU CFSP is as old as the policy itself, but the war in Ukraine has triggered renewed calls to drop unanimity and empower the EU to take timely and effec-

²⁷ BORRELL J., *A Strategic Compass for Europe*, Project Syndicate, 12 November 2021.

tive action. The advantages of majority voting over unanimity are self-evident in terms of enabling crisis response and leveraging the EU's critical mass in a world of heavyweights.²⁸ Given the nature of EU policy-making, decisions are framed by norms and rules, mostly build on earlier positions and are the product of a careful balance of interests. It is therefore hardly foreseeable that such decisions would simply ignore the fundamental interests of even one member state, or suddenly depart from shared principles.

Critics of the shift to majority voting in CFSP point to two drawbacks. For one, cornering one or more countries into an outvoted minority would expose divisions within the EU. This would detract from the legitimacy and political clout that consensus at 27 affords to EU positions on the international stage. For another, forcing a decision on a dissenting country would exacerbate differences between member states instead of bridging them, and may carry collateral damage for other, unrelated policy dossiers. As opposed to enhancing convergence, the risk would be that majority voting fuels divergence.

These are serious objections: a split between member states on important decisions can carry political costs not only for those outvoted but also for the majority, and for the EU at large. However, the case for preserving unanimity is not convincing. First, the costs/benefits assessment cannot be carried out in a void: what might have been suitable for the relatively benign post-Cold War strategic context is inadequate for the era of great power competition and weaponised interdependence that is fast emerging. Second, the EU's decision-making culture is firmly oriented to consensus-build-

²⁸ On the broad debate concerning the introduction of majority voting in this policy domain, see SCHUETTE L., *Should the EU make foreign policy decisions by majority voting?*, Centre for European Reform, May 2019.

ing. In this context, the option of majority voting would essentially work as a lever for all countries to seriously engage to strike a deal, while precluding one or two countries from simply hijacking EU decision-making. Third, when even the prospect of a vote is insufficient to bring about convergence, it is questionable that the very fact of voting would produce divergence. If one member state, or a tiny group of them, choose to be outvoted, divergence already runs quite deep. As argued above, the roots of convergence or divergence among member states do not lie in institutions or procedures. Just like these are not the main driver of convergence, so they are not the main source of fragmentation among member states. This holds for majority voting as well. The question is, however, whether the EU can afford to be powerless when consensus-building fails.

Beyond the merits of respective arguments, agreement to replace unanimity with qualified majority voting in CFSP does not appear forthcoming. The consideration of some form of decisions by super-qualified majority, essentially aimed at preventing the veto by one country, might prove more politically palatable, but even that is unclear. The issue will not disappear and is likely to gain further relevance for the EU agenda but, for the foreseeable future, other paths need to be explored to deliver action when unanimity is out of reach. These alternative options fall within the practice of differentiated cooperation, whereby willing and able member states act together through formats other than the EU at 27. This practice encompasses several arrangements for flexible cooperation, which can be clustered in two broad categories: treaty-based mechanisms and informal initiatives.²⁹

²⁹ GREVI G., MORILLAS P., SOLER I LECHA E. *et al.*, “Differentiated Cooperation in European Foreign Policy: The Challenge of Coherence”, in *EU IDEA Policy Paper*, no. 5, 2020.

Two treaty-based mechanisms stand out here — constructive abstention and so-called enhanced cooperation. According to the former procedure, outlined in Article 31.1 TEU, if a member state decides to abstain from a vote, it will not be bound by the corresponding decision, but will have to refrain from any action that might hinder its implementation. This mechanism has been used only three times, two of which within the last few months, concerning measures taken to support Ukraine’s military effort against Russia’s aggression. Austria, Ireland and Malta abstained from the decision to send lethal military equipment to Ukraine via the European Peace Facility, supporting instead the provision of non-lethal equipment.³⁰ In October 2022, Hungary abstained from the decision to set up the EU Military Assistance Mission to train Ukrainian armed forces.³¹ It is interesting that the shock of Russia’s aggression has kicked back into life a dormant provision, sustaining overall convergence while respecting the distinct positions of those abstaining. Broader recourse to this clause would be a promising avenue to reconcile the need for action with the specific reservations of one or more countries. However, exceptional circumstances rarely set the norm. Historically, member states have showed very little appetite to use this option, which probably reflects deeper divides on important foreign policy decisions.

Besides the clause for constructive abstention, the EU Treaties carry the provisions enabling enhanced cooperation in areas of non-exclusive EU competence, including the CFSP and the CSDP.

³⁰ WESSEL R. and SZÉP V., *The implementation of Article 31 of the Treaty on the European Union and the use of Qualified Majority. Towards a more effective common foreign and security policy?*, Study requested by the AFCO Committee, European Parliament, November 2022.

³¹ TIDEY A., “EU countries agree to train Ukrainian soldiers as part of new mission”, in *Euronews*, 17 October 2022.

These provisions outline the criteria to be met and the procedures that apply to establish cooperation among subsets of at least nine member states. In short, the aim is to ensure that enhanced cooperation is directed to advance the objectives and interests of the Union and is pursued through procedures that maximise the inclusion of non-participating member states as well. It is telling that this mechanism has never been activated in the domains of CFSP and CSDP. That may depend on two main factors. For one, treaty arrangements appear too cumbersome to enable a group of countries to undertake swift action, or sensitive diplomatic initiatives, when required by external events. For another, when national positions differ among the 27, like-minded member states may opt for more informal modes of cooperation precisely to avoid or minimise lengthy controversial deliberations at EU level.

Based on the record of the past 30 years, member states clearly privilege informal approaches to flexible cooperation in the domain of foreign and security policy over the constraints of treaty-based arrangements.³² The experience of differentiated cooperation in this field spans a wide range of formats and policy issues. Sets of member states have worked together through regional groupings, ad hoc multinational initiatives, contact groups or lead groups. Some of the best-known examples include the Quint group addressing the crises in the Western Balkans, the Quint group dealing with the Middle East peace process, the so-called E3 part of the negotiating format on the Iran nuclear deal on Europe's side, and the role of

³² DELREUX T. and KEUKELEIRE S., "Informal division of labour in EU foreign policy-making", in *Journal of European Public Policy*, vol. 24, no. 10, 2017, p. 1471-1490.

France and Germany in the so-called Normandy format, concerning the implementation of the Minsk agreements since 2014.³³

Informal groups are supposed to confer more agility to foreign policy initiatives, while bringing to bear the direct engagement and political weight of some of the largest EU countries. Whether differentiated cooperation fosters convergence or divergence among member states is a function of three main factors. The first is whether those participating in flexible formats frame their action within the policy parameters established at EU level, therefore pursuing shared objectives. The second is whether non-participating member states acknowledge the leading role of others on given issues. The third is the extent to which the members of flexible groups liaise and coordinate with EU bodies and with the other member states through EU institutions. The experience of the E3 in dealing with the Iranian nuclear crisis is an important instance of informal cooperation contributing to advance EU foreign policy at large.³⁴

Crisis diplomacy in the run up to and following Russia's invasion of Ukraine featured several initiatives by EU member states — unilateral, bilateral and mini-lateral ones, as well as many involving non-EU countries such as the US and the UK. One can debate whether all of them can be defined as instances of differentiated cooperation strictly speaking. All of them, however, point to an understanding of European foreign policy as encompassing multiple, simultaneous lines of action by the EU, individual countries and groups of them.

³³ GREVI G., MORILLAS P., SOLER I LECHA E. *et al., op. cit.* See also ALCARO R. and SIDDI M., “Differentiation in EU Foreign and Security policy: EU Lead Groups in the Iranian Nuclear Dispute and the Ukraine Crisis”, in *EU IDEA Policy Papers*, No 11, December 2020.

³⁴ ALCARO R., *Europe and Iran's Nuclear Crisis. Lead Groups and EU Foreign Policy-Making*, Springer - Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.

A non-exhaustive compilation of differentiated cooperation around the Ukraine crisis, and then war, includes close coordination and summits between the Baltic and Nordic countries (at variable geometries); coordination between France and Germany, including but not limited to ill-fated attempts to revive the Normandy format; the revival of the Weimar triangle; the activation of the Slavkov format; and regular top level consultations between the US President and the leaders of the main powers in Europe, as well as the heads of the EU and NATO.³⁵ Conversely, the war in Ukraine has divided the Visegrad group, due to the gap between Hungary's ambivalent position towards Russia and the active opposition to Russia's aggression by the other members of the group.³⁶ Sustained diplomatic initiatives such as that of President Macron in pursuing dialogue with Russia may be difficult to categorise as instances of differentiated cooperation. However, they might fit this practice to the extent that they are coordinated with the other EU member states, with EU bodies, or with a group of like-minded countries, reflecting therefore more than a purely national undertaking.

Another question is whether differentiated cooperation in dealing with the Ukraine conflict points to convergence or divergence among EU member states. Based on the three factors sketched out above, the picture is mixed, and a deeper assessment would require more space than available here. Initiatives through different formats have often exposed differences of judgement among EU countries

³⁵ The Normandy format was set up in June 2014 and involved France, Germany, Russia and Ukraine in talks to achieve a lasting solution to the conflict in Ukraine. The Weimar triangle is a forum for dialogue and cooperation involving France, Germany and Poland, first held in 1991. The Slavkov format was launched in 2015 and includes Austria, Slovakia and the Czech Republic.

³⁶ The Visegrad Group is a regional forum for cooperation established in 1991 and including the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia and Poland.

on how to prevent the war and then how to respond to it. In some cases, they have triggered unease and even open controversy among EU capitals. These frictions are largely the result of different strategic cultures and threat perceptions, in particular between eastern and western Europeans. At the same time, all EU member states have quickly shifted gear in response to Russia's attack, and converged time and again around an unprecedented set of measures to punish Russia and support Ukraine, short of direct military involvement in the war. A very tight sequence of both scheduled and extraordinary meetings at Council and European Council level took place in the weeks following the conflict's outbreak, signalling the shared determination to work together through the EU. While not always consistent and requiring laborious negotiations, the proposals and pronouncements of EU bodies and member states have broadly pointed in the same direction. In the midst of an unprecedented crisis, which could have amplified differences and triggered divergence between member states, the EU managed to establish a common front that still holds nine months into the war.

CONCLUSION

This article has reviewed some of the principal variables that affect convergence or divergence among EU member states in the foreign policy domain and has set this assessment in the context of the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. The main argument is that the interplay between external trends and shocks and "domestic" politics, at the EU and national levels, is the most important determinant of progress towards unity, or drift towards fragmentation. The article has illustrated the step change in Europe's crisis response triggered by the COVID 19 pandemic and Russia's attack of Ukraine, compared to

earlier challenges. This shift of gear is attributable to the extraordinary scale and severity of these disruptive events, which threatened all member states at once and clearly required decisive common action to cope with their systemic effects. These crises contributed to shape a new political and strategic context for EU foreign policy making. With a view to the implications of the war in Ukraine in particular, three main considerations can be formulated to capture the findings of this analysis.

First, well-functioning and properly equipped EU institutions are a very important but insufficient requirement for effective action by member states at the international level. Institutions deliver legitimacy, knowledge and critical mass through pooled resources and coordinated efforts. The war in Ukraine underscores the importance of member states developing an integrated approach spanning security, trade, finance, energy and industrial policies, among other fields, to assert their interest in a competitive world. There is little chance that they will succeed without working through the EU. Institutions can also contribute to the emergence of a shared strategic culture, for example by adopting landmark policy documents that become references for subsequent deliberations. However, convergence toward a common strategic culture is likely to be a product of effective joint action more than of the seamless stream of meetings among EU and national officials.

Second, if an effective institutional framework can help achieve coherence and convergence, a decision-making system bound by the unanimity rule remains vulnerable to national vetoes that undermine the EU's credibility on the international stage. The introduction of majority voting in the domain of CFSP would be no panacea in case of deep cleavages among member states. However, it would help avoid the hijacking of common position and joint actions by

one or two outliers. Alongside this long-running debate, member states have operated through multiple forms of differentiated cooperation among sub-sets of them. Depending on the motivations driving differentiated cooperation, the latter can either enhance convergence or expose divergence between member states. Under some conditions, flexible forms of cooperation can contribute to advance shared EU policy goals, while expressing the strong political commitment of participating member states. Europe's response to the war in Ukraine has seen EU member states operating through the EU, via variable formats, and on an individual basis too. If separate initiatives often conveyed different readings of how to deal with the crisis, on balance they unfolded within a strong level of consensus on the gravity of the threat and on the need to assert a strong common position, backed up by adequate measures.

Third, and related to this, the war appears to have triggered simultaneously convergence and divergence among member states. However, the case can be submitted that the war ushers in a deeper shift too. As the poly-crisis strained European cohesion over the last decade or so, member states still managed to maintain common positions on key foreign policy issues, such as pursuing the Iran nuclear deal or sanctioning Russia after the crisis in Ukraine in 2014. Where convergence took place, however, it did so in the shadow of larger political trends pointing towards a more fragmented EU and the creeping disengagement of member states from EU foreign policy. In other words, ad hoc convergence in the shadow of divergence. Following the outbreak of the war in Ukraine in 2022, differences among member states have come to the fore, but they occurred in the shadow of a larger drive to build a common front on critical choices. In short, ad hoc divergence in the shadow of convergence.

The war has surely not bridged different perceptions and positions across the Union. In some cases, it has actually highlighted them. But it is a fact that member states have agreed at EU level measures that would have been inconceivable just the day before Russia's attack. In terms of strategic culture, this experience might contribute to attenuate differences over time, even more so if joint action succeeds in mitigating the impact of the war on European economies, and in shaping the course of the war itself. Institutions can help along the way, creating spaces for strengthening trust among member states, and connecting their multiple initiatives.

This book chapter cannot offer a definitive answer to the opening question — whether the war in Ukraine will make or break “geopolitical” Europe. The coming months will likely pose the hardest test that the Union has ever faced. However, this analysis has sought to offer some frames to assess the impact of current events on convergence and divergence within the EU, against broader features of EU politics and foreign policy. Based on this assessment, there is a chance that the war in Ukraine will mark a watershed not only in terms of exacerbating great power rivalry, but also by way of forging a stronger, more united Europe.

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Reckoned with: Europe's distinctive power in a changing world

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INTRODUCTION

Major events, such as the end of the Cold War, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and now the dual impact of the Coronavirus pandemic and the Russia war in Ukraine, trigger debates about the kind of rupture they cause. From the “end of history”¹ to “Cold War 2.0”², from hyper-globalization³ to its seeming imminent end,⁴ the world of ideas has reflected the roller-coaster of global politics that the past forty years have offered. Simultaneously, the ideas themselves have also shaped the understanding of events.

At the heart of these debates, which mostly originate in North American academia, are questions about power, the role of the

¹ FUKUYAMA F., *The End of History and the Last Man*, New York, Free Press, 1992.

² GOLDSTEIN G.-P., “A ‘Cold War 2.0’ Between the US and China”, in *RUSI Commentary*, 10 November 2021, [accessed 17 Apr. 2023, A ‘Cold War 2.0’ Between the US and China | Royal United Services Institute (rusi.org)].

³ RODRIK D., *The Globalization Paradox: Democracy and the Future of the World Economy*, New York/London, W.W. Norton, 2011.

⁴ POSEN A.S., “The End of Globalization? What Russia’s War in Ukraine Means for the World Economy”, in *Foreign Affairs*, 17 March 2022, [accessed 17 Apr. 2023, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/world/2022-03-17/end-globalization>].

state and of the US: the degree to which the end of the Cold War and hyper-globalization flattened history and diffused power away from the state or, conversely, the return of history, the rise of geopolitics, and the shift away from US unipolarity. In Europe, debates about the EU's global role are similarly shaped by the context in which they take place and by normative concepts of the EU's identity. This contribution attempts to look at interpretations of events and narratives about Europe's international identity as interconnected.

Presently, the rivalry between the US and China is framing the debate around bipolarity or multipolarity. In the first approach, the US-China confrontation is seen as leading to the breakage of the international system, thus imposing stark choices on the rest of the world. The focus on multipolarity, by contrast, sees a fragmentation of global politics and a plurality of actors hedging and adapting their power and alliances.

For the European Union, framing global politics around bipolarity or multipolarity informs the debate around “strategic autonomy”, which has been the dominant lens through which its international role has been interpreted in recent years. The general gist of the argument is that the surge of geopolitics renders past debates about Europe's global presence and power redundant⁵ and calls for a new “geopolitical” Europe.⁶ With a newly found unity in responding to

⁵ EUROPEAN EXTERNAL ACTION SERVICE, Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe, A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy, Brussels, 28 June 2016, [accessed 17 Apr. 2023, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/global-strategy-european-unions-foreign-and-security-policy_en].

⁶ VON DER LEYEN U., Speech by President-elect von der Leyen in the European Parliament Plenary on the occasion of the presentation of her College of Commissioners and their programme, Strasbourg: 27 November 2019, [accessed

Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Europe's "geopolitical awakening"⁷ needs to be followed by investing on its security and autonomy.⁸

While the definition itself of "geopolitical Europe" is conceptually and empirically problematic,⁹ this contribution focuses more broadly on the limits of the international debate on bi/multipolarity (section 2) arguing that parallel and interconnected global developments also shape the context in which Europe operates. In particular, it is striking that the international relations debates ignore the systemic and diffuse impact of the democratic recession, the climate crisis, and the technological revolution. Identifying these trends helps rediscover Europe's distinctive features that can be relevant to the 21st century.

The chapter then moves on to examine European responses to the external and internal shocks — the Coronavirus pandemic and the war in Ukraine, on the backdrop of a decade-long "poly-crisis"¹⁰

17 Apr. 2023, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/speech_19_6408].

⁷ BORRELL J., *Europe in the Interregnum: our geopolitical awakening after Ukraine*, Brussels, 24 March 2022a, [accessed 17 Apr. 2023, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/europe-interregnum-our-geopolitical-awakening-after-ukraine_en].

⁸ COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, *A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence — For a European Union that protects its citizens, values and interests and contributes to international peace and security*, Brussels, 21 March 2022, 7371/22, accessed 17 Apr. 2023, [<https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-7371-2022-INIT/en/pdf>].

⁹ YOUNGS R., "The Awakening of Geopolitical Europe?", in *Carnegie Europe*, Brussels, 28 July 2022, [accessed 17 Apr. 2023, <https://carnegieeurope.eu/2022/07/28/awakening-of-geopolitical-europe-pub-87580>].

¹⁰ JUNCKER J.-C., *Speech by President Jean-Claude Juncker at the Annual General Meeting of the Hellenic Federation of Enterprises*, Athens, 21 June 2016, [accessed 17 Apr. 2023, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH_16_2293].

— identifying the contours of the debate on the EU as an international actor, framed around the notion of “strategic autonomy” (section 3). On this basis, the concluding section explores how the EU’s distinctive attributes should be incorporated into thinking about its power and global role. In doing so, it will stretch out of the mainstream foreign and security policy framing to embrace a broader interpretation of the EU as an actor taking into account the combination of internal and external policies and the connection between economic and security policy.

THE LIMITS OF BI/MULTI-POLAR POLITICS IN A COMPLEX WORLD

The intensification of the rivalry between the US and China has become the single most defining feature of contemporary global politics. This is unlikely to ease because of both of Beijing’s ambitions under Xi Jinping and the bipartisan consensus in the US about the systemic nature of China’s threat. For the Biden Administration, all other priorities are subsumed under this overarching goal, including the need to demonstrate transatlantic firmness with respect to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. The ubiquity of the US-China rivalry means that it is acutely felt in the rest of the world, becoming the dominant lens through which the so-called “global south” views its own politics.¹¹ With the Coronavirus pandemic exposing the dependencies of the global supply chains, the rivalry has taken on new dimensions fracturing economic global relationships.

¹¹ BALFOUR R., BOMASSI L. and MARTINELLI M. (eds.), “The Southern Mirror: Reflections on Europe from the Global South”, in *Carnegie Europe*, Brussels, 29 June 2022, [accessed 17 Apr. 2023, <https://carnegieeurope.eu/2022/06/29/southern-mirror-reflections-on-europe-from-global-south-pub-87306>].

This structural drift away from multipolarity towards a bifurcation between China and the US, however, still leaves a long tail of messy multipolarity. For instance, a Middle East destabilized since the US-led invasion of Iraq has seen the growing role of regional actors engage in direct and proxy wars, expand their webs of influence, and shake up regional alliances and opportunistic relationships. The NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan, the failure to re-engage Iran in the JCPOA coupled with strengthened roles played by countries such as Saudi Arabia and Turkey, all make the future map of the Middle East highly uncertain — except for the declining relevance of the West.

The years of the Trump administration enabled states to attempt foreign policy adventurism with little or no consequence, often as a distraction from domestic woes. The playbook for adventurism came from Russian President Vladimir Putin who, prior to the full-blown invasion of Ukraine, managed to compensate Russia's declining power with foreign adventurism on the cheap, with military or mercenary interventions in Ukraine, Syria, Libya, Venezuela, Mali, Central African Republic, demonstrating that facts on the ground could be changed without much cost — a lesson that perhaps convinced Putin of the opportunity of carrying out a full-blown invasion of Ukraine instead of pretending not to have done so in Donbass since 2014.

Turkish President Erdogan also has excelled in adventurism in the East Mediterranean, the South Caucasus, and interfering militarily in Syria. His handling of Putin's war temporarily earned him points as a mediator, bridging between war aims and the global food crisis by unblocking the shipping of grain across the Black Sea. As Turkey seeks to play a relevant role in a competitive environment, its

position supports the argument about the staying power of multipolarity.

Much of this adventurism is fueled by authoritarian leaders. Indeed, one of the great trends since 2006 is the rise authoritarianism and the degradation of democracy.¹² The number of countries backsliding from democracy started to increase, through coups or a relentless degradation of democratic features. As Freedom House put it in 2021 “the international balance is in favour of tyranny”.¹³ Since 2016 three times as many countries are moving towards authoritarianism rather than towards democracies.¹⁴ Fragile democracies have seen important reversals. Democracy has been performing badly in the Western world, to the glee of the authoritarian regimes that can point to the inefficiency of the democratic model.

