

# Trans-Atlantic relations and world governance

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After Hiroshima, Einstein famously warned that «[...] everything has changed, except the way we think». The same could be said nowadays, as we pick up the pieces of both 11/9 (the fall of the Berlin Wall) and 9/11. The financial crisis has now conclusively proven that the world is indeed ‘flat’, tightly interconnected. The situation is not as chaotic as it appears; a new territory maybe insufficiently explored, but not uncharted. The playing field has become much wider, and the stakes have increased for everybody, big and small. The signposts may have shifted, but the basic parameters are still there, all the more valid on a global scale. The debate is about practical priorities, well beyond the long-standing theoretical seesaw between top-down idealists and bottom-up realists, in a borderless, ‘liquid’, world.

## A ‘post-modern’ world

In the twenty years since the Soviet Union unravelled, the international community has gone through a prolonged transitional phase, tentative, basically experimental. A wit observed that «[...] the Wall came down and we all went shopping», assuming (with Fukuyama) that things would eventually sort themselves out, under the ‘invisible hand’ of History. That was before the attack on the Twin Towers sowed confusion. Since then, we still need to focus on the essentials. We are in the midst of a ‘post-modern’ (i.e. post-Westphalian) situation, with intergovernmental relations in some disarray. Instead of the previous clear-cut arithmetic formulas of the East-West nuclear balance of power, algebraic political equations have emerged, comprising many unknowns and variables, indicating at best a trend.

Additionally, in our crowded planet in a hurry («[...] full of sound and fury», as Shakespeare would have said), rising expectations and the ensuing disappointments contribute to a widespread bewilderment and rebelliousness. The authority of States, in their constitutional role as organisers and protectors of national communities, and that only legitimate wielders of force, is dwarfed by novel transnational threats beyond their grasp, such as international organised crime, illicit trafficking, mass migrations, while energy and commodity prices fluctuate out of control, and climate change threatens the planet. International

organisations themselves have consequently gone out of their way (out of area), in the performance of new tasks that overstretch their capabilities and erode their very credibility.

International law has altered significantly. Power-politics are not conclusive anymore. Nor are wars, which have lost their heroic aura, and are inadequate instruments for conflict-resolution, in the presence of widespread civil strife and terrorism, oozing out of dysfunctional States. The very concept of a just war has apparently lost its meaning. The time-honoured principles of national sovereignty and territorial integrity have been eroded by a yet ill-defined right/duty of international interferences in the domestic affairs of sovereign States. International accountability (the responsibility to protect) and the appropriate relationship between legitimacy and legality have become the overriding issues. Inter-governmentally, nowadays the main challenges result not so much from the head-on confrontations of yore, but instead essentially from the consequences of failed, failing or outright rogue States (the latter disputing the very existence of common rules). A situation that has given rise to humanitarian interventions aimed at restoring law and order, and institution-building at the intra-national level. Dispelling the lingering accusations of neo-colonialism and war-mongering, such an international 'constabulary' role shown however increasing signs of wear and tear. So far, the international community has reacted to emergencies as they occurred, in a patchwork 'fire-fighting' pattern, rather than interacting with them as a 'neighbourhood watch' would do. Best practices and codes of conduct have become pragmatic substitutes for the new shared rules that the intervening international situation would instead call for.

In present circumstances, we should therefore revert to the Socratic method that anchors Western civilisation, according to which asking the right questions is more relevant than providing the right answers. More than on individual events as they occur, we ought to concentrate on the big picture, particularly on the most relevant omissions, on what should happen and doesn't. With the demise of the Cold War, we should essentially revisit the rules of the game established at the end of World War II, when Fdr and Truman revived Wilson's international liberalism and imposed on a severely battered world a cooperative security system replacing the centuries-old balance of forces mechanisms. The Un and the European Community constituted the most immediate tangible results, with more elaborate European regional arrangements, such as the Csce and the European Union, eventually following suit. Decolonisation was another dramatic spin-off, ushering in a new, radically different, era in international relations.