Whereas historically democracy has advanced with modernization, this association is no longer empirically substantiated. Since the 2010s the world is experiencing the “most severe democratic setback” since fascism,¹⁵ and China is promoting a model of modernization without democracy. The rise in the assertiveness of authoritarian states is encroaching on neighbours, undermining other states and international rules and institutions. This pits democracy

¹² DIAMOND L., “Facing up to the Democratic Recession”, in *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 26, no. 1, 2015, p. 141-155; BIDEN J., *Remarks by President Biden at the 2021 Virtual Munich Security Conference*, 19 February 2021, [accessed 17 Apr. 2023, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/02/19/remarks-by-president-biden-at-the-2021-virtual-munich-security-conference/>].

¹³ FREEDOM HOUSE, [accessed 17 Apr. 2023, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2021/democracy-under-siege/>].

¹⁴ INTERNATIONAL IDEA, *The Global State of Democracy. Building Resilience in a Pandemic Era*, 2021 [accessed 17 Apr. 2023, <https://www.idea.int/gsod/>].

¹⁵ INGELHART R., “The Age of Insecurity. Can Democracy Save Itself?”, in *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 97/3, May/June 2018, p. 20-28.

versus authoritarianism as another credible binary trend driving the present narrative about global and domestic politics, as US President Joe Biden has argued.¹⁶

Simultaneously to the bifurcation of the international system and success of the authoritarian state, we also see that the demand for democracy is alive and well. The 2021 string of coups across the world was met by important popular resistance. Driven by contestation of authoritarian decisions, economic insecurity, and frustration by public health policies in the context of the Coronavirus pandemic, the global geographic spread and pace of protest has been remarkable despite the lockdown periods.¹⁷ New affirmations of identity beyond nationalism have also gained global traction. The #BlackLivesMatter protests that shook the United States in 2020 have had global reverberations, fueling new debates about post-colonialism and post-imperialism in all corners of the world, influencing domestic as much as international politics.

Bipolar interpretations of global politics are unhelpful in accommodating the continuing relevance of people power: even if political trends continue to be in favour of authoritarianism, global protests have shown patterns of contagion and demonstration effects that go beyond borders, from the “coloured revolutions” of the 2000s to the Arab uprisings of the 2010s.

¹⁶ BIDEN J., *Remarks by President Biden at the 2021 Virtual Munich Security Conference*, op. cit.; BIDEN J., *Remarks by President Biden on the United Efforts of the Free World to Support the People of Ukraine*, Warsaw, 26 March 2022, [accessed 17 Apr. 2023, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2022/03/26/remarks-by-president-biden-on-the-united-efforts-of-the-free-world-to-support-the-people-of-ukraine/>].

¹⁷ [accessed 17 Apr. 2023, <https://carnegieendowment.org/publications/interactive/protest-tracker>].

Bipolar politics also fail to capture the transnational, multilevel, and interconnected nature of the major challenges to humanity. The climate crisis and the technological revolution are certainly accelerating change, with complex rather than linear impacts, obfuscating the direction of overall trends. Demographic trends, such as patterns of ageing and depopulation, migration, the growth of major global cities, influence the geographies of power. In Europe and the United States, rural versus urban divides are increasingly important markers of electoral politics. The latest US election run-off in Georgia showed a striking divide between urban and rural votes, the first in favour of the Democratic winner, the second for the Trump-supported candidate. These divides between rural nationalist supporters and urban progressives were also behind the British 2016 referendum to leave the European Union.¹⁸

The end of the Cold War and globalization had seemed to herald a new era in which power was diffused away from the state, across societies but also towards international finance capital.¹⁹ This has led to a focus on non-state and transnational agency in the form of networks and other modes of global engagement.²⁰ The political backlash against benign interpretations of the diffusion of power started with the securitization of global politics after terrorist attacks of 11

¹⁸ JENNINGS W., STOKER G. and WARREN I., “Cities and towns: the geography of discontent”, in Anand Menon (ed.), *Brexit and Public Opinion 2019, The UK in a Changing Europe*, 2019, [accessed 17 Apr. 2023, *Public-opinion-2019.pdf (ukandeu.ac.uk)].

¹⁹ KUPCHAN C., *No One’s World. The West, the Rising Rest, and the Coming Global Turn*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2012; NAÍM M., *The End of Power. From Boardrooms to Battlefields and Churches, to States, Why Being in Charge Isn’t What It Used to Be*, New York, Basic Books, 2013; RODRIK D., *op. cit.*

²⁰ SLAUGHTER A.-M., *The Chess-Board & the Web. Strategies of Connection in a Networked World*, London/New Haven, Yale University Press, 2017.

September 2001. Now the simultaneous opportunities and threats of the changing nature of power are becoming more clearly articulated in a context of weaponization of everything.²¹

Climate, demographic politics, democracy, the technological revolution, global health are certainly open to weaponization through great power competition, but they also empower alternative actors, mobilize diverse levels of institutionalization, engagement, and governance, making bipolarity an incomplete framing picture of contemporary trends. Multipolarity, while capturing the role of a plurality of actors, does not accommodate for the sweeping and complex transformations that are shaping the world.

One interpretation of the post-Cold War power competition together with the present disjunctures to globalization uses the definition of “fuzzy bifurcation”²² also to highlight the grey areas between more Manichean understandings of global change. In this context, actors will seek a diversity of alliances depending on the policy. States may “band-wagon” on some issues but may also “balance, hedge and even pursue strategic autonomy” in others. This helps explain how medium-sized actors chose to behave, including the European Union. Capturing the complexity of the present world, Acharya²³ uses definitions such as “multiplex” and “multi-order”, allowing for the proliferation of a number of influential actors, new competitions among rivals, and the lack of a global hegemon.

²¹ LEONARD M., *The Age of Unpeace. How Connectivity Causes Conflict*, London, Penguin Random House, 2021.

²² HIGGOTT R. and REICH S., “The age of fuzzy bifurcation: Lessons from the pandemic and the Ukraine War”, in *Global Policy*, 2022, p. 1-13.

²³ ACHARYA A., “After Liberal Hegemony: The Advent of a Multiplex World Order”, in *Ethics & International Affairs*, 31(3), 2017, p. 271-285.

EUROPE'S MORBID SYMPTOMS. CAN EUROPE REINVENT ITSELF?

After a succession of crises lasting over a decade, it was to be expected that Europe's "awakening" would be rough.²⁴ Former European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker²⁵ used the term "polycrisis" back in 2016. The EU seemed stuck in what Antonio Gramsci had famously described as an "interregnum" without finding a new identity. Fast forward to today, and the "tightrope walk with no end" is far more complex, rapid, and with far reaching consequences. As Adam Tooze²⁶ argues, "in the polycrisis the shocks are disparate, but they interact so that the whole is even more overwhelming than the sum of the parts".

The crises hit Europe from within and at its borders, causing both internal fragmentation and external fragility. Institutionally, the EU's crisis started when its attempts to equip itself with a more advanced constitution were thwarted by the negative referendum results of 2005 in the Netherlands and France, drying up the momentum for ambitious reform, which was instead tiresomely agreed upon in the Lisbon treaty.

The crises were also financial, economic, and of economic governance. The financial markets crash of 2007-8 was followed by the Eurozone crisis with two inflection points in 2010 and 2015 that wit-

²⁴ BORRELL J., *Europe in the Interregnum: our geopolitical awakening after Ukraine*, Brussels, 24 March 2022a, [accessed 17 Apr. 2023, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/europe-interregnum-our-geopolitical-awakening-after-ukraine_en].

²⁵ JUNCKER J.-C., *op. cit.*

²⁶ TOOZE A., "Welcome to the world of the polycrisis", in *Financial Times*, 28 October 2022, [accessed 17 Apr. 2023, <https://www.ft.com/content/498398e7-11b1-494b-9cd3-6d669dc3de33>].

nessed the worst of European politics in decades.²⁷ Austerity politics impoverished large sectors of European society — some countries more than others - and dried up government ability to invest in innovation and technology.

Exogenous shocks came to Europe through revolution, conflict, the growing insecurity on its borders, and the prolonged inability or unwillingness to provide meaningful responses to shape the external environment. Conflicts in neighbouring regions and ensuing population movements in search of refuge caused major crises on the EU's borders and nearly broke down unity within in 2015-2016. The EU's engagements with outside countries especially through the enlargement process and its neighbourhood policies, stagnated alongside a steady withdrawal from investing on good governance abroad. And while the EU continued to seek global trade opportunities, the multilateral environment was severely weakened by US disruption to global governance especially during the US Presidency of Donald Trump. The transatlantic security relationship was also put under unprecedented stress.

Throughout the decade, the EU's past permissive consensus was challenged by populism — the left-wing version rising against austerity politics and Euro-technocracy, the nationalist right-wing version against the EU more broadly, culminating in the British vote to leave the EU in 2016. For the first time, Brexit questioned the irreversibility of the project of European integration — the “ever closer union” leitmotif that had provided one of the functionalist logics to integration. Within the EU, together with a general erosion of the quality of democracy through corruption and poor governance, far right nationalist governments pursued reversals of democracy. In

²⁷ Tooze A., *Crashed. How a Decade of Financial Crises Changed the World*, London, Penguin, 2018.

2022 the European Parliament downgraded Hungary to an “electoral democracy” in line with international democracy indexes.

How historians will interpret Europe’s long crisis remains to be seen. To contemporary observers the most apt and common definition was “muddling through”. Jean Monnet’s famous dictum that Europe emerges stronger through crisis became an empty platitude on the lips of EU leaders throughout the 2010s. While debates about Europe’s “strategic autonomy” gained ground, especially as a consequence of a hostile US under President Trump, they did not translate into a new consensus about Europe’s future.

Rather, the debate about the EU’s role continued around a few dilemmas. The first is relational. Strategic autonomy has been interpreted in European politics as alternative to the transatlantic relationship, referring to Europe’s ability to respond to security challenges autonomously of the United States. Through this lens, a greater European autonomy would require or contribute to greater world multipolarity.

The second issue revolves around the degree to which strategic autonomy is anchored to security and defence. The term was initially developed in the security context and with respect to NATO, but increasingly has embraced a broader range of policy areas. Indeed, the European Commission’s Directorate General for Trade, arguably where the EU’s strongest concentration of global power is shaped, coined the term “open strategic autonomy” (European Commission). This signifies a departure from a technocratic approach to trade as regulation of global commerce to trade as a tool of power. “Open strategic autonomy” also underscores a third dilemma over the degree of openness or protection that the EU wants to accord to its strategic interests.

Then came the pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Taken together, they provided shocks to the system that forced a series of decisions which, potentially, could lead to a reinterpretation of Europe's global role. The concerted EU response to the Coronavirus pandemic tore apart the austerity playbook and allowed collective EU borrowing to support the economic recovery, giving the EU a new sense of post-pandemic purpose around the green and digital transitions.²⁸ Even if the decisions were possible as single event rather than a reform of the Stability Pact principles of economic governance, they ushered in a new phase of state investment (and public debt) into innovating the economy, against the backdrop of exposure of the weaknesses of the global supply chains and disruptions.

On 24 February 2022 Russia invaded Ukraine triggering another EU “whole of government” response, now investing security and defence, the energy transition, and further disruption of Europe's interdependencies away from Russia and closer to the United States for security, with the enlargement of NATO. Europe's energy diversification, including new contracts with the United States for LNG, and the securitization of the technological race also make it gravitate more closely to the US even if trade with China continues to play a fundamental role in Europe's economy.

The double shocks to globalization of the pandemic and the war have intensified the bifurcation of world order, are forcing upon Europeans a greater responsibility in their security and defence, while the basic tenets of globalization and neoliberalism that served the EU so well are fundamentally challenged under the shadow of

²⁸ BALFOUR R., *Europe's Global Test*, *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 9 September 2020, [accessed 17 Apr. 2023, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/09/09/europe-s-global-test-pub-82499>].

US-China rivalry. Whether the EU manages to reinvent itself will depend on how it can better connect together its internal economy and democracy with a responsible role in the world.

EUROPE'S DISTINCTIVE POWER?

Past attempts to conceptualize the EU's hybridity — less than a state, more than an international organization — have focused on the distinctive features of being a unique economic power able to domesticate relations between states, combining federalist with intergovernmental elements, but a weak security actor reliant on the US and on NATO for its territorial integrity.

Defying classical realist interpretations, and building on the sui generis nature of the European project, scholars have developed the notion of “civilian power”,²⁹ and included among its features the need to accept cooperation, a concentration on non-military tools, and a willingness to develop supranational structures.³⁰ Benign attributes were further identified to define the EU as a “normative power”.³¹ Ambitions from the 2000s onwards to strengthen the EU's security and defence capacity, mostly thwarted by political realities, called into question these original concepts that guided a generation of EU studies as much as the EU's rhetoric about its international identity.

²⁹ DUCHÊNE F., “Europe's Role in world Peace”, in Richard J. Mayne (ed.), *Europe Tomorrow: Sixteen Europeans Look Ahead*, London, Fontana, 1972, p. 32-47.

³⁰ SMITH K.E., “The End of Civilian Power EU: A Welcome Demise or a Cause for Concern?”, in *The International Spectator*, vol. 23/2, 2000, p. 11-28; TELÒ M., *Europe: a Civilian Power? European Union, Global Governance, World Order*, Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2006.

³¹ MANNERS I., “Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?”, in *Journal of Common Market Studies*, vol. 40/2, 2002.

Leaving aside the critiques to the benign interpretations of the EU as a global actor, it is quite notable that the rude awakening led to total abandonment of a normative rhetoric and to an adoption of classical realist narratives based on the language of interests, power, geopolitics, security. The general narrative is that the EU need a “wake up call”,³² to “our fate into our own hands”,³³ to strengthen the “European sovereignty”³⁴ and to criticize a “Kantian” past where “we were not enough Hobbesian”.³⁵

This suggests the need for a sober reassessment of how the recent challenges are reshaping the EU. Several generalizations can be drawn. The first regards the experience of fragmentation through the painful process of negotiating British departure from the EU. Brexit proved to be the single most important defining experience of EU unity. Member states and institutions coalesced without fail around a common position to be negotiated with the British government through the negotiating team led by former Commissioner Michel Barnier. The discovery was that the Single Market was not just an expression of internal rule and soft power, but a core interest

³² BORRELL J., *Investing more together in Europe's defence*, Brussels, 11 December 2022c, [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/investing-more-together-europe%E2%80%99s-defence_en].

³³ A. Merkel, quoted in PARAVICINI G., “Angela Merkel: Europe must take ‘our fate’ into own hands”, in *Politico*, 28 May 2017, [accessed 17 Apr. 2023, <https://www.politico.eu/article/angela-merkel-europe-cdu-must-take-its-fate-in-to-its-own-hands-elections-2017/>].

³⁴ MACRON E., *Initiative pour l'Europe - Discours d'Emmanuel Macron pour une Europe souveraine, unie, démocratique*, Paris, 2017, [accessed 17 Apr. 2023, <https://www.elysee.fr/emmanuel-macron/2017/09/26/initiative-pour-l-europe-discours-d-emmanuel-macron-pour-une-europe-souveraine-unie-democratique>].

³⁵ BORRELL J., *Investing more together in Europe's defence*, *op. cit.*

shared by all member states for which hard power tactics could be used.³⁶

Related to the “discovery” of the single market’s power was the degree to which EU norms, rules, standards, and regulations are of impact externally through what has been successfully labelled as “the Brussels effect” through which EU internal rules designed through the technocratic logic of the single market acquires the power of external enforcement because outside powers are obliged to adopt them.³⁷ Neither these points are new to students of the single market, but the realization in the EU of the political — even geopolitical — value of European integration was not part of the narrative about its international identity. Secondly, these developments revealed the intimate connection between internal and external policies. This too was a critical feature in the EU’s response to the Coronavirus pandemic and to Russia’s war in Ukraine that was not visible in the previous decade.

Following over a decade of stagnant policies towards the Western Balkans and Turkey, the war prompted the EU to accept new candidates to enter into its fold — Ukraine and Moldova, and potentially Georgia. This historic decision, aside from the practicalities of carrying it through, reinstates what has always been a distinctive feature of EU power: its attraction to include European neighbours and its capacity for inclusion. It also underlines yet again that the soft power of its democracies, however tarnished, continues to work. In

³⁶ LAFFAN B., *Europe in the world: The emergence of Collective Power Europe?*, Annual T.M.C. Asser Lecture, Asser Institute, 2022, [accessed 17 Apr. 2023, <https://www.asser.nl/annual-lecture/annual-tmc-asser-lecture-2022/>].

³⁷ BRADFORD A., *The Brussels Effect: How the European Union Rules the World*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2020.

particular, it is relevant to those countries around the globe that are uneasy with the bipolar framing of the US-China rivalry.

In turn, the recognition that EU enlargement is not dead has triggered, as ever, discussions about the need for institutional reform along the traditional lines of the “widening versus deepening” debate that have featured at every historical stage of enlargement. What stands out in this latest iteration is that one of the problem areas EU leaders want to address is the troublesome impact of countries that have deviated from democracy on EU decision-making processes — namely Hungary’s continued attempts to blackmail EU unity in responding to Russia’s aggression in Ukraine. In other words, the linkage between internal and external policy is not limited to Europe’s economic governance, but also to the quality of its democratic governance.

Finally, the type of solution to the complex crises that Europe is undergoing is also reflective of EU defining features. Its whole of government responses, combining internal and external policies and short-term measures with the longer term goals of building a green and digital economy, requires a unique combination of technocracy and politics. Partially shielded from electoral cycles, the EU is potentially better equipped to face transnational and transgenerational challenges that require long term commitments that individual governments struggle to maintain.

Ultimately, the big structural shift is the relative decline of the West and of Europe therein. To find its role, the EU needs to shape its space based in its own distinctive strengths, rather than mimicking some kind of power it cannot attain.

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The EU facing war and bifurcation: A dark future needs a more autonomous Union

NICOLE GNESOTTO

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has been rightly described as a shock. Actually, since the last decade, the EU has gone through three simultaneous shocks: climate change, pandemic, war in Europe, without speaking of the tremendous economic and social impacts of this collusion of crises. Will the EU be able to tackle this new global equation? Will it be the same at the end of the decade, more united or more divided, more dependant or more autonomous? What kind of world order is the EU supposed to face and live in?

NEW WORLD: BIPOLARITY IN EUROPE, REALPOLITIK AT THE GLOBAL LEVEL

Describing the world as global chaos is certainly the right thing to do. Since the beginning of this century, our previous certitudes, principles, rules, criteria and models have been deeply weakened by the uncontrolled path of globalisation: the use of force is not any more a taboo to solve disputes in Europe; multilateralism simply does not work; democracy is betrayed by some democracies like Hungary and Poland; military might has not solved anything in Africa or the Middle East; a rules-based order does not mean anything when the

US itself weakens it as Donald Trump did regarding the 2015 treaty with Iran; European integration is rejected by a strong proportion of European citizens; populism is rising in Europe including in the most democratic countries; economic growth does not help to reduce poverty, on the contrary extreme liberalism leads to extreme social inequalities, etc. Finally, yet importantly, the western political and economic model has lost some of its attractiveness, since China pretends offer to the rest of the world a new kind of more efficient model.

In this strategic smog, the war in Ukraine (with Russian atrocities committed against civilians, and the Russian-Chinese axis, at least as asserted in February 2022, behind Putin's aggression) seems to offer some sort of clarification. A new bipolar order could be emerging, opposing democracies and authoritarian regimes, the West and the rest, the US and China-Russia: a sort of return to the previous Cold war, but extended to the whole planet. The President of the US, Joe Biden, has been the first to call for an alliance of democracies since the beginning of his mandate, and US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, tries to convince European members of Nato that the fight against China is, and will remain, the most important challenge of this century.

Impossible indeed to deny some relevance within this vision of world geopolitics: China has become a more and more nationalist and state-controlled country; other middle powers like Turkey follow a similar path toward authoritarian measures; Russia has returned to the worst days of Stalinian dictatorship; India itself, the so-called "biggest democracy in the world", has become a very nationalistic country promoting the "hinduist" identity against all religious minorities, etc. In its report for 2021, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) concludes "the world

has become more authoritarian". However, reducing the world to a new bipolar order between the West and the rest seems too easy a solution for a much too complex world. There are at least three reasons why this vision is misleading, at least in European eyes.

First, the democratic side of the world is not very clean. Some western democracies do not fit anymore with our basic political standards of freedom and rules of law: Turkey, Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria, may be one day Italy, Sweden and others; while some western allies are simply not democracies - from Egypt to Pakistan and Brazil, going through to other African or Arab partners. The US itself has gone through a deep democratic crisis when Donald Trump was elected and worse still when the Biden election was rejected: nobody knows what American politics will look like in the two or five years to come.

Second, our western world more and more appears small and alone: the US and Europe together do not reach 10 % of the global population, while more than half of human beings live in Asia and in non-democratic countries. In the developing world, a vast majority of nation states simply do not want to choose between democracies and other regimes. They just want to take advantages of both, according to their interests and circumstances. It is the case with India, South Africa, Senegal, Algeria, and all the other 35 countries which refused to condemn the Russian invasion in March 2022, while not approving of it either. Together with China, it means that two thirds of the world do not want to side alongside the western model.

Third, the vision of a new bipolar world order, opposing the West and China, implies quasi automatically a return to the old solutions implemented during the previous bipolar East/West divide: the creation of a military global alliance, under US leadership, built from Nato enlargement to Asia, both in its membership and its mission. In

other words, the slogan simply prevents us from thinking: there are many examples in history when applying old recipes to a very new strategic environment is simply misleading.

What seems more accurate to define the world of today is to accept the reality of a double world order: a bipolar system actually defines the European order, but it does not apply to the rest of the world, where a purely pragmatic system prevails, based on national interests, — *realpolitik*. In other words, ideology prevails in the European strategic equation, *realpolitik* is the name of that of the far South.

As far as globalisation is concerned, the impact of geopolitics cannot be either denied or avoided. Economic globalisation, global trade, including technological innovation such as AI and others digital challenges, are not developing in a separate world. The primacy of geopolitics affects all parts of human activity, preventing any bifurcation between geopolitics and economy. Already, the war in Ukraine has led to a crisis in the energy market, raising serious doubts about economic growth in Europe in 2023. Conversely, this western need for oil and gas impacts every day on geopolitics: J. Biden is trying to improve relations with Venezuela, while the chief of the European Commission has recently visited Azerbaijan, which she called an “important partner”, despite the attacks on Armenia. Equally important has been the impact of the Ukrainian war on the food market, putting at risk developing countries usually dependant on Ukrainian and Russian wheat for their own survival. Even on the digital market, geopolitics is everywhere: China intends to become technologically independent from the west in 2035, outside any foreign system of governance and control.

Furthermore, the dichotomy that we have described in the international order applies also to Economics. The bipolar European

order, that is to say the division between democracies and authoritarian regimes, tends to create a new economic fragmentation: because of the sanctions imposed on Russia, a sort of “de-russification” of globalization will be implemented by western democracies. For the rest of the world, that is to say in the realpolitik order, globalisation will continue as usual, with Russia as a possible player, with China as the leader of global growth, with interdependences and competition between the west and China as between every country and every market.

THE EUROPEAN UNION: DESTROYED OR RENEWED?

Both the war in Ukraine and the covid pandemic have drastically modified, if not destroyed, most of the EU principles, doctrines and policies. Two years ago, the fight against covid, played the role of a new momentum for more EU integration: the Commission was right to propose the buying of vaccines together, the member states were right to accept a common debt for more than 750 billion euros. Two years later, because of war in Ukraine, the EU is no longer the same and the momentum for integration is fading away.

At least four drastic changes within the EU deserve to be noticed. The first affects its traditional belief and doctrine. Franco-German reconciliation in the 1950's and European integration afterwards have been conducted with an undisputed belief in the virtues of trade and economic interdependency: they were supposed to bring peace and consolidate democracy within and between all partners. Applied to the rest of the world, this initial dogma of EU integration became even more true: the more enlarged and even global trade becomes, the more regional or global peace will follow. It was Montesquieu applied to the XX and XXI centuries: “le doux commerce

adoucit les moeurs”. The European Commission was the more enthusiastic and sincere believer in the virtue of the liberal model. EU enlargement was seen as a recipe for transforming the eastern neighbourhood of the EU, the bigger the better for growth and democracy, while a maximum of freedom should be given to the economic sector: deregulation and enlargement became the two most popular slogans in the 1990s. When globalisation reached its climax, the Commission was reinforced in its belief by the American theory of the “End of History”. Conversely, member states and their wish to maintain political sovereignty and national interests were perceived as pre-historic actors that the Commission, as the leader of a post-modern world, had to resist or convert. Illusion. *Maxima illusio* the Latin poet would have said. Indeed, the war in Ukraine has proved how strong geopolitics remains, how naïve the EU was, how members states are right in also playing this part of the game. The Russian attack against Ukraine is obviously an insult to good sense, but Putin did it, against its (Russia’s?) own economic interests. Even more, for those who believe that trade is above geopolitics and that globalisation works with other rules, China is the most obvious example of their illusion: from Beijing, trade is a means to improve the strategic ambition of the country, it is not a free game in a competing world, but the other name of realpolitik.

This shock is so deep that it will take time to overcome. It is not only a matter of speeches, of new rhetoric on a geopolitical EU. It is a revolution in the very soul of European integration. A deep and difficult revolution. If Europe is to become a geopolitical actor, then it has to become like a super member state, with its own geopolitical vision, a clear definition of its “common national interest”, its military might, its foreign policy, in short, with everything the Commission has always denounced and rejected as old tools for old minded

member states. But there is no other way, except to renounce becoming a serious political player.

A second revolution is affecting internal relations within the EU. France, Germany, Italy, three founders of the EU and the three biggest economic and political players within it, are weakened: Italy by domestic radicalisation, France and Germany by their permanent desire to find a security and partnership architecture with Russia. France tends to stick to its long-term *realpolitik* approach to Russia, which is located on our continent whether we like it or not, while Germany is hesitating between France and Poland, between Nato and the EU, between the nation and the rest, for defending its national interest. Nobody knows where this German new search for successful identity will end. On the other hand, Poland and the eastern countries pretend to have been right since the beginning about the Russian threat, and claim a new leadership within the EU. The Poles only forget that, if they were right about the threat, i.e. Putin's imperialism, France was even more right in the answer to that threat, by urging for a more military EU, which Poland has never taken seriously.

The third revolution affects basic law and rules: the EU is living more and more in an exceptional regime. And when exception become the norm, after months or years, what happens to the funding rules? Already from 2020, in response to the pandemic, the member states obliged the EU to suspend the stability pact: everybody was allowed to spend "whatever it costs", and the Commission rightly will maintain this suspension until the end of 2023. However, when a country like France or Italy reaches for example a public debt of more than 100% of GDP, who believes that the rules of "no more than 60" will become feasible again in 2024? And so on. It is the same for enlargement: it took only three months for Ukraine to get its can-

didate status. Who believes that it will take years and years for it to become a full member? The same for institutional issues: at a time when member states insist on their national interest and territorial defence, who believes that they are ready for political and even more military integration under the auspices of the EU, and for arms procurement under the auspices of the Commission? This disruption in EU traditional rules and policies equally affects its environmental priorities: what will happen to the green deal if war lasts for years, as we know that defence will never be a “green” policy? How can we reconcile the prospect of a decarbonized EU with an energy crisis which obliges Germany, for example, to reopen coal extraction, and the other partners to buy from the US millions of tons of shale gas, that they denounced a few years ago as a source of environmental disaster? Last but not least, will the EU be able to keep its economic wealth and remain the first economic global power, if defence spending both in the EU and to help Ukraine means less growth, less public investment for future technologies, less energy available, less support from EU citizens?

This leads to the last and certainly the most important revolution: the end of EU ambition for strategic autonomy. Indeed, in all member countries, Nato is perceived and desired as the first and only credible actor to protect Europe. And rightly so, if ever Putin became more aggressive against any former Russian territories. In other words, the EU that is going through the Ukrainian war will be a more and more Atlantic EU, a more and more dependant ally of the US, both for defence and gas supply. The ambition of a European defence policy supported by a European autonomous arms industry is not anymore the issue of the day: Sweden and Finland have asked for Nato integration, everybody is increasing its military budget and buying US armaments, including Germany for missile defence

and air fighters. It may sound sad for the French and all those who believe in the necessity of European autonomy including in defence, but it is the reality of today.

Even more, the war in Ukraine will increase the dependency of the EU vis-à-vis the United States: for gas (which the US sells to us at a price four times higher than normal!), for arms, for political leadership in these troubled moments, Washington has become again for Europeans the "indispensable nation". The eastern members of the EU are leading this road towards a more Atlantic EU, while the European political community leads us towards a fuzzier bigger Europe.

IS THERE ANOTHER SCENARIO? POSSIBLY YES

This dark scenario could be partly avoided if the EU member states and the Commission were ready to consider the following arguments.

First, the uncertainty of US Alliance with Europe. In 2024, new presidential elections in the US could lead to a new period of trouble within Nato. Would a republican president like Donald Trump, or one of its clones, remain ready to defend European countries under any conditions? Nobody knows, and this uncertainty is the best argument for keeping open the desire and the preparation for some sort of autonomous European defence. If the war in Ukraine means the creation of a military European pillar within Nato, this means that this pillar can be detachable and possibly detached. Because of the domestic American political crisis, because the world has become more unpredictable than ever, EU strategic autonomy remains an indispensable goal for the EU: it applies not only to defence but also to critical technology, energy and food. It obliges the EU to re-establish some sort of political control and protection over free trade and

open markets, whether it is with China, the US or other economic partners of the EU.

Second, the illegitimate plea for EU leadership coming from Poland and other eastern countries. Speaking about Poland as the new political leader within the EU is simply not acceptable while Poland continues to betray the EU rule of law and basic values. The Polish government tries to appear as the most virtuous and glorious European country, by welcoming millions of refugees from Ukraine (not, however, the African students living in Kiev), but how can we accept a country that supports democracy in its foreign policy and at the same time destroys democracy at home? Poland deserves nothing except to be condemned, like Hungary, because of its internal authoritarian policy. A new Polish-led EU, based on populism, xenophobia, nationalism, is not worth creating. If this evolution has to be the result of the war in Ukraine, who could desire it?

Whether we like it or not, the Franco-German axis together with Spain and others western members of the EU have proved to be the less corrupt and autocratic regimes. If democracy is the very soul of the EU within such a violent and authoritarian world, then the EU cannot follow any Polish model.

Here we come to the third argument, namely EU responsibility in dealing with the new world disorder. While the USA is pledging a new bipolar order under its leadership, the EU ought to contest it in two ways. First, by choosing modesty and realism instead of ideology. Instead of trying to preach to the whole planet the virtues of democracy that we betray too often in our own domestic and external policies, would it not be wiser to accept the diversity of this world? Protecting human rights everywhere, welcoming refugees from everywhere (including from Russia) with the greatest determination, remains our most important duty as democracies. However,

this does not imply any evangelizing of states, which simply cannot or do not want to follow anybody except themselves. We rightly believe and defend universal values, because we believe that they have the potential to become universal. However, for the time being, they are not. Isn't our main task to keep them intact, honoured and respected in our own democratic western world, including by excluding some of our so-called allies - before preaching to the rest of humanity?

Second, by acknowledging the double world order that we have described before. In Europe, we must stick to the democratic western camp, in order to support Ukraine against Russian revisionism. However, on the global scale, complexity will be a better guide than ideology. China's growing power may certainly be a risk to western security, but reducing the world to the fight between the West and China is neither possible nor in European interests: we need China to fight against climate change, we need a more multipolar world in which the EU can play its own role and develop its own model.

The war in Ukraine will not automatically change the world, but it will certainly change the EU. The old model of a liberal, peaceful, united, democratic and wealthy EU is at risk. History does not play our European dream. Even without speaking of an extended war between Nato and Russia — a disaster that we cannot exclude — the Europeans will pay a high price, both in terms of economic growth and in term of political future. The prospect of a European Union poorer, more divided, less democratic and very dependent upon the US, cannot be ignored: in other words a sort of “Europe des nations” may come back again, where national interests prevail upon any collective ambition. In order to avoid it, a deep and global ‘aggiornamento’ of all EU policies is urgently needed: we ought to stop this day-to-day policy that we implemented since the beginning of the

war, running after the events and trying to answer separately crisis after crisis. More than ever, the EU needs a long-term global strategy, consistent with the real world, rather than rhetorical demonstration of virtues and good will. An autonomous EU strategy for the safety of European citizens is what we obviously must discuss with the United States, urgently: it may conclude that our interests and future are identical, but better to check it rather to discover one day that this was again *maxima illusio*.

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The trade-environment nexus: a global and a European perspective

PASCAL LAMY

Good evening to all of you, whether you are here in person or online, and many thanks to my good friend Mario Telò for his introduction and to the Brussels International College for hosting me tonight to speak on the trade-environment nexus.

The trade environment nexus has been a vibrant academic topic since the 1990s when concerns over the environment started reshaping the international agenda to become what it is now: the number one priority starting with the climate. Just look or listen to the media on COP 27 in Sharm-El-Sheikh.

As Prof. Telò kindly said, I've been following this topic over the last 30 years, in various trade and environment positions, whether on the deck or in the machine room, which is why my approach is not mainly academic, but rather operational. This is also why Europe Jacques Delors, which is the Brussels-based third sister of the Jacques Delors think tank family after Paris and Berlin, has devoted a specific work stream related to this trade and environment nexus, through the publication of 11 papers since its creation in 2019 in a series called "Greening Trade". And also because its General-Director, Geneviève Pons, is a green expert and activist who used to be Jacques Delors' environment advisor in his cabinet during his presi-

dency of the EU Commission. Also representing EJD tonight is Pierre Leturcq, now Director of Studies and Development. Having given EJD some due publicity, I will now share a few lessons from both my experience and from this think tank approach.

To put it simply, the environment-trade nexus can be boiled down to a simple question: can trade opening be put to the service of environmental protection, or should environment protection trump open trade? In other words, can we green trade? As is often the case when one wants to be serious, there is no simple answer to this albeit simple question. I remember participating in the 2019 Budapest European Agora where we asked young participants: “Is trade good or bad for the environment?” The answer was 30% “good”, 40% “bad” and 30% “I don’t know”. I suspect that these proportions would be similar among you today, underlining what I said about there being no clear-cut answer: it depends.

So, let us look at this trade-environment relationship from two successive angles, one being the global perspective and the other being the European one.

THE GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

To start with the global view, let’s not beat around the bush: the trade environment nexus is quite a mess. This mess arises from the many different viewpoints on the issue, which is a good recipe for trade tensions. When looking at the global picture, the trade-environment nexus remains a divisive issue even after 30 years of conversations, discussions and, every so often, negotiations. A divisive issue in economics, politics and institutions.

Among economists, you roughly have three schools of thought: one says that trade is bad for the environment, another one that

says trade is good for the environment, and a third one says trade doesn't matter that much.

The first school asserts that the expansion of trade facilitated by trade openness led to the increase of negative externalities, whether because of transport - and we know that the multi-localisation of production systems has led to an expansion of these value chains, which entail a lot of transport links - or otherwise because the numbers show that there is a concentration in what is internationally traded in highly carbonated goods such as steel or aluminium. These are not their only arguments, but these are the two main ones.

In the second school, other economists say no, trade is good because it benefits from the positive effects of the international division of labour, which has to do with increased efficiencies, hence a better allocation of production factors, especially when they are nature-based or scarce. On top of that, trade leads to an openness in the transfer and circulation of innovation and new technologies - including those that are environmentally friendly - either in goods or services.

Then, there is the third school that says trade is not the real problem: the real problem is in how our economies are organized and the fact that our production systems are not fit for greening the economic system we live in. This is not to say that trade does not matter at all; it may matter in certain areas, but in reality, a much more fundamental revolution - more than just reforming trade to make it greener - is needed. At the time, in the 1990s, this is what Jacques Delors called a new model of development, which is a way of saying we fundamentally need to change the way we produce goods and services to address the environmental negative externalities, starting with the climate.

Global trade and climate politics are also divided in a roughly north-south line — industrialized countries on one side, who have a huge responsibility for what they have emitted over the last centuries, including the carbon stock released into the atmosphere that increases the greenhouse effect, and developing countries on the other side. Proportionally, the damage of climate change is much heavier on developing countries, which are on the receiving end of the impact of these environmental negative developments, much more than we are in many respects. This is a fundamental division that has a big bearing on all conversations between the environment and trade globally. The South speaks of the risk of green protectionism, which is an echo of a deeply unfair colonial trade system that it took decades to exit from - although one could say we are not yet there. The North speaks about the risk of environmental dumping. So green protectionism on one side, environmental dumping on the other. China falls somewhere in the middle and prefers to be considered a developing country in many respects, although developing countries know pretty well that it is the biggest emitter today. This puts China in a rather uncomfortable position, although overall so far, they have been rather good at not being squeezed in the middle between the South and North.

Another divisive element of the environment-trade nexus has to do with institutions and global governance. There is trade on the one side revolving around the WTO system, and the environment on the other side with a host of environmental agreements - whether it be on endangered species, chemical products, dangerous products trade - or with the Paris Agreement, which is probably the largest and most important element in environmental global governance. The Paris Agreement itself created a new category of global governance - a new form of soft global governance: if you compare the Kyoto Pro-

tol, which was the first major international agreement on climate change, and the Paris Agreement - the Kyoto protocol being in 1997 and the Paris Agreement in 2015 - you will see that the Kyoto Protocol was a classical treaty wherein parties took binding obligations that they had to comply with. In contrast, the Paris Agreement is based on voluntary national contributions. So, the Kyoto Protocol is a “menu” system, the problem being that this “menu” system was with a limited number of countries, hence having a limited scope and impact on CO₂ emissions. The Paris Agreement has a much wider scope, but at the cost of a lot of flexibility, an “à la carte” system.

As a result of these economic, political and institutional differences there is unfortunately no global consensus on the relationship between trade opening and environmental protection, starting with climate. There is only a global commitment to limit global warming to two degrees Celsius, if possible to 1.5 degrees, although overshooting the 1.5° limit is now highly probable according to the IPCC.

In other words, all roads lead to Rome, but with different vehicles and speeds; the problem here is that these different de-carbonisation national paths interact with each other because of international trade.

Unsurprisingly, this has created a very complex landscape of policies and instruments with a high risk of provoking trade tensions, which is what happens when various production systems interact with each other in different competitive positions. The system is full of heterogeneities: 1) the ambitions of decarbonisation are different; 2) the starting points in decarbonation are different; 3) the trajectories for decarbonation are different. Some countries are targeting 2050, some others, 2060 - and the slope in getting there is different. The starting point is also different between industrialized countries (who have passed their emission peak) and some other major CO₂

emitters that will have their emission peak way later than us, such as China or India having their emission peak probably around 2030.

This leads to policies and instruments which are different, starting of course with economists' beloved silver bullet, which is CO₂ pricing. In theory, it is the easiest way in a global market-based economy to internalize climate externalities. Suppose you have a carbon price at the right level, which is probably 150 euros a ton for everybody everywhere and for all economic sectors, the last part of the problem would be solved. Of course, this is a pie in the sky; there is no way we would get there anytime soon, and anytime soon in my view, because I am very old, is measured in decades. So, there is some progress on CO₂ pricing, notably with emission trading systems like the one we have in the EU, or the one that China is testing, though some, such as the US, are fundamentally reluctant to increase carbon consumption prices as if it were a tax. They instead take a different road, they use a different toolbox to decarbonize their economy via, for instance, massive subsidies or technical regulations at the federal level with carbon pricing in some states like California. In Europe, we have a mix of these instruments; others rely mostly on the regulation of emission standards; some use public procurement to incentivize the production of green goods or give subsidies in order to incentivize the greening of the economy. In Europe, we combine a partial system of CO₂ pricing in a part of our economy, which is roughly comprised of energy production plus the most carbonated part of our industry, and a system of free allowances in order to help (in theory) industry to adjust to this new pricing, which of course comes at a cost for them — hence impacting their competitiveness.

These big differences impact trade relations, and why so? Simply because they impact relative prices — some prices will go up, and

others will go down. These relative price changes impact competitive positions, and competitive positions impact participation in international trade, including the localization of production. It is of course very tempting, if you are in a place where carbon is highly-priced, to try to move your production to a place where carbon is less highly priced or regulated differently in order to benefit from the arbitrage of localization, which a global economy inevitably entails.

As a consequence, countries are inventing or using trade measures in order to offset the risk of either carbon leakage — i.e., what happens if production in a country moves to a lower carbon-priced country, which doesn't make any difference in carbon emissions since it is the same carbon, but does make a difference if on the side of the losing country due to losses in value-addition, jobs and the rest; or if a domestic producer is confronted with competition stemming from imports that do not have to respect the same environmental constraints as your national production, in which case this national producer will inevitably and understandably complain that international competition is unfair due to having to compete with lower standards.

These considerations lead to new trade measures that are in the making. Some already exist, but some are in the making, such as border carbon adjustments — we will talk later about CBAM, which is the name of a new mechanism under construction in Europe; or such standards that can be controlled beyond the border for imports, or such as subsidies: I will subsidize my photovoltaic industry, you will subsidize your wind technology, they will subsidize their nuclear technology etc. etc., which in turn leads to a sort of new competition where countries are racing to use these instruments to decarbonize their economies. Or such as new obligations of due diligence on firms depending on their value chain, not just their own carbon emissions

with these very complex issues — and I won't enter into too many technical issues like “scope 1, 2, 3”, calculation of production footprints depending on whether you look at production itself and how much it emits or whether you look at the upstream or downstream impact of these productions.

If this is the case, and I deeply believe that it is (or at least that it will be), these tensions and disputes need to be settled within a proper legal system — a global one with standards recognized by the different players. We have one at the WTO: there is a WTO legal frame that allows for the interpretation of whether a carbon-based environment measure is or is not fair as compared to international law; the solution is in the technical barriers to trade (TBT) and the sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) agreements of the WTO. Another possibility at the WTO comes in the form of a waiver, an exception - the famous article XX exception.

So, there is a system but this system is moving, and if you look for instance at the jurisprudence of the dispute settlement system of the WTO, you will realize that adjudications 30 years ago and today are quite different, meaning that producers may not always know what will be the adjudicating standard, therein creating unpredictability. There are also many views according to which this corridor of compatibility, which is established by WTO law, is too narrow. This is especially true on the green side, with proponents saying “this is much too constraining, this will slow decarbonization because it limits the capacity of countries to recourse to green policies” (referring back to this renowned problem of domestic policy pace constrained by international institutions), or “we need a global exception, any measure that is based on trade and enhances environment protection should be cleared by the WTO system”. It is also true for others who say “there should be a waiver in the WTO

for green subsidies” — and by the way, there was one from 1995 to 1999, but those that did not like it were clever enough to add a sunset review clause to the agreement. Unsurprisingly, at least for some, this waiver lapsed.

In a nutshell, this is the global situation, and we have two good examples of possible and already existing trade tensions — one with the EU CBAM, which for some may not be WTO compliant (though this is not my view), or more obviously with the ongoing dispute between the US and the EU (and many others) following the huge IRA pro-environment package, passed through congress by the Biden administration, that heavily subsidizes electric car production - subsidies with local content requirements. If you want to benefit from the subsidy, you must meet conditions proving the car was produced locally, which in this case is clearly WTO non-compliant. This is not a theoretical issue, we are not dreaming up potential problems, the problems are there.

THE EU PERSPECTIVE

Moving onto the EU perspective, which is my second angle under which to consider the trade-environment nexus, we see that Europe has found, or is on the way to finding, a new articulation between trade opening and protecting the environment. As compared to other players in this field, the EU has a very specific position as both a major trade power and a proclaimed international leader in environmental protection. These two characteristics are specifically European; no other entity on this planet has both a positive environmental bias on the one side and this degree of participation in international trade on the other.