The apparently free-for-all state of international affairs that resulted from the demise of the Cold War has given rise to misgivings about the broader applicability of what is essentially a Western model, harking back to the political philosophers of the Enlightenment. What needs to be argued, however, is not the supposed moral superiority of such values, but instead that they best accommodate the common interests that have emerged with globalisation. The world at large should consider

not so much Kant's ideal perpetual peace, but rather Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill's utilitarian arguments, reaching out to a rules-based system of inter-State relations ensuring some sort of governance among the intervening very many States and non-State international actors. Not an ever-elusive world order (vertical, hierarchical), but a result-oriented network (horizontal, participatory), as befits our 'e-world' is what should emerge, based not on uniform behaviour but on the convergence and compatibility of the most diverse contributions towards a common focal point. In other words, a result-oriented approach. An aim that should now inspire the would-be architects designers of a much-needed multilateral structure (not of the 'multipolar' kind that some call for, which would instead reinstate the balance of power logic on a bigger, more ominous scale).

### The European Union experience

It could be argued that globalisation has finally caught up with the European Union, the only actually post-modern actor that, with all its contradictions, many describe it as a place more than a real thing. Even after the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, Washington is still looking for its telephone number, as it strives to move on from the euro-space it has so far quite effectively been, and become a euro-power. A prospect that remains somewhat beyond the horizon, leading some to describe disparagingly Europe as Venus, and America as Mars (as if there was something inherently wrong with that: Homer and Ovidius, as well as many a painter, have recorded the very amorous, if adulterous, relationship between the two gods). As a matter of fact, in present-day crisis-prevention and crisis-management operations, the civil-military soft security approach has gradually emerged as an indispensable complement to hard security measures. Both America and Europe should indeed benefit from each other's complementarities, both within and without Nato.

Europe's unification has progressed gradually, painstakingly, by accretion, according to the bottom-up Monnet approach. Functionalists and institutionalists have been arguing with each other ever since. Occasionally, in response to external jolts, the integration process has ratcheted forward (with the Suez and Hungarian crises in 1956; the Prag crisis of 1968; the Kippur war in 1973; and the dismantling of the Soviet Union in the early '90s). Which indicates that, politically, the Union is basically a demand-driven institution. With the Berlin Wall tumbling down, Europeans, awe-struck and wary, scrambled to rearrange the «common house» that Presidents Gorbachev and Bush agreed over their heads to restore «whole and free». Since then, emerging from under the protection of the Atlantic Alliance, the Union has undeniably grown in stature, significance and influence, both outwards with its enlargement and neighbourhood projections Eastwards and Southwards, as well as inwards, sharpening along the way its own decision-taking mechanisms.

At first unable to intervene decisively to contain the tragic consequences of the collapse of the Yugoslav Federation, bureaucratically slower than Nato in absorbing the States that emerged from the Soviet bloc, the European Union,

according to the Maastricht Treaty (the Teu) of 1992, gradually established a Common Foreign and Security Policy (Cfsp) and a European Security and Defence Policy (Esdp), that resulted in a huge enlargement of its membership, to 25 (the 'big bang') then to 27 (and counting...), a development that threw a few spanners in the deepening of the integration process. The Eu Amsterdam and Nice Treaties of 1997 and 2000 reformed both the Rome and Maastricht Treaties, while the Laeken Declaration of 2001 *On the future of Europe* looked ahead, admitting to the urgent need of streamlining the Brussels machinery. Which thus became more coherent and efficient, as well as more transparent and accountable to the citizenry, in particular through subsidiarity, which implies the handing back to national and local administrations the functions that do not require a central direction anymore.

A Constitutional Convention was finally set in motion, with the broadest possible participation, comprising representatives not only of governments, but of all of the other possible strands of national civil societies, including even all candidate States. A text was meticulously produced, and solemnly signed in Rome on the very hall where the 1957 founding Treaties had been underwritten. With the replacement of all previous Treaties, the Union would have acquired a clearer political identity and streamlined its decision-making mechanisms, with a 30-month Chairman replacing the rotating national Presidencies' semesters and a Foreign Policy High Representative, doing away with the compartmentalised structure (Commission vs Council; three pillars, respectively economic, foreign policy and home affairs), and increasing majority voting as well as the co-decision of the European Parliament. A Charter of Fundamental Rights and a consolidated text of previous norms (the *acquis*) would have completed this new and improved comprehensive Treaty.