The EU has high climate ambitions, it has high trade openness, it has significant market power, and it has high innovation capacity in trade/environment measures. It is more ambitious, open and inventive, which puts the EU in a unique position. We have higher climate ambitions because we have higher political support within EU public opinion for greening the economy. From my experience in both the South and the North, there is not always public opinion wanting to green the economy. This was absolutely clear to us in the 2019 elections at the European Parliament: the coalition that supported the new Commission also was united behind the idea of the EU Green deal.

As a result, we have a more ambitious decarbonization agenda than others, not only timewise — 2050 — and sector-wise, but also in regards to what many others don't have (among those who have a 2050 agenda time horizon): we have a 2030 passage point of -55 per cent, which of course adds a lot of credibility to a trajectory 20 or 25 years down the road. In the EU, we are developing higher standards than elsewhere and have progressively been doing so for a long time.

We also have a higher level of trade openness. When looking at trade openness, you have to compare what is comparable — you have to compare big blocks between themselves and not to smaller countries whose participation in international trade is higher given that their domestic producers can only supply a smaller range of their consumers' needs. We are more open than the US. We are, for the moment, not more open than China, but China will be much less open in 5 – 10 years from now as it builds its own value-addition capacity, hence a lesser recourse to international trade. We have a very high level of market power, which we use, and having a large market power is a big lever in international trade and notably, with

imports. We are less rich than the US, but we are more populous; we are, of course, much less populous than the Chinese, although much richer. So, if you combine these two criteria, we have the largest market power in the world — and this by the way has traditionally been the EU's main lever of influence on the international system.

The EU is an economic and trade elephant. Furthermore, it is not a “political dwarf” as we have often been depicted 10 or 20 years ago. We can say that based on facts: the EU is the one that introduced fish subsidy negotiations in the WTO 20 years ago, which basically had nothing to do with trade. It was an environmental issue. Similarly, the EU invented the GDPR, the EU standard for protecting the privacy of data, which is now found in various parts of the world. Another example is how the EU has totally transformed the global chemical industry with our REACH legislation, which obliges much greater transparency on the chemical components of products. These are all results of EU market power. And finally, we've been quite fast at translating the Green Deal into a greener EU trade policy. This is most visible in the creation of the EU CBAM, the carbon border adjustment mechanism I've mentioned throughout this discourse and which has been in academic literature for 25 years.

I remember asking the legal service at the WTO: “What would a CBAM look like in terms of WTO compatibility?”. Well, in early 2020, the Foundation Europe Jacques Delors, the think tank I already mentioned, proposed the first CBAM template that went on to become the foundation of work of the EU Commission, and others, leading up to the new Commission proposal and to the final decision.

The EU is also embarking, for instance, on specific trade instruments to contain or avoid deforestation as a consequence of imported products, which is of course a major issue in the agro-food system. Similarly, it is putting together a new instrument in corpo-

rate due diligence that will oblige European companies, or companies operating in Europe, to pay more attention to whether or not their upstream or downstream value chain is properly green. This goes together with the adaptation of the EU bilateral trade agreements template in order to green them (on top of the normal reciprocal market agreement “I open up my market, and you open up your market”).

With the EU’s introduction of environment clauses into their bilateral agreements, including clauses from the Paris Agreement’s nationally determined contributions (which are their voluntary decarbonization endeavors), these clauses therein become compulsory. So, a voluntary (contribution) to the Paris Agreement can become an obligatory (measure) in a bilateral trade agreement, which is a sort of chemical transformation that the EU has now started to provoke.

These are examples that demonstrate how, as compared to the rest of the world, we do not just talk the talk - we walk the walk. Of course, it goes without saying that a lot remains to be done. But the train has left the station and it did so with the 2019 European elections. As a consequence of this, the EU is in many ways a first mover in greening trade. And this position of first mover creates both challenges and opportunities which need to be factored into a new manner, which is what I call green trade diplomacy, which is the last point I will make.

I think we need clearer, more articulated green trade diplomacy for our future. We have to explain what we do and why we do it. We have to defend our own road to greening trade against forces that will try to slow it down. It is as simple as that. Now, what are the main components of such green trade diplomacy? I will mention only four

of them for the sake of brevity. One is the narrative, two is the strategy, three are the resources, and four is a proper organization.

GREENING TRADE DIPLOMACY

In the narrative, I think we have a case to make which is that precautionism is not protectionism. Many countries on the planet suspect that what we are doing is green protectionism — this is not the case. Protecting your producers from foreign competition is protectionism and in my view, should be avoided or at least limited. Protecting your population or the environment from damage is not protectionism. It is precautionism. You exercise a precaution, you try to hedge against risk, in this case, an existential one for the planet and hence for your population, which is true by the way in areas such as health, for instance. In this way, we should not confuse the two. In my view, we should be better at explaining that what we are trying to do is not to give a comparative advantage to our producers, who by the way have to bear the brunt of decarbonizing their production, which is no small deal, as you know. On the contrary, what we are trying to do is what we all need to do to protect this public good, which is a cleaner environment. This is not something specific to the EU — it should be something universal. After all, this is an intercontinental common challenge that we need to address globally.

In order to do so, I think we need a more developed and clearly articulated strategy with two basic components: one is addressing the North-South divide more boldly. We are in a situation where North-South relations are getting extremely tense, and sometimes for the right reasons (which have to do with old reasons plus a few new reasons like the invasion of Ukraine by Russia). Just look at the UN vote in March about the invasion, and you will see where the

“global South” (an expression I use for the sake of brevity, but which I dislike) stands. They do not agree with us. And this is a major issue for the EU, notably if we want — which is my suggestion — to redefine proper EU-global South relations. We are currently in dire need of redefining this EU-South relationship following our way and not the Chinese or the American way. There is one area where we have the capacity and power to establish our own relationship and of course, my implicit strategy is that greening our economies should be the backbone of this new EU-global South strategy. Another element of this strategy should be to multi-lateralise as much as possible the trade-environment nexus in order to try and establish some coherence in the mess I have described, though this poses its own risks due to the potential for more trade conflicts. There are various ways to do so: we have, at Europe Jacques Delors Foundation, proposed a number of possibilities such as creating within the WTO a comparability forum, which would regroup countries who do take trade measures for environmental reasons in order for them to be compared, rated, discussed, and possibly resulting in a compatibility forum in cases where conversations lead to establishing common standards, which is the way to go. Two silver bullets in this area include the one I mentioned earlier - that of CO₂ pricing - as well as common standards. If you have a common standard on the carbon footprint of steel, which is valid worldwide, then a part of the problem is solved. The EU should therefore be more active in leading multilateral fora, in order to find multilateral solutions. For the moment, the EU is a bit of a follower. You have countries like Norway, Switzerland, Chile and New Zealand who are trying to build a coalition for common standards — the EU is joining such coalitions, but so far hasn’t demonstrated, in my view, the sort of leadership it pretends to have on greening trade.

Of course, in order for this to be serious, you have to allocate resources. The EU has a lot of resources that can be more deployed to greening trade, notably towards developing countries; in my view, this should be reorganized, and re-shaped in a way that helps developing countries green their entire economy. After all, this is in both our interest and theirs. I am not saying that education or health do not matter — I am saying that greening economies should become the new axis. If it were to be the case, we would, in a way, gain a new negotiating position worldwide. If you look for instance at the last proposal by Barbados Prime Minister, Mia Mottley, called ‘The Bridgetown Initiative’, there is consensus among finance experts that international financial institutions should prioritize the way they allocate resources to favor green projects.

And finally, this needs a bit of organization. I am not going to enter into too many technical details here, but let me be frank, and I hope our friends in the EU External Action Service will not see any prejudice in what I am saying: there is a need for better coordination between the EU Commission on one side, and the EEAS on the other side. The EEAS has a voice. The Commission has the money and the instruments. There is a need for these two to be more closely integrated, including in the leadership of the President of the Commission. What happened last year in Glasgow with the EU embarking on a ban for external financing of gas production — which totally surprised our African friends who need gas for a transition period, and to whom we said gas is good for us but not for you - should not have happened. Now, the invasion of Ukraine has a boomerang effect, since we are now in the same position that we put Africa in by denying the financing of their gas production. This was not coherent and was a result of the EU system failing to properly, at the right moment and at the right place, focus its attention on the right topics.

Finally and before I conclude, as part of this green diplomacy, there is also a need to keep and win our credibility at home. If you look at the EU agro-food system for instance, which is according to different estimates responsible for 20-30 % of our carbon emissions, they are not included within our carbon pricing system. These emissions will have to be included at some stage, but this will have major consequences on our trade relationship with many developing countries that have a comparative advantage in producing food. In this case, A) we haven't done our homework, but B) if we do it, we will have more problems with developing countries. This is something which, plainly speaking, we need to seriously address right now.

Let me finish by saying that if the EU picture looks better than the global one, this is not guaranteed forever. We know, and have seen with the invasion of Ukraine, that there are forces within the EU that push back on the greening of the economy and on the greening of our trade instruments. I am convinced that we need to resist them, strongly and seriously. I've been to many places on this planet and continue to do so; what I can tell you is that for many people across the globe, the EU flag is not blue with yellow stars...it is green. In the future, the EU can and should become not only a green power but **THE** green power.

Critical perspectives on the trade and environment nexus

AMANDINE ORSINI

Both the multilateral governance efforts on trade and on the environment, considered separately, appear at first sight as failures. As recently recalled by the United Nations Secretary General, 50 years after the first global environmental summit, the Stockholm 1972 Earth Summit, humanity is facing a triple global environmental crisis with climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution rates exponentially growing¹. Multilateral trade governance is also blocked within the World Trade Organization (WTO) with, among others, no major negotiation outcomes out of the Doha Round and a blockage of the Appellate Body².

While both fail independently one from the other, there exists increasing evidence that one governance domain cannot fully work without taking the other into account. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 6th evaluation report reminds us that “the transition (to net zero greenhouse gas emissions), requires (...)

¹ GUTERRES A., “Message for International Mother Earth Day”, 22 April, SG/SM/21243, 21 April 2022.

² DE CLERCK M.B., “The Multilateral Trading System in a Changing World: the WTO and Current Threats Challenging its Survival”, in Madeleine O. Hosli, Taylor Garrett, Sonja Niedecken *et al.*, *The Future of Multilateralism: Global Cooperation and International Organizations*, Rowman and Littlefield, 2021, p. 50-75.

international coordination of climate and trade policies³". The 2022 Communication by the European Commission on orientations for a reformed European Union economic governance framework mentions the importance of sustainable growth and a green economy⁴.

This chapter therefore proposes critical reflections on the trade and environment nexus. It first reflects on how the interactions between the trade and environmental domains have been initially studied in academia, through the analysis of interactions between international agreements analysed one by one (Part 1). From this classical way of understanding international governance as made by individual agreements, scholars evolved by developing perspectives focusing on international regime complexes and adaptive systems (Part 2). While such a regime complex perspective widens the scope of the trade and environmental nexus, it still adopts an institutional lens that underestimates potential critics to current institutions (Part 3). The chapter conclusions (Part 4) present policy recommendations on how to create better synergy between the environment and trade, to potentially tackle co-jointly the trade and environmental crises.

³ INTERGOVERNMENTAL PANEL ON CLIMATE CHANGE, *Climate Change 2022. Mitigation of Climate Change. Working Group III contribution to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, World Meteorological Organisation and United Nations Environment Programme, 2020, p. 142.

⁴ EUROPEAN COMMISSION, *Communication on orientations for a reform of the EU economic governance framework*, European Commission, DG Economic and Financial Affairs, COM 583, 10/11/2022.

TRADE AND THE ENVIRONMENT FROM THE CLASSICAL APPROACH: LOOKING AT INTERACTIONS ONE BY ONE

The story of international trade regulations and of international environmental regulations is to a large extent an interrelated story. From the very beginning of their development, environmental agreements included trade provisions in their texts, while trade agreements soon started to include environmental provisions as well. Among others, market-based instruments were embraced as efficient tools for environmental governance. As early as 1973, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) also known as the Washington Convention, used trade bans to protect endangered species. As early as 1994, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) included environmental provisions to avoid the phenomena of pollution havens, to avoid a race to the bottom for environmental standards and to mitigate conflicts between trade and environmental law.

Regarding global environmental governance, the diversity of market-based instruments used in global environmental governance is growing. In addition to trade bans, one of the most renowned policy instruments to tackle climate change is the European Union (EU) Emissions Trading System Scheme, with current discussions under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement on the possibility of creating a worldwide emissions' trading scheme on the same model. What is however rather new in global environmental governance is the development of market-based instruments for environmental governance that are precisely designed to have effects beyond national borders.

The EU has been a leader on this aspect. Among others, the EU Green Deal Communication adopted in 2019 introduced the Carbon

Border Adjustment objective of the EU to avoid carbon leakage⁵. Indeed, to measure the contribution of a country to worldwide CO₂ emissions, experts usually use accounts from domestic emissions. But these accounts should be complemented by the production of CO₂ emissions that is related to the traded goods used in that same country. Current data confirm that, by taking such traded goods into account, the EU is provoking a large amount of CO₂ emissions beyond its borders⁶. The Carbon Border Adjustment mechanism is meant to avoid such effects. Similar effects beyond borders are already enforced for chemicals governance with the REACH Directive⁷ or with directives related to biofuels⁸. While the EU is the main international actor to have embraced such instruments, it still has to convince other players, including its trade partners, of the feasibility and efficiency of these measures beyond the EU borders.

Regarding global trade governance, since 1992, the number of trade agreements including environmental provisions has increased

⁵ EUROPEAN COMMISSION, *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – The European Green Deal*, European Commission, 2019, [accessed 17 Apr. 2023, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:b828d165-1c22-11ea-8c1f-01aa75ed71a1.0002.02/DOC_1&format=PDF].

⁶ MORIN J.-F., ORSINI A. and SIKINA J., *Global Environmental Politics: Understanding the Governance of the Earth*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2020, p. 324.

⁷ BIEDENKOPF K., “Chemicals: Pioneering ambitions with external effects”, in C. Adelle, K. Biedenkopf and D. Torney, *European Union External Environmental Policy: Rules, Regulation and Governance Beyond Borders*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2020, p. 189-208.

⁸ ORSINI A. and GODET C., “Food Security and Biofuels Regulations: the Emulsifying Effect of International Regime Complexes”, in *Journal of Contemporary European Research*, vol. 14(1), 2018, p. 4-22.

exponentially⁹. Within these trade agreements, the greater number of environmental provisions are related to waste, biodiversity and water, all three of which are more localized environmental issues. Climate change only appears as the 6th sector of environmental provisions. Both the United States and the EU are the leading players on the deployment of environmental provisions in trade agreements. However, while the United States mentions, on average, at least 2 provisions on biodiversity within the trade agreements it negotiates, the EU has a similar practice but regarding climate change objectives. In particular, the United States is cross-referring to environmental agreements such as CITES, the Whaling Convention, or RAMSAR (international convention on wetlands) in its trade agreements; but not to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), which is the major international convention on biodiversity issues. Indeed, the US is not a party to the CBD. On its side, the EU has been referring mostly to the Kyoto Protocol or to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in its trade agreements. These elements confirm that states tend to favour environmental provisions in environmental sectors they are already performing well in. In the same line, Peru, Columbia, Costa Rica and New Zealand, who own biodiversity hotspots, include a high number of provisions on natural genetic resources in the trade agreements they negotiate¹⁰.

One major academic debate has developed around the question of how to know if trade governance is good or bad for the envi-

⁹ MORIN J.-F., DÜR A. and LECHNER L., “Mapping the trade and environment nexus: Insights from a new data set”, in *Global Environmental Politics*, vol. 18(1), 2018, p. 122-139.

¹⁰ MORIN J.-F., BLÜMER D., BRANDI C. *et al.*, “Kick-starting diffusion: Explaining the varying frequency of PTAs’ environmental clauses by their initial conditions”, in *World Economy* 42(9), 2019, p. 2602-2628.

ronment. There is evidence of positive and negative effects in both cases¹¹. On the positive side, five arguments have been put forward. First, trade can favour the diffusion of green goods and technologies, as has been the case for solar panels. Second, trade can help the diffusion of green consumerism and certification practices, with, for example, the rather successful Forest Stewardship Council and Marine Stewardship Council initiatives. Third, trade can increase efficiency in resource consumption by enabling states to specialise in certain types of resources. Fourth, trade can reduce environmentally harmful subsidies by opening markets. Finally, trade can increase income, which can be invested in environmental protection efforts.

On the negative side, six arguments appear as a mirror effect. First, trade can increase production and consumption, and therefore the environmental externalities related to these activities. Second, trade specialization, in particular on environmental resources, can create pressure on specific ecosystems. Third, trade provokes long distance transport that is often detrimental to the environment. Fourth, trade and specialization can lead to displacement of industrial activities to countries with lower environmental standards. Fifth, trade increases the risks of invasive species. Sixth, trade can

¹¹ BAGHDADI L., MARTINEZ-ZARZOSO I. and HABIB Z., “Are RTA agreements with environmental provisions reducing emissions?”, in *Journal of International Economics*, vol. 90(2), July 2013, p. 378-390; BASTIAENS I. and POSTNIKOV E., “Greening up: the effects of environmental standards in EU and US trade agreements”, in *Environmental Politics*, vol. 26(5), 2017, p. 847-869; BRANDI C., BLÜMER D. and MORIN J.-F., “When Do International Treaties Matter for Domestic Environmental Legislation?”, in *Global Environmental Politics*, vol. 19(4), 2019, p. 14-44; MORIN J.-F., ORSINI A. and SIKINA J., *op. cit.*; JINNAH S. and MORIN J.-F., *Greening through Trade: How American Trade Policy Is Linked to Environmental Protection Abroad*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 2020.

lower restrictions on environmental regulations, in particular for competitiveness reasons.

Because both positive and negative interactions between trade and the environment are possible, it is usually advised that specific cases be considered one by one. But recent academic research is also reflecting on the importance of understanding the conditions under which such positive or negative effects might diffuse on the international scene. In order to do so, there is the need to develop a more comprehensive picture of the trade and environment nexus.

TRADE AND THE ENVIRONMENT THROUGH REGIME COMPLEXES AND ADAPTIVE SYSTEMS

Initial research on trade and environment interactions has tended to analyse international agreements one by one, as if they existed independently one from the other. Yet, as early as 1983, Stephen Krasner, a prominent scholar of international politics, had already demonstrated that several institutions could deal with the same issue area. On this basis, he explained that international relations were organized around international regimes, as institutional arrangements made of several institutions and representing the implicit and explicit principles, norms, rules and procedures that guide international behaviour on a given issue area¹². For instance, biodiversity concerns were dealt with by CITES, but also by the CBD or by the Whaling Convention. For trade, all trade agreements could be gathered around a unique international trade regime. In that context, interactions had to be studied within the context of international regimes, where norms and rules could interact.

¹² KRASNER S.D., *International regimes*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1983.

Going one step further, scholars also noticed that such international regimes were actually interacting together, any time more specific governance topics were emerging on the international scene. For instance, the issue of the management of natural genetic resources relies on the intersection of several international regimes¹³. Because natural genetic resources can be seeds, their governance appears related to the agriculture regime including institutions such as the Food and Agriculture Organization. As these seeds are protected by intellectual property rights, they are also regulated by the trade regime with institutions such as the World Intellectual Property Organisation. It is the case in many other domains of global environmental governance. Another example concerns climate change. The major institution for climate change governance is the UNFCCC and currently the associated Paris Agreement. But financial institutions such as the World Bank, financing for example biofuels projects, also have an impact on climate change governance. Trade institutions like the WTO, and its rules on subsidies, including fossil fuel subsidies, are also key to such governance¹⁴.

The interconnections between these regimes are so important that academic experts now talk about governance happening within the context of “international regime complexes”, defined as: “network (s) of three or more international regimes that relate to a common subject matter; exhibit overlapping membership; and generate substantive, normative, or operative interactions recognized as potentially problematic whether or not they are managed

¹³ RAUSTIALA K. and VICTOR D. G., “The regime complex for plant genetic resources”, in *International Organization*, vol. 58, 2004, p. 277-309.

¹⁴ KEOHANE R.O. and VICTOR D.G., *The Regime Complex for Climate Change. Discussion Paper 2010-33*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard Project on International Climate Agreements, January 2010.

effectively¹⁵”. The above-described governance structures on genetic resources and on climate change are known as the genetic resources’ regime complex and the climate change regime complex. The key message of regime complexes is not that global governance becomes complex in the sense of complicated. It is that institutions governing the same issue area behave within a common structure, being a complex: if one governance element evolves in one of these institutions, it will have impact on all the other institutions. It also means that, to be more efficient, governance should seek coherence across the whole regime complex. With regards to trade and environment what is noticeable is that all the existing regime complexes on environment-related issues have the trade regime as part of their components: in global environmental politics, the importance of ensuring coherency with trade rules is perceived as central by governments.

While environmental issues are now mostly conceptualized as regime complexes, trade has mostly been conceptualized as a unique international regime, because its governance was initially very centralized around one unique multilateral institution: the World Trade Organization. However, recently, several experts have recognized that in practice, and because of the boom in bilateral trade agreements, these agreements create a family of agreements which looks like a complex. However, instead of talking about international regime complexes, trade experts have been talking about the trade regime as a complex system¹⁶. It means that trade govern-

¹⁵ ORSINI A., MORIN J.-F. and YOUNG O.R., “Regime Complexes: A Buzz, A Boom or a Boost for Global Governance?”, in *Global Governance*, vol. 19(1), 2013, p. 29.

¹⁶ MORIN J.-F., PAUWELYN J. and HOLLWAY J., “The Trade Regime as a Complex Adaptive System: Exploration and Exploitation of Environmental Norms in Trade Agreements”, in *Journal of International Economic Law*, vol. 20(2), 2017, p. 365-390; ORSINI A., LE PRESTRE P., HAAS P.M. *et al.*, “Complex Systems and

ance, instead of being static, behaves according to the three main properties of complex systems namely self-organization, emergence and adaptation.