It was never meant to be the completion of the never-ending European construction site, only the evolution of the species. But some capitals found it necessary to submit it to popular referenda, which surprisingly backfired in two of the Eu founding members demonstrating the vagaries of direct democracy. A Reform Treaty, hastily put together in Lisbon, patched things up preserving the substance while doing away with many formal trappings.

Any aspiring protagonist on the international scene is recognized as such not by what it claims to be, but by what it actually delivers and the specific responsibilities it undertakes. In these truly pioneering times, the fittest will blaze the trail; institutions will eventually follow: this is how, from time immemorial, international law and foreign policies were moulded. The Eu's constitutive shared sovereignty makes it the only true-believer in multilateralism; all of the others international actors (not only the much-blamed Usa) showing off unilateralist tendencies that respond primarily to their respective self-interest. The European Security Strategy of 2003, reviewed in 2008, has nailed the Eu colours to the effective multilateralism mast. But Europe's body language is still not right and will hardly be convincing until its declaratory statements are sustained by a more focused political vision and a sharper sense of direction on specific issues.

On the institutional side of things, the Lisbon Reform Treaty finally streamlines the decision-making mechanisms, establishes a common capping of the Commission and Council machineries, and allows for more flexibility and transparency, all of which should improve the visibility, credibility and effectiveness of the Union, and therefore enable it to show its mettle.

## The European Common Foreign and Security Policies

In any case, the Union continues to provide a force multiplier to each member State, a pole of prosperity and stability at the disposal of its neighbours, and hopefully an inspiration for other countries in transition, world-wide. The Georgian conflict and the financial crisis have again demonstrated that in times of need the European Union is willing and able to act. Relying on the soft power of its social and economic integration (while the Us-led Nato continues to allow it to save on defence expenditures), the Eu accounts for 1/4 of the world's Gdp and international trade, and contributes most of development aid. Yet, on the international scene the Eu cannot continue to behave like an old-fashioned *débutante* waiting to be asked, shying away from taking the initiative, sheltering behind a flower arrangement of statements of principle and other common positions. Among the 27, no lead-country stands out, not even the two permanent members of the Security Council; no privileged relationship seems able or willing to exist anymore. Instead, occasionally, variable geometries and multi-speeds spring up. The constraints of the two by now usual external terms of reference, the Us and Russia, therefore persist.

The slow progress of the European juggernaut has become more obvious at 27, in the presence of an accelerating string of events, urging it to interact rather than simply reacting (particularly since Nato has overstretched much beyond Europe). The Lisbon reform should turn the Eu political hybrid into the additional international actor that the present state of the world clamours for. Present circumstances indicate that the Eu cannot sit it out any longer. It must project a more convincing political vision and play a more active role, particularly at the European continental level. After years of benign neglect of its own inner identity and political ambitions, it's a more focused vision of itself, rather than neatly drawn-out institutions, that Europe needs to acquire. Not only in order to project a more decisive influence internationally, but also to restore a more coherent unity of purpose to trans-Atlantic relations, the indispensable precondition for the re-establishment of an acceptable international system. Only then could the Us and Nato afford to take a step back, away from their present over-exposure.

The agenda is clearly set out for them. The first and foremost task is to address the unresolved intra-state conflicts and failing States, with their sub-regional destabilising effects. Such crisis-management emergencies are not only along the fault-lines in the remote lands of Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, North Korea, Somalia, but also in the immediate European neighbourhoods of the Mediterranean (including the 'greater Middle East'), the Balkans, and the 'belt of common

contiguity' that has emerged between Russia and the enlarged EU: from the precarious truces of Kosovo and Bosnia, all the way to Moldova and the Caucasus. All of which constitute the breeding grounds for terrorism, uncontrolled migration flows, widespread lawlessness (even piracy!), organised crime and religious extremism, not to speak of Wmd proliferation. A very volatile situation compounded by the conundrums of international finance, trade, energy and climate-change.

The European integration process has been spectacularly achieved in the economic field, with the single market and single currency. A freedom, security and justice space was also established, which includes free circulation of people (in the Schengen space) and an interconnected judicial system (with common data bases and a European arrest warrant), in fields that until 9/11 were deemed to be the innermost preserve of national sovereignty. Foreign and security policies will however remain the prerogative of individual States. There is nothing very wrong with that as, with international equations more than ever in perpetual flux, foreign policy does not lend itself to pre-established contingency planning, and will therefore remain inherently intergovernmental, subject to ad hoc coalitions («[...] the mission will define the coalition», as Rumsfeld used to say).

High expectations about an eventual European Common Security and Defence Policy (Csdp) could therefore prove self-delusional. The Eu will never turn into a peace-enforcing instrument. The Helsinki Council of 1999 established the creation of battle-groups of up of 60,000 soldiers (since then reduced to a 15,000 rapid-reaction force), a Military Committee and a Defence Agency, designed to identify operational defense requirements and promote the relevant headline goals. Twelve missions operate in the field, focused mainly on policing or restoring the rule of law, not on hard military tasks. Considering the specific, non-military imprint of the European integration process, a fully-fledged European common defence may even turn out as unimpressive as a mouse that roars, and diminish the overall political credibility of the Union.

A big step forward has in any case been made with the enlargement process (less irritating to Moscow than Nato's own), a convincing expression of the effectiveness of the Eu's Common Foreign and Security Policy (Cfsp). Europe's influence as a stabilising factor at the continental level continues to reside in its transformative, normative power (that the Copenhagen conditionalities, addressed to countries applying for membership, spell out). Its neighbourhood policies have proven effective for crisis-management and post-conflict rehabilitation purposes, assisting Nato in many an exit strategy, to which it provides the appropriate civil-military mix. Not so for conflict-resolution, even though the swift response of Pres. Sarkozy in the Georgian crisis could be a harbinger of more impressive things to come.

Furthermore, the Lisbon Treaty (art. 28A) foresees the possibility of permanent structured cooperations in security and defence matters, among members who are ready and willing to «[...] fulfil higher criteria of military

cooperation», undertaking «more binding commitments» for «the most demanding mission». The responsiveness of the Union would of course improve with such a pre-established commitment of the main Eu members (militarily speaking), and the advance preparation of dedicated military units, supported by the Treaty's solidarity clause (i.e. collective defence engagement, mirror-imaging Nato's art. 5 and Weu's art.V). It could of course be argued that, whenever the need arises, such an arrangement could always click together on a pragmatic, intergovernmental basis. Even if -as Monnet used to say- nothing is possible without the will of men, but only an institutional back-up makes it durable. Too much ad-hocery could in the long run hurt the overall political credibility of the Union.

While preparing for more impressive tasks to perform, Europe should therefore engage in a more energetic diplomatic activity, if only in order to probe into the yet undiscovered agendas of the many emerging global actors, persuade and co-opt them, expose their dysfunctional behaviour, involve their responsibility, promote the convergence of their actions towards a common, mutually beneficial result.

### A new and improved trans-Atlantic relationship

Europe's most immediate task will be to improve the trans-Atlantic link, especially in order to bolster the coherence of the Western model of international relations dating back to Woodrow Wilson, Fdr and Marshall. History and geography will continue to dictate the Atlantic Alliance's asymmetries, but it need not continue to be the troubled partnership that Kissinger described decades ago, and that Kennedy (with his two-pillar approach) and Kissinger (with his year of Europe proposal) tried to address. In the post-Cold War circumstances, it involves not only the operational effectiveness of overstretched Nato capabilities, but the very essence of the persuasiveness of a Western approach to international relations.

Like any other international organisation, Nato has rushed out of area, much beyond its original self-defence tasks, addressing critical situations far and wide, in the broader interest of international stability. In the Balkans, Afghanistan and elsewhere it has proven to remain a most efficient operational instrument, not only because of its unique logistical means and integrated chain of command, but also critically for the political credibility it has accumulated over time. Military planning, force-generation, burden-sharing, interoperability (Nato-plus or otherwise) are of course important issues, but there is more to Atlantic solidarity, especially when the civil-military mix of expeditionary peace-building missions, is at stake.