While environmental regimes are not part of this system, what experts show is that environmental provisions within trade agreements can navigate within such a trade adaptive system. In particular, research in this direction has shown two important results. First, that trade agreements connecting parties that do not have shared partners are more likely to introduce novel environmental provisions. This means that innovative trade partnerships are more likely to create innovative environmental provisions and make them navigate the whole trade adaptive system. Second, that environmental provisions introduced in cross-regional trade agreements are more likely to pollinate the entire trade system. This shows the importance of regional players, like the EU, and of their interactions with other regional actors for the pollination of environmental provisions across the trade system¹⁷.

Conceptualizing environmental and trade issues as governed by regime complexes or complex adaptive systems has several consequences for our understanding of the governance mechanisms of their interactions. First, it means that power gets more diffused as the trade and environmental nexus becomes embedded in networks of institutions. Powerful players in one institution might not be powerful players in another institution. This enhances the need to create alliances for stronger influence. Second, such conceptual-

International Governance”, in *International Studies Review*, vol. 22(4), 2020, p. 1008-1038.

¹⁷ MORIN J.-F., BLÜMER D., BRANDI C. *et al.*, “Kick-starting diffusion: Explaining the varying frequency of PTAs’ environmental clauses by their initial conditions”, in *World Economy* 42(9), 2019, p. 2602-2628.

izations indicate that the trade and environment nexus might more easily evolve compared to what is usually foreseen. Indeed, changing one small aspect can have a domino effect on other institutions.

While these conceptualizations help to acquire a broader understanding of trade and environment relations, the next section reminds us how they also help us identify what is missing in the governance of such relations.

WHAT DO THESE REPRESENTATIONS FORGET: A CRITICAL VIEW ON INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

The common element to the approaches presented so far is that they all concentrate on existing institutions dealing with trade and the environment. International regimes, or international regime complexes, include formal and informal principles, rules and norms. They therefore help with identifying the existing practices of global governance in these fields. But beyond showing what is existing, they can also inform us on the potential improvements of such governance efforts. In particular, two lines for further inquiry can be identified. First, regimes and regime complexes can inform us about what is missing in global governance. Second, they can inform us about what needs to be transformed, for better governance to be performed, for the trade and environment interactions.

First of all, one risk is that reflecting on the existing structures of global governance might prevent us from thinking about what is missing from this picture, and from thinking about the existing gaps. There are indeed a number of governance gaps that should still be tackled in the debate about trade and the environment. Among others, one major problem for climate change are fossil fuel subsidies. Indeed, fossil fuels are the main drivers of greenhouse gas

emissions. In 2017, Libya, Iran or Uzbekistan were subsidizing fossil fuels with amounts worth 10% of their Gross Domestic Product¹⁸. While fossil fuels are also the key energy used for the transportation of goods, the WTO would be well placed to support a fossil fuel subsidy reform, as subsidies can be contrary to trade liberalization.

Another key issue that is missing in the trade and environment nexus relates to the sometimes disastrous environmental externalities that corporations from developed countries can have, when operating in developing countries. This is, among others, the case with European corporations¹⁹. There exists no international framework so far for corporate responsibility on these aspects but the creation of international law, especially on human rights and sustainable development violations, could improve the environment, and also trade, as such violations are also particularly detrimental to the reputation of EU corporations. So far, the European approach is based on due diligence requirements, and could be backed by an international treaty on corporate social responsibility.

Finally, another key current challenge related to the environment and trade nexus would be the reform of the financial sector²⁰. Again, current funding schemes tend to ignore environmental externalities, while a clear sign from funds and investors that these externalities should be taken into account, would help towards a sustainable transition.

¹⁸ MORIN J.-F., ORSINI A. and SIKINA J., *op. cit.*, p. 340.

¹⁹ MINGUET A., “Cleaning up the Mess? The EU’s Answer to Environmental Conflicts Within and Beyond its Borders”, in Amandine Orsini and Elena Kavvatha (eds.), *EU Environmental Governance. Current and Future Challenges*, London, Routledge, 2020, 207-223.

²⁰ PAUW W.P.U., MOSLENER L. H., ZAMARIOLI N. *et al.*, “Post-2025 climate finance target: how much more and how much better?”, in *Climate Policy*, vol. 22:9-10, 2022, p. 1241-1251.

Second, concentrating on the existing governance dynamics on trade and environment prevents us from questioning the very nature of such dynamics. Instead of proposing ways to reform current trade governance, several experts and civil society groups are increasingly questioning the very dominance of the trade paradigm. Would it be possible to conceptualize trade differently, in line with post-growth perspectives? Such perspectives, including de-growth, a-growth or steady-state economy share the idea that the current growth imperative is incompatible with the physical limitations of planet Earth²¹. Such perspectives invite us to rethink growth, by decreasing consumption first, to then reaching a balance between trade and the environment. While media refers to austerity as a key concept towards such achievement, taking care of the environmental externalities is most of the time common sense²². The European Union²³ and youth among others²⁴ are increasingly aware of the usefulness of modifying trade practices for a better environmental balance.

Several experts also stress the importance to go beyond mere environmentalism, to embrace the full sustainable development challenge²⁵. The initially environmentally centred movement on climate change is now becoming a climate justice movement. Indeed,

²¹ PICOITO DO CARMO N., “Post-growth and the European Union”, in *EUGLOBALGREEN Case Study n°1*, October 2022, [accessed 17 Apr. 2023, https://www.crespo.be/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/EUGLOBALGREEN-Case-Study_Picoito-do-Carmo-Natacha_final.pdf].

²² On a personal note, I do not have a car, I do not have a smartphone, I do not have a TV, most people would call me a dinosaur, but I would call myself a happy person.

²³ PICOITO DO CARMO N., *op. cit.*

²⁴ ORSINI A., “Youth Goals? Youth Agency and the Sustainable Development Goals”, in *Youth and Globalization*, vol. 4, 2022, p. 108-139.

²⁵ ORSINI A. and KAVVATHA E. (eds.), *EU environmental governance: current and future challenges*, London, Routledge, 2020.

environmental progress will not be reached if they do not take into account other key societal challenges such as poverty, gender inequalities, trans-generational justice, or human and nature rights. This has been particularly visible in the yellow vest movement protests and is even more prominent after the COVID 19 crisis.

Based on such a critical view on international institutions, the next section concludes and draws recommendations.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter has presented the evolution of scientific perspectives in terms of the global governance of the trade and environment debate. While members of the scientific communities have initially analysed international institutions one by one, they progressively pictured trade and environment issues as a nexus, where several institutions relate to one another, creating a proper governance structure.

Such debates enable us to picture a comprehensive approach of the trade and environment nexus that is important to better understand power dynamics and possibilities within such contexts. While analysts initially believed that one key international actor could block the whole governance process, power appears to be more diffused in a complex system. This also means that opportunities are more likely to arise and research has shown that the diffusion of rules, principles and norms could happen from one institution to the other. What needs to be done to create opportunities is to create alliances and to advocate for opportunities across international institutions. If the EU wants to stay an environmental leader, it has

to convince other players²⁶ and to engage in the trade and environment complex system and nexus²⁷.

Another recommendation stems from the need to work on existing important gaps within the trade and environment nexus: fossil fuel subsidies, green finance and corporate responsibility are identified here as key topics on which further governance is needed. Diplomatic work is needed to demonstrate the common sense that exists in all these measures, which would help create a more balanced international system.

Finally, current reflections have concentrated on how current trade practices and environmental practices interact. But this contribution reveals the need to adjust trade; and a need to adjust environmental objectives. On the one hand, trade needs to be rethought for it to go through a qualitative rather than quantitative increase. There is a need to move from over-trade, to trade in goods that have less environmental externalities. On the other hand, there is the need to embrace the full dimensions of sustainable development and to ask for inclusive environmental measures. These recommendations remind us that only by tackling the root causes of the current environmental and trade crises will change be possible.

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²⁶ PIPART F., “Explaining EU influence in international environmental negotiations”, in *Journal of European Integration*, vol. 44(8), 2022, 1059-1074.

²⁷ EARSOM J. and DELREUX T., “Evaluating EU Responsiveness to the Evolution of the International Regime Complex on Climate Change”, in *International Environmental Agreements: Politics, Law and Economics* 21(4), 2021, p. 711-728.

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Democratic Geopolitics: Can the EU champion an Inclusive, Polycentric and Fairer Multilateralism?

KALYPSO NICOLAIDIS¹

INTRODUCTION: SEVEN PILLARS FOR THE BORRELL PARADOX

Like the proverbial elephant, “Europe’s Strategic Culture” can be grasped from many angles. Mine here is another amorphous animal, namely multilateralism and how Europeans do and ought to relate to it. I assume that not only the contributors to this collection but also its readers, including all those active in the EEAS, are animated by a shared conviction, beautifully expressed throughout his life by Mario Telò. A conviction that multilateralism and the rule of law are perhaps the most precious human inventions of all time.²

¹ This chapter is based on a talk given on 17 October 2022 at the Palais des Académies in Brussels under the sponsorship of the High Representative. I would like to thank the Royal Academy of Science, Letters and Fine Arts of Belgium and the European External Action Service for their support, and most importantly recognise Mario Telò for his customary commitment to this project, the last of his life to which he gave his all. Mario remained a steadfast friend and intellectual inspiration until the end. I would also like to thank Stephanie Hoffman and Alar Olljum for their insightful comments.

² See inter alia TELÒ M. (ed.), *Globalisation, multilateralism, Europe: towards a better global governance?*, London, Routledge, 2016; RUGGIE J.G., “Multilater-

For together, they are about tribes (or call them countries) sitting together in discussion circles in order to agree to cooperate under shared rules and procedures. To be sure, multilateralism may often be seen, *pace* Koskenniemi, as “the manner to accumulate power and exert pressure upon the weaker states,” but this makes all the more precious the extent to which it can also, at least part of the time, mitigate structural asymmetries of power in the international game.

I also venture to suggest that we share the conviction that multilateralism is what the EU is all about internally: an anti-hegemonic credo for an EU which at its foundation gave disproportional institutional power to small and medium states.³ In this sense Europe’s margins, its small states, its limes, became the very soul of the integration project. And this is why the EU has allegedly made it its mission to champion multilateralism externally in other regions and at the global level, and to revitalise it in our emerging post-post-cold war world. But of course, it is a tall order to do this while at the same time forcefully to commit to reintegrate another game, that of power politics and geopolitics. Indeed, this is a core question addressed by the Strategic Compass of the EEAS published a month after the start of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.⁴

alism: the anatomy of an institution”, in *International organization*, 46, no. 3, 1992, p. 561-598; BOUCHARD C., PETERSON J. and TOCCI N., *Multilateralism in the 21st century*, New York, Routledge, 2014. MERDZANOVIC A. and NICOLAIDIS K., *A citizen’s guide to the rule of law: why we need to fight for the most precious human invention of all time*, New York, Routledge, 2021.

³ MAGNETTE P. and NICOLAIDIS K., “Large and small member states in the European Union: Reinventing the balance”, in *Notre Europe*, 5 May 2003.

⁴ *A Strategic Compass for Defense and Security: For a European Union that protects its citizens, values and interests and contributes to international peace and security*, EEAS, 24 March 2022; NOVÁKY N., “The Strategic Compass: Chart-

And so we ask: what principles can, or should, guide this narrow path between commitment to multilateralism on one hand, and accommodation of geopolitical realities on the other? This question, I will argue ought to guide what I will call here our ‘democratic geopolitics.’

I can only give here a few cursory insights as a basis for further conversations, both scholarly and political. In doing so, I draw on some of the thoughts expressed recently (fall 2022) by EU High Representative Josep Borrell, our patron for this project, and the tensions or dilemmas they may give rise. To simplify it hugely, my subjective take is that the High Representative posits two contradictory imperatives which I believe reflect the zeitgeist of the EU as a whole.

On one hand Josep Borrell calls on his services to be more ambitious individually and collectively: “Europeans have to be much more engaged with the rest of the world...Otherwise, the rest of the world will invade us, by different ways and means.” This statement, along with the garden-jungle metaphor which elicited much controversy, is in fact a call to arms. Whether we agree or not to see, to feel, to fear the rest of the world as a “jungle”, we are warned about the downside of power transitions, the chaos that accompanies imperial collapse and great powers falling from their pedestal, and we must try to address this pattern head on. It is time for Europe to grow up and invest in the upside as a ‘geopolitical actor’.

At the same time, the High Representative sounds a cautious note about being more humble: “we got this war wrong”, and “we must listen...”. And as we do, “let’s not be surprised if the global south is not behind us.”

ing a new course for the EU’s security and defence policy”, in *European View*, vol. 20, no. 1, 2021.

This dialectic between ambition and humility – if you allow me to call it that - is music to my ears.⁵ After all, in my Oxfordian “Alice-land” we are allowed 6 contradictory things before breakfast! As for me personally, I have long been inspired by Greek mythology to read European politics, and in my last book, I ponder the paradox of Hubris, a kind of self-confidence that can be terribly excessive and poignantly admirable at the same time.⁶ Think of Prometheus punished by Zeus for the audacity of giving fire to humans. Or think of Arachne, godmother of #metoo, punished for weaving the sexual impunities of the gods, or of Icarus who fell to his death for daring to fly too close to the sun. All punished, but would we have it any other way? The ancient Greeks wouldn’t. We both admire them because they dared and shun them because they failed from arrogance. Perhaps, we would have liked them to practice responsible hubris – Icarus should have grounded his ambition in his wise father’s advice and remained humbly far enough from the sun. In my book, Europe can be both wrecked and redeemed for its “Icarus syndrome.”

So I will argue that the EU can and should be ever more ambitious and yet ever more humble in defending and reshaping multilateralism - and if you allow me I will refer to this proposition as the Borrell paradox.

Of course, this is not to make any deeper claim to the High Representative’s own persuasion, but rather to use his statements as a metaphor for the actual or potential change-makers involved in shaping Europe’s role in the world, starting (but not ending) with the diplomats and other actors working in the external action service, as

⁵ On the ambition-humility dialectic, see MERDZANOVIC A. and NICOLAÏDIS K., *op. cit.*, fn2.

⁶ NICOLAÏDIS K., *Exodus, reckoning, sacrifice: Three meanings of Brexit*, London, Unbound Publishing, 2019.

agents of a polity that is after all the most powerful economic power in the world. This state of affairs, however, will not last forever. And with power comes responsibility, including responsibility that outlasts one's power.

My proposition is the following. What is seen as the increasing geo-politization of the last few years, affecting trade, investment, climate and even democracy, is not a clean slate for power dynamics.⁷ Inversing Putin's zeitgeist, the geopolitical game must be rule-bound *coute que coute*, even if this may require renegotiating the rules in question. Macron was right to take the French nuclear deterrent off the table in the context of the Ukraine war. But at the same time, democratic practices and democratic innovation in the EU is a geopolitical necessity. Such a requirement comes in tension with rule-boundedness – we need flexible rule, not frozen rules interpreted at will by unaccountable powers.

I will therefore argue that the EU's strategic horizon needs to be reshaped as 'democratic geopolitics' embodying values that will serve the EU's stature in the rest of the world, reflecting a young, empathetic, imaginative, post-colonial, decentered, feminine stance. Operationally, this means that the EU can play its part alongside others in an inclusive, polycentric and fairer multilateralism, but that we need to critically interrogate the conditions of possibility for such a global role. Leading by example rather than leading tout court. This is why we need to grapple with the humility-ambition paradox.

I offer below some brief insight into seven variants on this theme, all of which can be taken as variations on the EU's strategic horizon regarding multilateralism; and I ask where the "Borrell paradox"

⁷ MEUNIER S. and NICOLAIDIS K., "The geopoliticization of European trade and investment policy", in *J. Common Mkt. Stud.*, 57, 2019, p. 103.

or the dialectic between ambition and humility can take us, if we commit to boldly embrace it (when I say ‘we’ below I mean “we Europeans” in an inclusive way, although however we define such inclusivity will always leave some out – language is oh so imperfect here).

THE WAR OF NARRATIVES IS ABOUT OUR IMAGINING A DEMOCRATIC GEOPOLITICS

Lets’ start with words. How does the ambition-humility dialectic fare in the war of narrative? Arguably, the advent of planetary politics calls for combining the humility of prediction with the ambition and thus capacity for deep foresight.⁸ We did not foresee events regarding Ukraine, tensions over Taiwan, or Russia’s games in the Sahel, sighs the High Representative. But foresight is not forecast. Most predictions are useless in today’s world: there is generally no way to foresee why and when shocks might happen, how they might unfold and with what implications. Even if the risks are known, they are not computable. All we know is that black swans simply appear, all the time.⁹

This is why the High Representative is right to call for adapting to a world of radical uncertainty through “flexibility and resilience.” But in times of radical transformation where crisis meets the need to manage structural transitions, resilience as the capacity to protect what we already have is not enough. For sure, we must think outside the box and conjure up black swans or unlikely events. But more acutely than ‘we did not foresee,’ we need to say, ‘we did not

⁸ BURKE A., FISHEL S., MITCHELL A. *et al.*, “Planet politics: A manifesto from the end of IR”, in *Millennium*, 44, no. 3, 2016, p. 499-523.

⁹ TALEB N.N., *The Black Swan: The impact of the highly improbable*, Penguin Random House, 2007.

imagine'. De-risking may be the alternative to decoupling (say with China) but it cannot replace deciphering the mind of the world.

Indeed, the EU has always been predicated on learning the right lessons from the past. What if instead we set about learning lessons from the future? Not just the future of foresight units. But lessons from a future *imagined*, especially as imagined by our children and children around the world. Imagination can be a most fruitful ground where academics meet politics and policy making. And storytelling a most fruitful ground where so called "ordinary" citizens and elites (of whatever type!) meet in a democratic polity where external relations ought to belong to all.

Imagination is the key to a better future. How else, can we prepare for a future where nuclear deterrence fails, climate loops accelerate, the global financial system implodes, and bees cease to be. Imagination is the force that must power us to turn the ambition for each of us to be a good ancestor into a clear and present collective imperative.

And this is the cliché but it bears repeating. Multilateralism of the sustainable kind I call for here, is about lengthening the shadow of the future, turning crisis management into institutional habitus and thus imagining new ways to cope with unwritten futures. Let us rediscover and expand on the idea that multilateralism provides the setting for diffuse reciprocity - which helps us think beyond the confines of direct reciprocity, so as to picture one's actions as responding to and inducing a chain of reciprocal actions and reactions by others far removed from one's action in space and time. We wish for the kind of multilateralism which radically expands the diffuse nature of reciprocity through foresight-cum-imagination.¹⁰

¹⁰ SEE INTER ALIA, RUGGIE J.G., *OP CIT.*

To be sure, the EU machinery is rightly proud to have learned to operate in emergency mode in the last decade's "poly-crisis". Since 2008, four years to agree (or agree to disagree) on debt, four months on refugees, four weeks on Covid, and four days on Ukraine! This is surely a sign of progress in EU decision making. And yet, in each of these recent pasts, we largely failed to imagine other futures, when at every juncture, with EU imprimatur, we could have future-proofed loud and clear for 2, 10, 50 year horizons. We failed to proclaim: it is urgent to act for the long-term.

I have argued that this state of affairs does not have to be. Indeed the EU is particularly well disposed to act globally as a guardian for long-term (notwithstanding Europeans' acute historical responsibility in mortgaging humanity's future). After all, it can't be a classic democracy where you can throw the rascals out, a democracy which, as is too often the case, is driven by short term political concern for re-election. But there is a silver lining to the EU's so called democratic deficit. It can be a democracy with foresight. It can pivot from the politics of space to the politics of time and commit to what I have called "sustainable integration", a dynamic of integration where we re-join the paths not taken in past crisis, the path to these foregone futures that would have transformed our present. This would mean today, as the slow-burning crisis that is climate crisis erupts as hot crisis through energy dependency or water shortages, to transform *now* how we consume and not just where we produce, how we redistribute work, value and risk, and how we reward the burden of sacrifice.¹¹

¹¹ NICOLAÏDIS K., "Sustainable Integration in a Democratic Polity: A New (or not so new) Ambition for the European Union after Brexit", in Benjamin Martill and Uta Staiger (eds.), *Brexit and Beyond: Rethinking the Futures of Europe*, UCL Press, 2018, p. 212-221.

None of these choices however, can be imposed from the top-down. They must be owned by societies where difficult trade-offs are debated democratically all the more to enforce them effectively. This is why radical democratic innovation in the EU is a geopolitical necessity, not only an anti-populist strategy. ~~The right kind of democracy.~~

It is often argued that authoritarian regimes have a much longer time horizon in general. Presumably, their leaders can respond more flexibly to exogenous shocks and geopolitical changes since they are not bound by elections. It is for us not only to provide the arguments but to demonstrate with actions, that such a view does not need to hold. Democratically crafted choices are in fact the condition of possibility of a geopolitical model where democracies around the world will gain and sustain a competitive edge. The capacity of domestic regimes to act on the premise that it is urgent to act long-term is up for grabs. Arguably, decision-making in a polycentric and inclusive spirit that can scale up or down depending on the issue at stake, will create more sustainable decisions, through wider expertise upstream and buy-in downstream, making enforcement a collective effort. Democratic geopolitics pits those who will know how to mobilise collective intelligence against those who can't, a theme I will come back to at the end of this essay.

As I see it, imagining the EU as a more likely guardian of the long-term than its member states is a humble ambition indeed, one that would clearly trace a forward path for its actions in the world (aka Afghanistan, China, Iran), as it starts to offer a tool-box for collective guardianship of the long-term, a set of tools that others can borrow or discard, add to and refine. To be sure, some would argue that President Biden's series of legislative achievements have generally been bets on the long-term. But this is arguably a much harder

achievement to sustain in the US with its short electoral cycle and hugely polarized politics. With the EU, however flawed it may be, Europeans can benefit from a kind of “slow governance” which will serve as the necessary counterpart to the prevailing emergency politics.¹² Slow, steady, sustained, a democracy with foresight fuelled by the power of imagination can be Europe’s signature in managing our triple green, digital and geopolitical transitions.¹³ And if the EU lives up to the promise it could become one of the laboratories for planetary politics.

WE MUST ENDEAVOUR TO EXPORT THE EU’S LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONALISED EMPATHY

My second proposition takes this imperative for embedding Europe’s action in the long-term through the power of institutions to another building block for our strategic horizon, building on the High Representative’s admonition: “Yes, we have the “Brussels effect” and we continue setting standards, but I believe that, more and more, the rest of the world is not ready to follow our exportation of model.” To be sure, the EU may not be a super-power but it holds a “power

¹² WHITE J., “Emergency Europe”, in *Political Studies*, 63(2), 2015, 300-318; SCHMIDT V.A., “European emergency politics and the question of legitimacy”, in *Journal of European Public Policy*, 29(6), 2022, p. 979-993.

¹³ AZMANOVA A. and NICOLAIDIS K., “Democracy with foresight: the key to a socially sustainable transition in Europe (and beyond)”, in N. Countouris, A. Piasna and S. Theodoropoulou (eds.), *Benchmarking Working Europe 2023: Europe in Transition: Towards Sustainable Resilience*, 2023, p. 19-29 [accessed 22 May 2023, https://www.etui.org/sites/default/files/2023-03/Benchmarking%20Working%20Europe%202023_Towards%20sustainable%20resilience_2023.pdf].

surplus” when it comes to the trade-regulatory nexus.¹⁴ Because of the size of its market and its active regulatory policies, EU norm setters clearly have the capacity to influence regulatory developments globally. Isn’t such power exercised for the better? To enforce multilateral rules? Or to enforce demanding European standards on health, human rights or the environment? No doubt. But I believe that if we are to heed Borrell’s ambition-humility paradox on this count, we cannot simply expect that our EU standards and regulations will be adopted by third countries and their corporations if we simply impose them unilaterally through the magic wand of conditional access to our single market. Instead, the EU’s power surplus in the trade-regulatory nexus must be embedded in institutionalised, multilateralised legal empathy. What do I mean?

As discussed by Pascal Lamy in this volume, the EU’s power *through* trade is an old story.¹⁵ Since the time I started working on how the EU could/should export its approach to trade in services to the global trade regime in the 1980s, such ‘external governance’ has looked like our great success story. From food standards to privacy standards on the internet, we can proclaim that we are not forcing our standards on anyone – just making them a condition to access our precious single market. Most of us embrace this proposition that the EU can be an “actor for good” in the world by moving the needle

¹⁴ GARCIA BERCERO I. and NICOLAIDIS K., “Europe’s Power Surplus: Legal Empathy and the Trade/regulation nexus”, in Elaine Fahey and Isabella Mancini (eds.), *Understanding the EU as a Good Global Actor. Ambitions, Values and Metrics*, Cheltenham, Edward Elgar, 2022. See also NICOLAIDIS K., “Mutual recognition: promise and denial, from sapiens to Brexit”, in *Current Legal Problems*, 70(1), 2017, p. 227-266.

¹⁵ MEUNIER S. and NICOLAIDIS K., “The European Union as a conflicted trade power”, in *Journal of European public policy*, 13(6), 2006, p. 906-925.

of the normal as a market power.¹⁶ And yet there is great risk of complacency in assuming that this dynamic will continue to work. Especially as conditions for EU access penetrate deeper and deeper in the socio-economic and political fabric of other countries. The last instalment of this externalisation approach – the so called ‘Due Diligence’ directive – promises to be the most far reaching instrument in this vein, affecting social and environmental rights, standards and policies around the world.

While it is hard to question the worthiness of the goals pursued through this method, we need to interrogate the method itself, both in terms of effectiveness and legitimacy, as I have argued in a recent paper with Ignacio Garcia Berceo, responsible for WTO in DG trade.¹⁷ In part, this is about consistency. Internally, the EU has for decades refined the design and enforcement of what I have called “managed mutual recognition” based on intense cooperation between regulators and their regulatory systems over time. Even when the underlying standard is said to be “harmonized”, recognition is necessary when it comes to the monitoring and accreditation of these standards. In the EU, this approach is predicated on the *compatibility* or *comparability* between regulatory regimes, allowing for legitimate concerns on the part of host states when it comes to “competition over rules,” without necessarily resorting to requiring *sameness*.

In turn, I argue that such compatibility is gauged through “legal empathy” which I define as “the process of engaging in comparative dialogues on the differences between national laws to explore, understand and learn from these differences through detailed

¹⁶ FAHEY E. and MANCINI I. (eds.), *Understanding the EU as a Good Global Actor. Ambitions, Values and Metrics*, Cheltenham, Edward Elgar, 2022.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

investigation into each other's motives in order to ground voluntary or binding mutual actions."¹⁸

In short, if empathy can be defined as the ability to put oneself in the shoes of another, legal empathy in turn consists of a deep cooperative engagement with each other's systems assessing how far a relationship can be sustained *despite* differences. And legal empathy in turn relies on institutionalized empathy, or the setting up of institutions that are meant to facilitate mutual understanding and dialogue between its members.

I argue for the territorial extension of legal empathy beyond the confines of the EU ...with caveats. Some will counter that this logic cannot be exported beyond the institutionally dense EU eco-system, which allows for building trust and intense contacts. And yet, this is a question of degree. We could do worse than to aim to apply our internal experience with legal empathy and other-regarding habits to our relationship with the rest of the world. In other words, we could reframe Market Power Europe as both a more ambitious and more humble use of our trade-cum-regulatory power.¹⁹ More humble by minimising unilateral moves and more ambitious by amplifying cooperative designs and investments under bilateral or multilateral umbrellas.

To be sure, we need to be mindful of the potential tension between the EU's external action objective (such as in the list of Art. 21(2) TEU) and the protection of its own interests – a tension to be managed on a case by case basis. The EU cannot either fall into the trap of moral relativism, simply accepting blindly deeply unjust, unsound or even dangerous policies and practices in partner coun-

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ DAMRO C., "Market Power Europe", in *Journal of European Public Policy*, 19(5), 2012, p. 682-699.

tries. All the legal empathy in the world cannot make allowance for the treatment of the Amazon by the Bolsaneros of this world. But the engagement that such vigilance implies ought to be about empowering local actors who are on “our” side rather than exporting blueprints – we know this, we say this, but do we practice it effectively?

Such an approach will not only enhance the rate of compliance we can expect elsewhere but it will also help revitalise multilateralism. What kind of commitment to multilateralism does the Brussels effect convey when the EU relies above all on unilateral adaptation on the part of its trade partners as the default solution? Therefore, responsible multilateralism means that seeking more systematically to extend the EU normative influence to the regulation of transborder concerns must rest on a “good global governance” approach to the external aspect its regulatory policies, rather than simply leveraging EU power surplus unilaterally. Especially if we consider that multilateralism is not only about pledges but about actual changes of policies in response to cooperation.

A DECENTERING AGENDA FOR THE EU IN THE AGE OF PLANETARY POLITICS

Which leads me to my third variation on the theme of ambition-cum-humility. The High Representative invoked the need for the ‘foot soldiers’ of the EU’s external action on the ground to listen and report in real time. I would add, to report about time itself – the time horizons of others and how we negotiate over time. From my conversations with EEAS diplomats posted in EU delegations, this imperative involves questions about how you actually do that and

how Brussels in turn listens to your listening. Is that what we mean by “Team Europe”?²⁰

In a recent textbook on EU external action edited by Gstöhl and Schunz, a number of scholars discuss this imperative under the broad label of the decentering agenda.²¹ What does this mean?

First and most broadly, faced as we are with the looming inter-linked threats of climate change and catastrophic loss of biodiversity, it is impossible to imagine staying on the narrow path of global cooperation if *any* actor pretends they can be “leaders”, “champions”, “models”. Instead all we can all do, including Europeans, is do our bit as well as we can. This mindset starts with self-reflection.

You cannot have been involved in the negotiations over EPAs (Economic Partnership Agreements between African and the EU), without becoming aware of the lasting import of colonial legacies, not only within the academic strictures of “decolonial studies” but on the ground, in the interactions between negotiators and between their respective constituencies. Whatever Europeans might do or say with the best of intentions, others hear colonial echos and plead

²⁰ “Team Europe” was created in April 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic to improve coherence and coordination between EU members-states, EU institutions, including their implementing agencies and public development banks, as well as the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD).

²¹ GSTÖHL S. and SCHUNZ S. (eds.), *Studying the European Union’s External Action: Concepts, Approaches, Theories*, London, Macmillian Academic, 2021; see also ACHARYA A., “Global International Relations (IR) and Regional Worlds: A New Agenda for International Studies”, in *International studies quarterly*, 58, no. 4, 2014, p. 647-659; FISHER-ONAR N. and NICOLAIDIS K., “The Decentering Agenda: Europe as a post-colonial power”, in *Cooperation and Conflict*, 48, no. 2, 2013, p. 283-303; KEUKELEIRE S. and LECOCQ S., “Operationalising the decentering agenda: Analysing European foreign policy in a non-European and post-western world”, in *Cooperation and conflict*, 53, no. 2, 2018, p. 277-295.

for us to come to grips with our “post-colonial condition.”²² As I have argued elsewhere, the EU, and not only its former colonial member states, needs to become a genuine post-colonial power, both in a descriptive and a prescriptive sense – understanding and transcending its post-colonial condition. Indeed, every state today that is the heir of an imperial power will do well to truly come to grips with its post-colonial condition, to not only give up it up but beforehand to *know* it. This is the key to full responsible membership of the international community –*pace* Russia.

This agenda starts with our overlapping memories with formerly colonised peoples. Many Europeans seem to believe in the EU’s “virgin birth” as if the creation of the market in 1958 simply erased the past of the countries operating behind its trade walls. Many in Africa are well aware that at the time of its creation, the “Eurafrica programme” sought to pool sovereignty in Europe in order to pool the management of colonies outside it.²³ That it was later all but forgotten, although reproduced under a different guise, speaks of the mix of denial and atonement that has characterised EU’s approach to the global south ever since.²⁴

Decentering also means stepping out for good from the long shadow of the “standards of civilisation”, e.g. unilateral universalism

²² NICOLAÏDIS K. and FISHER-ONAR N., “Europe’s Post-Imperial Condition”, in Hartmut Behr and Ioannis Stivachtis (eds.), *Revisiting the European Union as an Empire*, London, Routledge, 2015, p. 115-133.

²³ See “Eurafrica”, in NICOLAÏDIS K., SEBE B. and MAAS G. (eds.), *Echoes of Empire: Memory, Identity and Colonial Legacies*, London, IB Tauris, 2015.

²⁴ See NICOLAÏDIS, K. “Southern Barbarians” in K. Nicolaïdis, B. Sebe and G. Maas (eds.), *Echoes of Empire: Memory, Identity and Colonial Legacies*, London, IB Tauris, 2015. See also on bilateral communities of fate, HOFMANN S. and ABD MERAND F., “In Search of Lost Time: Memory-framing, Bilateral Identity-making, and European Security”, in *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 58(1), 2020, p. 155-171.

with a moralistic cover of material interests. Instead of talking up the EU as a model for the rest of the world, we can more humbly see ourselves as a laboratory – as others can learn at least as much from our failures as from our success – or indeed choose to ignore us and do their own thing. The decentering agenda calls both for provincializing Europe and overcoming “European provincialism.”

Decentering therefore calls for self-reflexivity about the propensity for western states to reproduce the patterns of gatekeeping of yesteryears, deciding who is in and who is out (the state system in general or specific international organisations specifically), or on what grounds and modality can it be legitimate to intervene where. For centuries, assertion of hierarchy and denial of agency on the part of colonising powers have the twin pillars of this *modus operandi*, a *modus operandi* still in part with us today.²⁵ From the ‘state failure’ rationale for such gatekeeping to the “extraction drive” of western-headquartered (although not only) companies, others recognise legacies that we want to forget. We still need to give up the old reflexes.

To be sure with the crisis, the old continent has lost the confidence that its political choice can shape the future of world politics. But this is not a bad thing – ~~at last~~ Europeans are at last starting to see themselves as like any other.

A wide-ranging poll by the Open Society Foundation covering 22 countries around the world has revealed a high level of agreement regarding the most significant challenges facing the world today—

²⁵ For a systematic exploration of this inter-temporal parallel see, NICOLAÏDIS K., VERGERIO C., FISHER ONAR N. *et al.*, “From Metropolis to Microcosmos: Europe’s New Standards of Civilisation”, in *Millennium-Journal of International Studies*, vol. 42/3, 2014, p. 718-745.

and a common desire for effective global action in response.²⁶ In this poll, 86 percent agree that climate change was already affecting people's lives through heatwaves, droughts, floods and other extreme weather. Yet, despite the apparent interest in global solutions, there was clear dissatisfaction with the work of the UN. We could argue that the EU is bound to "lead by example", a core ambitious drive, reflected in its new green and digital policies paired with the CBAM (border adjustment tax) meant to induce mimetic policies on the other side. But if, on the other hand, we are to take humility seriously, talk of "leading by example" might not do. Why not note what the EU is "just doing" and let others decide whether this is an example for them? Or better, admit that there might be many different ways that eventually can be combined in dealing with the challenges of our time, the EU's being one among others.

Here again we come back to the blindspots of "EUnilateralism" and our failure to take into account, or at least manage, the externalities we produce through these policies. This is an old problem. Two decades ago, we were already pointing out that EU subsidies for a single cow per year in the EU could provide support for the installation of clean water for a whole village in sub-Saharan Africa REF.²⁷ Today, we may make our sanctions ever smarter and ever more targeted, and we may know that the only credible sanctions are the ones which also hurt the sender, but we did not consult extensively enough with countries in the global south on sanctions against

²⁶ [accessed 5 May 2023, <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/newsroom/majorities-across-the-world-support-russian-withdrawal-from-ukraine-and-greater-action-on-climate-change>].

²⁷ HEMEL D., "Scottish Beef Calves and Starving Children", in M. Egleton-Pierces, E. Jones and K. Nicolaidis (eds), *Building Blocks for a Global Trade Ethics: A Compendium of the Oxford Programme on Trade ethics*, Oxford University Centre for International Studies, 2009.

Russia. This in turn goes a long way to explaining the 4:1 gap between the UN vote on condemning Russia and the vote on sanctions in the fall of 2022. Similarly, as gatekeepers of the financial system the US and the EU elected to restrict access to this “shared infrastructure” unilaterally in ways that did not even pay lip service to multilateral decision making. The policy might be based on acceptable rationales but its contours must be designed around multilateral tables.

When the High Representative talked of a possible “humanitarian crisis of “dantesque” proportions” in the horn of Africa, of which we are not aware, we need to ask not only whether we are helping them to cope – the EU’s “global gateway” is certainly a good start - but whether we have thought enough about how externalities can be managed *ex-ante*, and at least partially internalised *ex-post facto*.

Against this backdrop, the High Representative invoked the many “who do not want to be forced to take sides in this geopolitical competition.” More importantly, “they feel that the global system does not deliver, and they are not receiving their part. They are not receiving enough recognition. They do not have the role they should have according to their population and their economic weight. And when facing these multiple crises – these multipolar crises - financial, food and energy crises – it is clear that they are not following us because they blame us, rightly or not.” A decentering agenda means that to other countries’ strategic ambiguity, the EU can try to respond with strategic empathy, at least when such ambiguity does not fundamentally hurt its interests. As a European diplomat friend quips, “a capacity for radical empathy - the will, ability, imagination and daring to put oneself into the other’s shoes- is no doubt the single most important relational skill that we need to truly succeed in our mission”. Can Europe’s strategic culture better reflect a mindset that hopefully widely prevails at the individual level?

Josep Borrell also echoed a call generalised across the EU, for recoupling the sources of our prosperity with the sources of our security and thus moving away from Russian gas and Chinese markets, including through friend-shoring, onshoring and shouldering more responsibilities ourselves. To be sure, Europe’s idea of “strategic autonomy” involves doing it with others, an autonomy with partners, an autonomy targeting asymmetric interdependence rather than interdependence *per se*. It ought not to be about decoupling but de-risking. But here again we need to ask both: how does our quest for “strategic autonomy” affect that of others? We cannot want to reclaim a sovereign Europe or at least strategic autonomy, without considering the autonomy of others. Indeed, this was the great insight of the “embedded liberalism” bargain after the war, going for global prosperity while putting domestic stability, welfare and autonomy first. After an almost 30 year cycle of disembedded liberalism, we need to aim for re-embedding liberalism, meaning decentering our quest for (relative) autonomy through multilateral rules which empower relative autonomy for all.

There are many realms where decentered action can be further operationalised. *Enlargement* where the grey zones of the *acquis* could be subject to competitive interpretation in order to engage in a more empowering mode of mutual adaption. *Our neighborhood*, where “the joint programming preference for country programming” needs to consider more genuinely the impact of externalising our border management, including through engagement with civil society (see Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) programming guidelines). More generally, in our liberal account of democracy we need to promote political pluralism rather than blueprints, local control rather than external constraints. To the extent that it is about reframing both agendas,

the fledgling *European Political Community* can also be invented as a decentered organisation to multilateralise neighborhood relations, neither an alternative nor a path to membership. To be sure, there may be a risk for the EEAS to be marginalised in this endeavor. But for the EU not to be the only institutional basis for structuring the European continent is both an ambitious and humble imperative.

WE CAN AIM TO EVOLVE FROM MESSY MULTIPOLARITY TO A POLYCENTRIC ORDER

Beyond the European continent, can we say that the world order as we have experienced it since WW2 is in crisis, as so many have argued? The answer to this question has surely been affected by the Ukraine war, and yet the basic equation remains the same. The global order is a dynamic construct in which crises and contestations can occur without fundamentally undermining the order as such.

²⁸ We may debate whether we are witnessing a change *within* the order rather than *of* the order, but arguably none of its three foundational ordering principles (national sovereignty, economic liberalism and inclusive, rule-based multilateralism) are fundamentally threatened –Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine may be an outright denial of national sovereignty and rules-based multilateralism, but it has been countered by its condemnation by a vast sway of the international community (as opposed to positions on sanctions per se). Similarly the ongoing shift in US – and admittedly now European- economic and trade policy towards protectionism - in the last

²⁸ HEILSTRUP-SANGIOANNI M. AND HOFMANN S., “Of the contemporary global order, crisis, and change”, in *Journal of European Public Policy*, 27, 2020, p. 1077-1089. See also along the same lines ZÜRN M., “Contested global governance”, in *Global Policy*, 9(1), 2018, p. 138-145.

few years has not amounted to a rejection of economic liberalism per se, but rather of its more socially predatory implications.

We must be careful not to conflate the fact that specific international organizations or rules are challenged by deadlock with the global order itself being in crisis.²⁹ In this sense, the international order is what we make of it and change can be a sign of its resilience. But not any change.

Change is certainly afoot. Looking to 2030, the world will not only have several centres but its centre of gravity will have shifted – to Asia and the global south, to new public and private actors, to transnational institutions. We cannot tell how this 2030 multipolar world will accommodate new patterns of globalisation, residual US military unipolarity, traditional balance of power dynamics, a range of ad-hoc bilateral alliances, a constellation of more or less integrated regional groupings, power fragmentation combined with power assertion, heightened competition over scarce resources, as well as probably broad areas of chaos. There are too many unknowns.³⁰ If the global order and modes of global governance within it – eg the collective management of common problems at the international level – are at a critical juncture, how should we characterise the scenarios before us?

The High Representative speaks of “messy multipolarity” to characterise this emerging world (dis)order, structured as it may be around US-China competition, but where other actors - Türkiye, India, Brazil, South Africa, Mexico, Indonesia - increasingly contribute to such structuring both as regional poles and as fluid counter-

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ In their scenario planning for 2025, the authors of a recent NIC-EUISS study provide an impressive list of factors that may make global fragmentation and conflict more likely.

balancing coalitions in global politics. As strategic hedgers they can alternatively take sides or act as heirs of the non-aligned movement, as a function of their shifting interests and global circumstances, without structuring permanent alliances. There is even less consensus outside America's core allies. India is buying discounted oil from Russia while it tries to cut its dependence on Moscow's weaponry. Saudi Arabia coordinates the oil market with Russia, courts China, and snubs the United States. For the so-called West this means that neither support nor opposition can any longer be taken for granted. We now live in an age of generalised strategic autonomy and geopolitical uncertainty.

In this context the EU's self-proclaimed revamped ambition as a 'geopolitical actor' calls for clearer lines of conduct. To be sure, the High Representative has rightly warned against isolating China. But many in EU circles call for the recalibration of Brussels' strategy towards Beijing to toughen up against China and see the country as an all-out competitor with limited areas of potential engagement economically but also politically. This goes along with working more closely with the US, to strengthen cyber and hybrid threat defences, diversify supply chains away from China, and deepen ties with Indo-Pacific powers.

What is at stake in this recalibration lies at the intersection between domestic and global politics, having to do with the shape and design of spaces of freedom in our emerging global techno-polis, and whether our societies can move away from the surveillance business model and cybernetic citizenship, mobilising instead to defend these spaces.³¹ In short, messy multipolarity may be a fact of

³¹ REIJERS W., ORGAD L. and DE FILIPPI P., "The rise of cybernetic citizenship", in *Citizenship Studies*, 27, 2023, 210-229.

today's global life, but it is a fact that allows for bottom-up agency on the part of governments.

I understand the EU's stance to be to put geopolitical power at the service of multilateralism. This is a tall order against the spectre of the two core tendencies of power politics.

On one hand, we face the risk of a 'great bifurcation' between splintered worlds which will exist in different spheres of communication and operation around the US and China. Some speak of 'the end of globalisation', 'Cold War 2.0' or a return to Containment and a bipolar world, others of a more fuzzy bifurcation.³²

On the other hand, we face the risk of what we can call 'great fragmentation' whereby no order structuring takes hold in an emerging international disorder characterised by fast changing domestic regimes and landscapes leading to ever-shifting alliances and increasingly fluid transnational politics, as 'ad hoc coalitions' form and unform at short notice for limited time while actors gather in flexible plurilateral and minilateral arrangements.³³

Whatever the most likely scenario, we seem to be at a significant inflection point, a watershed moment, when the shape of things to come is determined.

Against this double risk, the vocation of multilateralism is to blunt the edges of hard core geopolitical realism by guarding against hard bipolarity, a prospect where the two main protagonists are even more insulated from one another than the US-Soviet couple of the cold war (Cold War historians show now that it was not that insu-

³² HIGGOTT R. and REICH S., "The age of fuzzy bifurcation: Lessons from the pandemic and the Ukraine War", in *Global Policy*, 13, November 2022, p. 627-639.

³³ REYKERS Y., KARLSRUD J., BROSIG M. et al., "Ad hoc coalitions in global governance: short-notice, task-and time-specific cooperation", in *International Affairs*, 99/2, March 2023, p. 727-745.

lated after all). Or by guarding against messy multipolarity turning into fragmentation and even chaos, enlarged zones of non-law and power vacuum.

How is the EU to make good on its multilateral vocation? To start with, it needs to chart a balanced course between either the overly complacent view that it ought to *preserve* the current Western-centric international order *coute que coute*, or the overly missionary zeal of challengers speaking of a *new* world order without clear makers or markers.³⁴

Instead, as argued above, and in order to deliver the mix of stability and change that is desirable in the sphere of global governance, we need to imagine, design and engineer a *transformation* of the international order into a broader, more flexible system of global governance which takes into account its unavoidably power-fluid and polycentric nature.³⁵ Rising multipolarity does not have to amount to dysfunctional multilateralism.

While the *poles* of a multipolar world refer simply to poles of power balancing each other, the *centres* of a polycentric order refer to centres of authority of various political worlds, less vulnerable to the temptations of domination on the part of imperial neighbours or hegemonic powers. Accommodating a *polycentric order under multilateral guardianship* – e.g. truly multilateral global schemes

³⁴ IKENBERRY G.J., “Is American multilateralism in decline?”, in *Perspectives on Politics*, vol. 1, no. 3, 2003, p. 533-550.

³⁵ KIM R.E., “Is global governance fragmented, polycentric, or complex? The state of the art of the network approach”, in *International Studies Review*, 22, no. 4, 2020, p. 903-931; STEPHAN M., MARSHALL G. and MCGINNIS M., “An introduction to polycentricity and governance”, in Andreas Thiel, Dustin E. Garrick and William Andrew Blomquist (eds.), *Governing Complexity: Analyzing and Applying Polycentricity*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2019, p. 21-44.

of governance – would be humble for its willingness to give up on a “western order” and ambitious for the depth of transformation required.

To be sure, such a polycentric order does and will accommodate partial fragmentation, as these centres are likely to become organising structures for ‘friend-shoring’ and the shortening of supply chains while countries compete to control - and deny others such control - advanced technologies, from AI to quantum computing. But by the same token, this emerging polycentric order requires coordination, if only because some types of technology-intensive trade, from defence to digital, will most likely remain subject not only to global division of labour but also local regulations. Institutionally, countries will continue to coordinate through instances like the G20 but also through interlocking alliances across continents (the Quad partnership in the Indo-Pacific, i.e. United States, Japan, India and Australia) or mutual ambassadorship in their respective regional organisations – such Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand in NATO, or India and Indonesia in the G7. And of course, the need for coordination around the green and digital transition will remain acute for the foreseeable future.

The path is narrow for a polycentric order -held together by interconnected centres - to supersede its twin alternatives of either bifurcation or fragmentation. Such an order would be held together by the many hands and hand-shakes that would symbolise its inclusive character both procedurally (who decides) and substantively (what is decided).

But this is a moment to grasp, when Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has tragically made it easier to see a way forward. The US has become more aware of the importance of institutionalised alliances in NATO and beyond, and the Biden administration has pledged alle-

giance to multilateralism anew, including by bringing the country back into the climate change regime in spite of its continued reluctance to embrace multilateral constraints *pace* COP 15 on biodiversity. Perhaps most importantly, even countries in the global south which have not aligned themselves with the sanctions brought against Russia have started to react against the paralysis of the UN Security Council under Russian veto. Arguably, and even more important than the General Assembly widely condemning the invasion of Ukraine, is its first attempt to buttress the more democratic arm of global governance by requiring UNSC permanent members to provide it with reasons for exercising their vetos when they do. No wonder that this was a Liechtenstein initiative, one of the smallest of all states in the world! Such is the potential for upholding the value of international law over raw power politics.

PROMOTING INCLUSIVE MULTILATERALISM MEANS ASKING “WHO ADJUSTS”

Which brings us to our fifth theme, namely to ask how this perspective for a polycentric world order can shape the EU’s commitment to multilateralism substantively.

I believe that while some have argued that emerging countries’ use of their voice opportunities built into post-war institutions destabilise the global order because they push their preferred policies, I would argue that on the contrary the contestation of substantive bargains and finding ways of accommodating legitimisation challenges through a fairer distribution of benefits from the multilateralism could constitute the best road towards increasing the resilience of the international order.

To be sure, different states and other actors around the world will read such developments differently on a spectrum between simple corrective to the current deficiencies of the multilateral order in accommodating their demand or above a certain threshold, an alternative normative horizon. But while political actors might agree to disagree on whether change is a change within or of system, the EU can significantly contribute to this transformation.

I argue here that the EU, inspired by its own internal workings, should pursue inclusive yet differentiated multilateralism.³⁶ Indeed, the EU experiment has demonstrated the various ways in which cooperation can be pursued between states at different speeds or even through different overlapping clubs. That is, differentiated integration or cooperation for which the EU itself can be an inspiration albeit with numerous caveats.³⁷

A pre-condition for EU credibility in this design is to deal with the fall-out of weaponised interdependence and create multilateral spaces where the externalities created by EU policies are managed.³⁸ In this spirit, I like to use the horizontal metaphor of interconnected circles (rather than the vertical metaphor of ‘levels’) to reconcile a renewed conception of multilateralism with that of strategic autonomy. The global management of the COVID pandemic has

³⁶ On the EU system see inter alia, SCHIMMELFENNIG F., LEUFFEN D. and RITTEBERGER B., “The European Union as a system of differentiated integration: interdependence, politicization and differentiation”, in *Journal of European public policy*, 22(6), 2015, p. 764-782. On the global level, see NICOLAIDIS K., “Differentiation, dominance and democratic congruence: A relational view”, in *EU3D Research Paper*, 21, 2021, in collaboration with A. Bradley, S. Merlo, R. Symank, P. Puertas Roig.

³⁷ NICOLAIDIS, *op. cit.*

³⁸ FARRELL H. and NEWMAN A.L., “Weaponized interdependence: How global economic networks shape state coercion”, In *International Security*, 44(1), 2019, p. 42-79.

taught us that we can best manage together by agreeing on basic rules of autonomy, from the smallest circles of the family or neighbourhoods to the largest national or regional circles. These circles in turn cannot be insulated from each other – they interconnect in multiple ways in a world where autonomies are combined to ward off a bifurcated or fragmented world. It is this generalisation of strategic autonomy under the umbrella of inclusive multilateralism that an ambitious yet humble EU is best placed to defend and design.

The agenda of planetary politics discussed here at the outset invites all of us to consider the question of state survival as part and parcel of the survival of the planet. Only a highly inclusive yet differentiated mode of global cooperation can address this connection. The EU has experimented extensively with so-called “differentiated integration” and there might be (positive and negative) lessons from this experience. Even while its own approach does not easily travel across time and space, the EU can help develop a more systematic approach to what in effect already exists - global differentiation or a modality of cooperation between states, or substate entities, that allows them to work together in non-homogenous ways given their sustained and probably growing heterogeneity of preferences.

Such a vision requires broad ranging justification and elaboration.³⁹ In a nutshell, first, classic clubs have simply created segregation through “selection, or gatekeeping by some who set the rules unilaterally. Second, up one step on the ladder of inclusion, international regimes can create rules for systemic “distinction” between different types of members, such as GATT/WTO special and differential treatment – in this case the rulebook segregates but under commonly agreed rules. In this scheme, differentiation can also occur in an ad-hoc manner through rules of exceptions and safeguards.

³⁹ NICOLAIDIS, *op. cit.*

Thirdly and most ambitiously, inclusive yet differentiated global rules of the game can radically question dominant patterns of exclusion and gatekeeping by internalising the question of who decides and configurations of membership entirely. Hence, the COP process moved up the ladder of inclusion once it devised an all-inclusive model of national discretion combined with different incentives for bottom-up commitments at the country and even city level. This logic in turn is markedly different from a tragedy of the commons or prisoner's dilemma as per mainstream depictions which tend to underplay potentials for cooperation.⁴⁰ There are of course difficult challenges for this mode of multilateralism – but after all, enforcement has always been multilateralism's blind spot.

One implication of this vision is to rely more systematically on bottom-up enforcement of shared norms – this was after all the core approach to the global reach of the COVID pandemic. Why not envisage bottom-up enforcement as the core multilateral design of the post-pandemic age? Think of ways in which the trade-off designed in the 2015 Paris COP between the binding and inclusive character of the agreed targets – in other words “non-binding bottom-up commitment” – was applied at the recent COP 15 on biodiversity. We are slowly moving to a new differentiated approach to multilateralism where the graduation of parties in levels of commitment will occur through a combination of their own domestic forces, economic and civic, and the quality of external factors (investment, rules) which may empower them. This is how agreement between a wide-ranging set of parties might progressively be replacing the “gatekeeping model”. The EU can become a crucial actor in this new logic.

⁴⁰ See HALE T., “Catalytic Cooperation”, in *Global Environmental Politics*, vol. 20/4, 2020, p. 73-98.

Responsible and differentiated multilateralism is also about managing the inter-relationship between different international regimes and organisations whose jurisdiction and membership increasingly overlap, thus shaping regime complexes or constellations rather than continuing to manage them in silos.⁴¹ As Josep Borrell has pointed out, the connected food and energy crisis falling out from the war in Ukraine can either detract from climate change commitments or, on the contrary, accelerate them. Which one of the two will depend on whether, and how, the actors involved truly set their compass under the imperative of long-term sustainability. Today we may be developing regime complexes around say climate change or migration, but we do not have meta-regime complexes connecting all the dots except in a weak form under the UN. Moreover, the cooperative connective tissue between different issues is often threaded through informal governance, where research has highlighted the ways in which informal bodies are more likely to come to agreement and pursue “agile” governance, i.e. exogenously driven rather than driven by rigid endogenous process rules.⁴²

Behind and beyond the way different interests may be reconciled in various multilateral settings, however, responsible multilateralism calls for exploring another critical prerequisite for achieving a sense of shared purpose in a transformed world order: the politics of social and political recognition. Recognition may be reflected in the basic material facts of multilateral negotiations, who sits around what tables with what authority to decide. But if we go back to the

⁴¹ See for instance HOFMANN S., “Why institutional overlap matters: CSDP in the European security architecture”, in *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 49, 2011, p. 101-120.

⁴² ROGER C.B., *The origins of informality: Why the legal foundations of global governance are shifting, and why it matters*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2020.

insights provided by social psychology – Social Identity Theory and Social Representation Theory (SRT) as well as ontological security scholarship – we must be attentive to the ways in which states develop a ‘sense of self’, consistent with the knowledge of their membership in social groups and status within, and outside, these groups.⁴³ China is a special case as a hegemonic challenger who needs to be a founding member or a leading sponsor of an institution to invest in it rather than subvert its rules as it has done with the WTO. To be sure, China must be held to account on rule subversion from within where it fails to engage with its own externalities too. But more generally, SRT means addressing peoples’ (and not just states’) sense of marginalisation in the current international order, experienced when comparing their status as members of the group of major powers or simply of the international community, with that of other countries.

Indeed, demands for recognition do not only emanate from the Chinas or the Indias of this world, but from many more who suffer from “status denial” or “status immobility” as objects of a structural injustice – a state of affairs that provokes the rise of contesting behaviour or at least strategic hedging. As a case in point, recent developments around the nuclear non-proliferation regime and the 2017 adoption of the nuclear ban treaty are the endpoint of decades of demand on the part of non-nuclear states for being socially recognised as members on an equal footing with nuclear countries. As such recognition challenges are embedded in communities of prac-

⁴³ See inter alia WARD S.M., “Lost in translation: Social identity theory and the study of status in world politics”, in *International studies quarterly*, 61(4), 2017, p. 821-834; KINNVALL C. and MITZEN J., “Anxiety, fear, and ontological security in world politics: thinking with and beyond Giddens”, in *International theory*, 12(2), 2020, p. 240-256; STEELE B.J., *Ontological security in international relations: Self-identity and the IR state*, London, Routledge, 2008.

tice where regular interactions and shared goals allow for the condition of mutual learning that make genuine recognition possible.⁴⁴

To understand what it takes to engage in practices of recognition, we need to better understand the dynamics of globality as “relational” which starts with characterising the relations between actors rather than the actors themselves. Under the logic of such a relationality approach (or Chinese *zhongyong* dialectics), social facts that were typically seen through a separation-based lens are now understood as components of relations where we ask which differences are considered more important than others. Relations are not just interactions between ‘things’ like states or corporations, but are constitutive of the system in which such ‘things’ interact. Critically, different states, or other political entities, approach difference differently and therefore can be more or less tolerant of conflicting views as the basis of international order.

A relational view leads us to ask about the actual social purpose of multilateral institutions, and can thus whether they can evolve to reflect the requisites of a polycentric order. Moving from process to substance, we need to ask not only who decides but what is decided, not only whose rules of the game but what rules of the game.

This is where the question of “who adjusts?” comes in. I would argue that since most issue-areas are addressed by some form of partial global governance (as *bona fide* regimes, regime cluster or loose networks) the rules that govern them tend to offer a power-determined answer to a simple question: Who adjusts? Or rather

⁴⁴ ADLER E. and FAUBERT M., “Epistemic Communities of Practice. Conceptualizing International Practices”, in A. Drieschova, C. Bueger and T. Hopf (eds.), *Conceptualizing International Practices: Directions for the Practice Turn in International Relations*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2022, p. 47-76.

“who should be made to adjust” when the global system requires it in various kinds of circumstances including crisis. So if we are interested in the substance of norms and their consequences for the lives of people, a core focus in the field of global governance should be: How do the norms and rules about ‘who adjusts’ change across issue-areas? How should they change? Who is affecting such change? And according to what principles?

This is of course a question of legitimacy. Given power shifts and the urgent need to ground the legitimacy of transnational governance in order for countries and peoples around the world to sign up to an agenda of responsible interdependence, the rules which determine “who adjusts” need to evolve and sometimes radically change. Asymmetric burdens of adjustment that have been assigned between countries in the post-war era according to their relative power are no longer sustainable. The question of ‘who adjusts?’ was the core object of debate between Keynes and White at Bretton Woods, and sixty-five years later between China and the US at Copenhagen. In the end, most actors assess big principles on consequentialist grounds. Non-western powers are less and less tolerant of rules that cater to western pathologies. This is their message in the G20 attempt to reform the international financial system. To be legitimate, a new grand global bargain must rest on renegotiating the contours of global justice as understood by different actors around the world, including the implications of solidarity beyond borders and the responsibilities it carries.

Examples of “who adjusts” confrontations include:

Producer vs consumers of carbon emissions: part of what is at stake in revisiting the global climate deal is the unfairness of only accounting for our responsibility for carbon emission as

producers – where we do well by exporting production, as opposed to consumers – where our record of adjustment has been dismal. This asymmetry is only very incrementally being redressed.

Creditors vs debtors: The global financial crisis has shown that we need to revisit the Bretton Woods contract which has been imposing the burden of adjustment on deficit countries for the last 60 years, and transfer some of this burden of adjustment to surplus countries. This diagnosis is at the core of what is at stake with questioning the “Washington consensus”

External vs domestic actors: Whether in the economic or security field, we will need to constrain more systematically the allowance for pushing the costs of adjustment onto outsiders, as Germany has done during the euro-crisis, and as the West has done to a great extent in the repeated global financial crisis.

Nuclear vs non-nuclear states: the NPT was supposed to be a balanced bargain between the 5 nuclear states and the rest. But up to now, most of the focus and the responsibility for the stability of the system has been on the non-nuclear (actual or nominal). Nuclear states will need to radically act on their responsibility for both the provision of regional security and denuclearization.

Immigration vs emigration countries: Unsurprisingly, immigration countries have sought to push the burden of adjustment on emigration countries. But the global regime for the movement of people will certainly be revisited in the next

decade. Emigration countries will continue to be asked to shoulder more of the burden to keep people from leaving (or to take them back) while immigration countries will be asked to shoulder more of the burden associated with brain drain. Underlying this question we may ask whether individuals or collectivities will come to share the cost of plugging the skills holes in countries of destination.

There are other such divides which need to be spelled out, including today between rich and poor countries and the direction of capital flows.

Can we imagine a world where the EU invests heavily in rebalancing our global rules of the game to address this question of who adjusts more fairly? Whether the West wants it or not, the answer to the question of “who adjusts?” must change. And hopefully do so in a non-chaotic way. This statement could be grounded in a purely normative argument - that we need to better account for the distributional consequences of global norms, that however justified, analytically and in terms of “public goods” or indeed as translations of conceptions of justice, choices between alternative norms to address a given problem, or choices between ways of framing a problem, involve fundamental distributional consequences. This applies of course, even when collective action can be legitimately depicted as a positive sum game – the pie needs to be shared out even as it grows, and the ways it is shared out cannot be solely determined in technical terms.

But alongside the purely normative argument, we also need to analyse the strategic import of this need to revisit “who adjusts”. In the face of global power shifts, such considerations become strategically crucial. The question here is one for the global north, or

for the countries and populations hitherto favoured, who need to ask themselves whether they should seek to adapt reigning norms before they “lose control.” And the strategic question is also one for the Global South and, within it, those powers and regional organizations that have pursued alternative principles for global governance, justified on such grand grounds as the struggles against zionism, imperialism, neo-colonialism or racism. The challenge of redefining the norms which set out who should be made to adjust in part constitutes a way of *translating* these grand aims and often empty rhetoric (as in devoid of concrete implication) into empirical fact. In this sense, we turn back to transformation within the existing international order.

How then is such an agenda emerging? And, how would we go about sketching its normative contours? One strand of analysis stresses potentials for counter-hegemony *a la Cox* as the basis for an alternative global order without dominance. But dominance is a relative concept. In my view, and following the English school, the issue is not whether there are or will be dominant actors – it is hard to imagine a world without - but whether dominant actors might exercise their power responsibly in ways that are perceived as fair and therefore legitimate by all actors concerned, and consequently involve widespread participation. But counter-hegemony fails to capture the incremental nature of change at the global level. A new global grand bargain towards responsible interdependence will not be struck in one blow. It will need not only to *reflect* power shifts but also to *mitigate* power asymmetries at the same time. The actors which have shaped “western hegemony” since World War II will need to learn to share the playing field. This does not mean however that the world needs to undergo the kind of “hegemonic war” said to be

associated with international power transition.⁴⁵ Instead, engagement and accommodation can go a long way in preventing the drift from soft to hard conflict.

Unfortunately, even for some of the more enlightened leaders, the question arises as to whether the West, which still largely shapes the international system, should progressively accommodate or even anticipate power transitions. To be sure questions abound: will this accommodation and anticipation happen through a new grand bargain around recognition and distribution or a set of small bargains struck around changing ideas on “who adjusts” across areas? Should reformers anticipate and sequence reforms, or conduct them in parallel and balance concessions between them? How will these various “who adjusts” questions be addressed and linked?

Is it that complicated? Countries in the global south, both emerging powers and lagers, assess and negotiate over their interests when it comes to re-framing answers to the question of “who adjusts” or rather “who should adjust”. Which countries, which actors, state and non-state, are likely to be the catalysts of such normative negotiations? Europeans will simply need better to learn to watch, listen, and, when they can, support. Given the fact that many of the emerging powers will remain relatively poor countries in the next couple of decades (per capita), their assessment of the implications of linked global and local responsibilities will certainly continue to be grounded on global distributive grounds. How these translate into both global norms and domestic distributive bargains (*qui bono* within countries) may or may not be part of the equation. Global rules affect the distribution of adaptation costs to the various changes that we face by setting expectations as to which categories

⁴⁵ GILPIN R., “*The theory of hegemonic war*”, in *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 18(4), 1988, p. 591-613.

of actors ought to bear the cost of adjustment. How do countries or groups who find themselves on the losing side of this equation, frame and reframe their case for change?

We cannot tell yet whether the process of transformation is to be evolutionary or revolutionary, a re-ordering or counter-ordering of global order, whether change will be linear or discontinuous, or what kind of ruptures we will witness. It may be the case that emerging powers cannot at this stage fundamentally change the existing norms and rules as to who adjusts. But they are already challenging them and, in doing so, undermining hitherto Western dominance in defining the international rules of the game. The rest of the world needs to take note and adjust the rules of the game if it is not going to give up on the whole edifice of global governance.

While some have argued that emerging countries' use of their voice opportunities built into post-war institutions destabilise the global order because they push their preferred policies, I argue that on the contrary the contestation of substantive bargains and finding ways of accommodating legitimation challenges to make them fairer are themselves the best way to secure sustainable procedural multilateralism.

To be sure, different states and other actors around the world will read such developments differently on a spectrum between simple correctives to the current deficiencies of the multilateral order in accommodating their demand all the way to an alternative normative horizon. Maybe recognition will extent to agreeing to disagree on whether such change is a change *within* or *of* system. What matters is whether a regional sub-order like the EU – and other regional groupings- can help to adjust the multilateral normative horizon and translate a procedural goal – a more inclusive multilat-

eralism – into a substantive goal – fairer distributive bargains. Such an evolution would truly be revolutionary.

Some in the EEAS say to me that it is now too late, the train has left the station. But it is never too late is it? When faced with this ambitious challenge, we Europeans cannot react by hunkering down and retrenching our societies behind security walls. Instead our societies can and must be ready to radically share power and prosperity with societies in the Global South towards a fairer distribution of the costs and benefits of our double green and digital transitions. And consider that with time, this will be reciprocal.

CITIZEN POWER EUROPE CAN BE OUR NEW REALIST UTOPIA

The broad transformative ambitions for global governance sketched above lead us back to the democratic geopolitics laid out at the beginning, with the question as to why it would be credible for the EU to pursue such an agenda. While it remains the most advanced experiment in transnational governance in the world, the EU's own current political landscape is far from exemplary. In pondering the rise of the radical right in Europe, the High Representative has talked about the difficult cocktail of internal and external challenges which has led a significant part of the citizenry to put its trust in providential leaders. If all global politics is local, European countries must exhibit the domestic underpinnings for healthy and sustainable cooperation beyond the state. Even if it is too simplistic to oppose democracies and autocracies, the stakes are higher than ever in demonstrating that domestic democratic politics make for more sustainable global politics.

This is a difficult challenge. Recent polls show that 53% of Europeans under 30 believe that autocratic regimes are better placed to

deal with the climate crisis than democratic ones, given their ability to act authoritatively and rapidly.⁴⁶

How then can we demonstrate Europe's capacity act as a laboratory for democratic resilience in the face of transnational challenges?

One could argue that the images of Xi Jinping's 20th Communist Party congress in 2022, boasting 2300 delegates assembled in stern silence demonstrate more vividly than any abstract reasoning the failure of the Chinese leadership in drawing on the collective intelligence of its people. It is this fundamental point that our democracies are better at mobilising collective intelligence in order to maximise our adaptability and crowdsource solutions to our various predicaments, which will give us the edge in the years to come.

The diagnosis starts with the informational virtue of vote-fetching but does not stop there. Indeed, in the last two or three years, the EU has more decisively than ever sought to deepen its democratic functioning in particular through the conference on the future of Europe and its follow up. Throughout the continent, citizens' assemblies made-up of randomly selected citizens are being called upon with greater frequency at local, national and transnational level in various configurations and hopefully will be institutionalised in the years to come.⁴⁷

There are still many flaws and blind spots in this democratic transformation. But I believe that the idea and the ideal of "Citizen Power Europe" ought to be at the heart of the EU's geopolitical iden-

⁴⁶ GARTON ASH T. and ZIMMERMANN A., "In Crisis, Europeans Support Radical Positions", in *Eupinions*, March 2020.

⁴⁷ See for instance ALEMANNI A. and NICOLAIDIS K., "Citizen Power Europe", in A. Alemanni and P. Sellal, *The Groundwork of European Power, Revue Européenne du Droit*, 3, 2022.

tity. On our end, we can only support resilient democracies elsewhere and the democratisation of multilateralism by leading (or following) through example thanks to our own democratic resilience. Democratic collective intelligence will mean that we learn better to manage the triangle between representative, deliberative and direct democracy so as make the EU a trailblazer in democracy by lottery as practiced in the ancient world. Which means, perhaps above all, that citizens will more credibly own the trade-offs involved with devising policies for the long-term. In this perspective, what we can call a “democratic panopticon” will check the drift to corruption and nepotism prevalent in a number of member states by leveraging on the counter-surveillance potential of the internet.⁴⁸ People involved in deliberative journeys tend to become less polarised through confronting their views with those of others “like them.”⁴⁹ Ultimately democratic deliberation allows to tap in people’s deep ambivalence about the issues of our time, and thus push back against the polarised politics of right-wing populism.⁵⁰

Democratic geopolitics also means that public diplomacy ought to be about exercising diplomacy in public not about selling diplomacy to the public. “Popular geopolitics” is about how geopolitical knowledge is produced not only by the state and intellectual elites

⁴⁸ See inter alia GARDELS N. and BERGGRUEN N., *Renovating democracy: Governing in the age of globalization and digital capitalism*, University of California Press, 2019; NICOLAÏDIS K., “The democratic Panopticon”, in *Noema Magazine*, 6 July 2021, [accessed 5 May 2023, <https://www.noemamag.com/the-democratic-panopticon/>].

⁴⁹ GARDELS N., “The Climate of Democracy. Inviting the broader civil society into governance can cool the polarized political atmosphere and lead to effective action”, in *Noema Magazine*, 7 April 2023, [accessed 5 May 2023, <https://www.noemamag.com/the-climate-of-democracy/>].

⁵⁰ NICOLAÏDIS K., “In praise of ambivalence-another Brexit story”, in *Journal of European integration*, 42(4), 18 May 2020, p. 465-488.

but also through popular culture and everyday practices⁵¹. This was, after all, Machiavelli's message, that a republic must be owned and defended by its citizens.

The democratic dimension of geopolitics thus covers the inter-relation between a polity's own democratic 'powerbase' and the way it deals with the democratic implication of externalising its own rules (see part 2). Citizen Power Europe implies an acute awareness of the potential democratic domination involved with others finding themselves in the orbit of a rule-making planet like the EU. Interdependence in general and differentiated integration in particular is bound to lead to some degree of democratic incongruence, namely a disjunction between those who take decisions and those affected by them, or between the boundaries of rule-accountability and the boundaries of rule-applicability. The EU needs to guard against the ways in which, under certain conditions, such incongruence becomes domination.⁵²

But we should not throw out the 'differentiation' baby with the spectre of 'democratic dominance' bathwater. Strategies are available for ensuring greater democratic congruence, which can take shape at the global level as well as with EU third countries - from institutionalising the influence of others at our table to providing channels for democratic accommodation around norm diffusion in other polities.

Last but not least, Citizen Power Europe calls for revisiting the EU's democratic promotion agenda by reversing the gaze – asking what we can learn from how others regions or countries, including

⁵¹ Dodds K., "Popular geopolitics", in *Geopolitics: A Very Short Introduction*, 2nd ed., Oxford, (coll. "Very Short Introductions"), 2014.

⁵² See NICOLAIDIS, 2021, *op cit.*, n 42.

indigenous people, exercise democracy, mediation, sustainability.⁵³ As the oldest regional organization, it is no surprise that mechanisms for democratic participation in decision-making are among the most strongly developed in the EU. But the fact that other places have constitutionalised some form of democracy after us – such as the constitutional pluralism we find in South Africa or Latin America – can inspire the EU in turn. Indeed, the EU could be more attuned to the ways in which SADC or Mercosur for instance channel non-state actor participation to provide input into the formulation and oversees implementation of regional policies at the domestic level to ensure the legitimacy and effectiveness of regional policies. Various organizations in Latin America have institutionalised the consultative status of societal actors that go beyond the usual suspects we know from the EU, such as parliamentarians, labour and business, etc. Mercosur, for example, has a consultative forum comprised of the various subnational levels of government such as municipalities, provinces and departments. This is somewhat akin to the EU’s Committee of the Regions but casts its net wider in terms of governmental tiers. The Andean Committee also has a consultative forum of municipalities as well as one of indigenous people. All of these are attempts to bring regional cooperation closer to the people, and in quite innovative ways. Also relevant here is the fact that several regional organizations have democratic clauses that are more detailed and elaborate than in the EU.

In regions where democracy appears to be more fragile, and yet member states are in principle committed to it, supranational guardianship is often institutionalised more strongly than in the EU.

⁵³ NICOLAIDIS K. and YOUNGS R., “Reversing the Gaze: Can the EU Import Democracy from Others?”, in *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 2023, [accessed 5 May 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcms.13477>].

In Mercosur, securing the transitions to democracy through external hand-tying was an explicit goal of the organization from the start.

Reversing the democratic gaze will surely need to become a core imperative of a Citizen Power Europe committed to post-colonial powerhood- which means “following by example” other Citizen Powers – Citizen Power Latin America, Citizen Power Africa, Citizen Power Asia. Co-designing and co-creating a new world order with countries in Global South calls for a shared ambition and support for democratic reform everywhere.

A STRATEGIC EUROPE IS A “NEXTGEN EU”

The ideal of Citizen Power Europe takes us back in turn to where we started, the power of democratic imagination and in this space the need to ask, whose imaginings ought to inspire our institutions. I share the High Representative’s enthusiasm for taboo-breaking decisions in Europe, starting with the so-called *next-generation recovery fund*, a first step for a shared capacity to borrow by the member states in the wake of COVID. For if we took this logic to its ultimate conclusion, should we not ask with the so-called “next generation”: If we borrowed in their name, and spend it in their name, should they not have a say?

And indeed, should Europeans not be even more ambitious by asking its elders to be even more humble? As the EU takes on the traits of maturity, can we not imagine a “youth chameleon EU”, “NextGen EU”, or “GenZ EU”, an EU that will take on the look and feel of the next generation? This was my answer to the burning question we asked last year at the EU’s State of the Union: Is Europe fit for the next generation? To be sure, I don’t claim to offer a scientific take, or

speak in their name, but I have tried to listen and weave for myself an impressionistic story to ground my call for a GenZ Europe.⁵⁴

If some of them, especially GenZ, call themselves “the last generation” terminology, this is not a desperate death call but a passionate wake up call. A call based on rational, reasonable and justifiable fear as Uwe Bott put it recently. The last generation is globally aware and their call existential, in the face of a planet in irreversible decline. Their only question, like ours is how long it will take to come to irreversible the tipping point. This is why, in power, they will be doers, not preachers.

And they will invent better methods to be so. NextGen EU starts with the faces and the digital fingers we offer to the rest of the world. The EU should not present itself to the world as a project driven by disembodied states and supranational institutions but as an arena in which all generations contest their countries’ and Europe’s place in the world. Let us make no mistake, those who belong to Gen Z, born with the millennium, are not too young to get the essence of multilateralism. Social multilateralism is in their DNA, as they take part in exchanges across 3, 4, 5 threads at once with different protagonists on different registers. They are experts in the politics of recognition, as their software instructs a sort of casual tolerance (OK at their best!), not even about putting themselves in the shoes of others *a la Ricoeur*, just about creating the common ground where everyone feels comfortable in their own shoes.

As a result, NextGen EU I believe would go a long way in addressing the Borrell Paradox. On the humility side, let’s face it, they are not consumed by Europe as we were, not inclined to swap nationalism of the old kind for Euronationalism. Europe for them is more

⁵⁴ See [accessed 5 May 2023, <https://youtu.be/JO-2YdkF9vE>]. Gen. Z EU: Decarbonise, Democratise, Decolonise! #EUI2022.

a means to two ends: the local and the global. They show a healthy scepticism, when reacting to the idea that the EU must use its multi-lateral model to “fight for peace”. They just about buy the Eurospeak that the European Peace Facility was used for the first time to buy arms for Ukraine. But why they ask, before the Ukraine war, did the elders keep repeating that Europe as a peace project is a thing of the past, that it needs a new *raison d’être* because the young take peace in Europe for granted?! ...Haven’t we grown up seeing kids our age blown up to pieces from Bagdad to the Bataclan!? Aren’t you handing out to us a world of AI enabled weapons and outer space wars?

And they also, and rightly, ask – peace for whom anyway? Peace for our extended neighbourhood to whom we have subcontracted the management of our borders and often exported instability? Is Europe’s “peace” not borrowed from the rest of the world? Is not our precious free movement predicated on raising fences against it - in contrast with low barriers to tainted energy and clothing imports?

For NextGen seems not to grasp Judith Shklar’s liberal hypocrisy, the necessary unavoidable distance between aspiration and reality. And yet, to act as a liberal power in today’s world is to grapple with this aporia. Contrary to stereotypes, the under 30s are, in fact, dismantling the traditional definition of politics to focus on the public sphere and its power, leading transnational justice movements and shifting the terrain of conversation with politicians.⁵⁵ By doing so they are exploring innovative ways in which institutions and governments can better deliver.

⁵⁵ HESZTERÉNYI R., “Europe’s Youth is far from apolitical”, in *EUI Transnational democracyblog*, 22 November 2022, [accessed 5 May 2023, <https://blogs.eui.eu/transnational-democracy/europes-youth-is-not-apolitical/>].

Yet they are not angelic. Their ingredients for the illusive peace recipe includes nurturing relational boundaries. They may think one planet, one fate but they don't worship borderlessness. In fact their familiarity with boundaries is more intimate than ours as they manage theirs with extreme care, boundaries that, crucially, must be affirmed or discarded on reciprocal terms. In their world, unilateralism tends to be a last resort.

For them the desirable transformation of "world order" tends to chime with the High Representative's call for pursuing the feminine or, even better, feminist kind, where fitness measures do not conform to Olympic league tables – my medal/gdp/missile is bigger than yours! ~~Their~~ agenda which we can call 'decolonise 2.0' would do much to rebrand the EU in the global south. They tend to feel shame at the West's own relative immunity and ethnocentric solidarity - when the rest of the world feels the shockwaves emanating from the Eurocentric peace bubble. Sometimes they reject all together the "being humble" talk for being courageous enough to face the world without our club card. They also see how others care about consistency which means that Europe should decolonise inside too, give voice to the kids of immigrants, de-index west to whiteness... yes talk about race.

NextGen EU also means acknowledging that modernity is a global co-creation, all the connected local struggles of the youth around the world, victimised by the greed of strong men that Europe indulges. It means disentangling the Western Transatlantic bond from the precious universal invocation of liberté, libertad, Huriya, Dziyoo. And it means hearing the rest of the world. Come and join us! Embrace your decolonial moment. You won't know what you will miss if you don't.

For our local, national and global institutions must empower young people not just in the EU but around the world to take more responsibility for co-creating a just and sustainable future. Crucially, the EU needs to support this imperative in its “Southern Neighbourhood” and beyond to the African continent, turning the perceived threat to social stability of the so-called “youth bulge” into an opportunity for driving radical reform. The Youth should not wait no longer to be so, to hold the reigns of power.

In sum, next Gen EU would mean helping to retool transnational governance to serve the global south, nurturing tech for Peace and a cosmopolitics of life embracing the kind of planetary politics called for by 2 billion young people around the world. If the youth were to become the EU’s faces of the world, their geopolitics of recognition would also be about food, music and art galore. They would erase the pain I continue to encounter around the world of not being seen by Europeans, and they would know when to say nothing, just be there and listen.

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Synthesis and proposals

JOSEP BORRELL AND MARIO TELÒ

Here below is the outcome of an almost impossible exercise: trying to summarise the forty months of the BIC conference cycle of five questions, five research axes, problematic threads, five perceptions affecting convergences and divergences in the development of a common EU strategic culture.

IS THE EU STILL AN ECONOMIC GIANT?

We started in October 2021 by discussing the socio-economic foundations of the external relations and foreign policy of a geopolitical power.

In 2021 we were in a more optimistic period. External relations and foreign policy depend on socioeconomic strength and the EU looked like an economic giant. In 2022? At what point are we with the implementation of the extraordinary decisions of the Covid plan, the recovery fund of 750 Billion, and the Green Digital deal?

What about 2022? What about the implementation of the Recovery plan, according to the time-schedule? Is the energy crisis a Damocles sword or a further leverage for EU unity? How does it affect foreign policy and the strategic autonomy of the EU?

The speakers disputed about whether we were still competing in division A with China and the USA, or in division B with minor powers. We are actually ambitious: not only do we want to defend

our model which is, according to the philosopher Jurgen Habermas, the very soul of EU, but we also seek to shape globalisation according to our values and standards. Is this “Brussels effect” still realistic in shaping external regulation or is the EU way variously challenged by alternative ways like those of China and US?

Furthermore, regarding cyber security, we deepened this fundamental issue by discussing the progress of the EU in becoming a digital power (with Heisman and Tiirmaa-Klaar) not only resisting cyberattacks, but also setting global standards. The two speakers pleaded in favour of the EU as a digital power. And the example of the recent attack on the Parliament after the declaration of Russia as a “country supporting terror”, is indeed a sign of fragility.

Are we still playing a three-player game? President Macron argued last week that the EU is at risk of playing the “dependent variable” between the bipartisan US protectionism (see the recent Biden subsidizing plan) and China’s protectionism. Does the EU play in the same division as the USA and China or, as argued in Oxford by John Mearsheimer (head of the American realist school of thought), has its place as the third actor of a multipolar world been taken over by Russia and does it play in Division B? The answer by Borrell is very clear on both points. We still are playing in division A, and certainly Russia is no credible economic challenger; but on the condition of multiplying our endeavours, in energy policy first and in all technological fields: the energy crisis, the budgetary control and facing US protectionism are the main challenges. US protectionism is a major problem, and we cannot react through a single decision because while they are one country, we are 27 decision makers, and their energy is 4 times cheaper.

However, we are still competing in division A and progress in energy policy is evident.

COPING WITH INTERNAL DIVERSITIES

Karen Smith (LSE), G. Grevi and others discussed the question of how to cope with the resilient internal diversities. Karen follows the school of thought of Stanley Hoffman (1966, at the time of the “empty chair” crisis): national diversities matter and will matter for ever in the EU. K. Smith questions the success of the “Brussellisation process” and pleads in favour of the revival of the rotating presidencies. Borrell’s answer is that the plaidoyers for an immediate federation are not an answer, even as national diversities are not static but evolving with the time and the integration process. He has regular experience with the Council of foreign affairs and the abuse of the veto right, not only by Hungary in the case of Russian sanctions. As 27 MS we need three realistic layers of convergence: the first is values, the second is economic convergence and the third is foreign policy. Against the static idea of the unchangeable nature of European national sovereign divergences, also Grevi and Balfour argued in favour of new flexible ways of differentiated integration, through treaty reform, and Gnesotto for the construction of the EU as a geopolitical hyperpower.

COPING WITH INTERNATIONAL DIVERSITIES

Borrell insisted that we increasingly live in a non-European world (5% of the global 8 billion). The second types of obstacles towards a common strategic culture are the inevitable outcomes of the deepening of global diversities affecting geopolitical dialogues and economic interdependence, as well as the different internal perception by EU MS. These diversities are not always against multilateralism: we expect evidence of Lula commitments for example.

China was the main object of debate and controversy. Telò underlines that in 2021-22 we were very close to a new Cold War. Recently, the Xi Jinping Congress victory occurred in parallel with uprising and revolt against the COVID policy (12 cities): he must concede pragmatic reforms and flexibility in a context of no exit strategy and a declining growth rate. However, at the same time, we have witnessed the Bali G20 summit, the visit of Charles Michel, following the German delegation led by Olaf Scholz, events which are looking as potential leverage for a more independent political stance of Xi Jinping (who never mentioned Putin in his two hour long Congress speech). Borrell is very prudent about these parallel changes which confirm however that China is indeed a necessary multilateral partner and not only a competitor and a rival. China defends a model of society and politics which is an alternative to democracy.

Prof. Thomas Meyer, in his speech, wished for the conditions for a multidimensional dialogue to be restored, first because we need China for multilateral challenges, notably environment and biodiversity protection. Second, because according to him and the two female discussants – Wei Ling and U. Salma Bava – there is not much else on the horizon as an efficient alternative way to profoundly change the near and far abroad, and notably China, than the very successful “Willy Brand method” characteristic of the Ost-Politik, that is cooperation for change (*Wandel durch Annäherung*).

The second external diversity we focused on is the Mediterranean. Energy and migration oblige both parts to a better and new partnership including education and foreign policy. Prof. Filiu returned from Gaza, troubled by the 250 dead of this year: he concluded by inviting cooperation, but also to combine it with our power and conditionality for a tougher position (democratic elec-

tions). For Borrell cooperation in oil and migration and notably for containing Turkey and Russia is the priority.

THE WAR

On February 24th the unthinkable happened. The war pushes the diversities to the extreme: 77 years after the end of WW2 a member of the UN Security Council was not only responsible for open violation of international law but also for occupation of foreign territories, and is committing 20th-century-style massacres of civilians. Nobody was expecting such Russian aggression. Thanks to Borrell's leadership, the EU, a civilian power, was able so far to contain a military and nuclear power without direct military confrontation. Someone in the public discussion defended the idea of NATO responsibility which Borrell firmly rejects. Furthermore, Russia has gone too far with massacres, occupation of foreign territory and indiscriminate destruction, to make negotiation realistic in the short and medium term. According to Borrell the expectations for peace in the foreseeable future are very low unfortunately, which is also confirmed by the well-informed Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Thanks to Borrell's leadership, the EU and NATO were able to support Ukraine in a very efficient way: Borrell remembered that the EU made progress in defence policy. The Versailles Council and the Strategic Compass constitute limited but historical steps towards a defence policy.

However, the EU carries on its shoulders the economic weight of the war not only because of the energy crisis: internal divisions and controversies are for the High Representative an everyday challenge.

Borrell addresses the questions of how long we can resist as a united EU. How can we motivate domestic public opinion in the EU to continue their support for the defensive war? How can the so-called "good empire" of the future, an EU geopolitical hyperpower, contain

the revival of the imperialism of the past. And concretely, what wise piece of advice can be offered to Zelensky from the EU-USA?

EU AND MULTILATERALISM

We closed the cycle with two sessions focusing on the EU and multilateralism. The multilateral system has never been so troubled since the Korean War: a relevant UNSC member, with veto right, is violating all the main international rules. Multilateralism is under challenge. Borrell underlines that the EU foreign policy is profoundly interconnected with multilateralism as is well argued in his papers of 2021 and 2022: Reinforcing the UN system is our priority.

Our debate combined the idealistic attractiveness of the “Europe of citizens and democracy” perspective with the solid leverage relaunched by Pascal Lamy: The EU may be the driver of a new comprehensive understanding of global trade. A global trade – added the discussant Amandine Orsini – which must include essential very strict environmental criteria. But we are victims of protectionism, policies of division and isolation. The status quo is not an option; what we need is a more binding, legitimate and efficient multilateralism, promoting the role of regional entities like the EU. Which reform of the UN is regarded by the EU as a realistic priority? Which reform of the multilateral network looks both urgent and possible to the EU? Borrell is very clear: education should be the first UN commitment, notably in Africa and not only for demographic reasons but also to contain neo-liberal economic policies.

Telò concludes with a realistic support of the EU shared strategic culture: multilateralism is alive. While several thousand people are unfortunately involved in wars in Ukraine, Yemen, Rwanda, a hundred times more are involved in multilateral cooperation in so many civilian policy fields: everyday thousands of people work for multilateral solutions at global and regional levels. We have recently

had COP 27 in Sharm-El-Sheik, the Montreal conference on Biodiversity, the G-20 in Bali; furthermore, the UN Secretary General looked for room to manoeuvre also in Ukraine (food and nuclear-plants security). Antonio Guterres is working on a new “Global deal” for 2023. The EU commitment to a new multilateralism, more legitimate, better constraining and based on dynamic regions (AU, EU, ASEAN MERCOSUR), is not an isolated utopia but is a possible scenario for the human being of the XXI century. The competition between war and multilateral cooperation is still very open.

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