The integrated military structure rests on the Atlantic Alliance, a political compact originally designed to regenerate a European continent torn apart by two internecine wars. From the international tool-box it has apparently become, Nato should therefore revert to its original political role of backbone to the Western community of nations (inspired by the international liberalism of Lippmann, Acheson, Kennan and their ilk). Initially, at least, in order to revive the pan-

European spirit set in motion by the Csce Helsinki Final Act of 1975, that recent events in Georgia have apparently called into question.

With France back in the military side of things, Germany re-unified and the UK's special relationship with the Us, Europeans should finally be able to provide the missing leg of a new Us-Eu-Russia tripod, that would constitute not only the premise for the much-needed reintegration of a Europe whole and free, but also the hub for the restoration of a workable system of international relations. The nature of new international tasks should allow for a more articulate and flexible (i.e. essentially political) Euro-American security relationship, for the whole world to contemplate and possibly relate to. Particularly since the new American administration may decide not to have a finger into so many hot pies (Baker's «no dog in this fight!» still rings out ominously). An updated definition of the trans-Atlantic link should combine the American firefighter approach and the European preventive and healing capabilities.

For a Western alliance that still considers it to be its duty to sort things out globally, a more focused Euro-American public diplomacy should emerge, with soft and hard security roles apportioned more clearly between Washington and Brussels. Precisely because Venus will be Venus and Mars Mars, the two will be more credible if they engage in what they are respectively known to be best at. Not only when dealing with other would-be world powers, but also within the International organisations (Un, Osce, Ifis, Wto, and the newcomer G-20), with the many out-of-area commitments they are all presently confronted with.

In more ways than one, after the demise of the Cold War, we are indeed back to the post-World War II square one. The West must once again embark on the laborious task of persuading 'the Rest' that common global interests have become as relevant as the host of different national values. In order to do so Americans and Europeans must consult much further upstream than they have ever done, and engage in joint decision-shaping much before decision-making becomes imperative. Joint analyses of evolving situations, identification of looming crises, and the assessment of their relevance and priorities, have become indispensable both in order to provide a coordinated if differentiated Euro-American response and to attract a wider international convergence.

### The way forward

Security, i.e. predictability not only in the military field, but increasingly also in the economic and social order of things, remains the overarching concern of every human endeavour. Human security is the stated concern of every international intervention, with boots on the ground designed only to protect, restrain, rebalance, rehabilitate. International organizations (in particular the Un emerging from the sclerosis induced by the Cold War) should be revisited, not necessarily reformed, in order to improve their legitimating role on the many ad-hoc coalitions.



Such a state of affairs requires a new international compact, where every would-be protagonist of international affairs, regionally or globally, undertakes his own responsibility in converging towards a common goal, however different the respective geo-political situation may be. In order to find its balance the system of international relations must however recover two indispensable actors, namely the European Union and Russia. Both have been shying away for too long from a more proactive role in continental and world affairs. It should be the Eu's responsibility to entice Russia back, out of its instinctive reliance on the old-fashioned and obviously out-dated display of force, partaking instead in the running of world affairs as its status of permanent member of the Security Council also implies.

United Europe owes its birth-right to the Us; it grew and prospered under their protection; it was eventually reunited when George W.H.Bush brushed aside the many European hesitations; it reached out with its enlargements in the wake of Nato's similar initiatives. It must now undertake the responsibilities that go with any coming of age, especially in this global New Age. In order to do so, as any teen-ager would, Europe must finally emancipate itself from the prolonged bipolar Us and Russian protectorate and become the lynchpin of pan-European reconciliation, which constitutes the necessary precondition for a rules-based system of international relations (the innermost fabric of the 'exporting democracy' mantra).

Turning Clausewitz on his head, the time has come when politics must become the continuation of war with other means. For all intents and purposes, America remains the only global actor, the essential term of reference and external catalyst, all the way from Rome to Moscow, from Teheran to Beijing. Obviously, the Us prolonged over-exposure has not only tied it down, Gulliver-like, but also resulted in a very severe contamination of its values and prestige. Neither isolationism nor unilateralism are an option anymore, not even for a powerful nation supposedly sheltered by two Oceans. America remains the indispensable nation, even though it must recover the flexibility to decide not only if but also how to get eventually entangled abroad.

There is only one thing worse for the world than American unilateralism, and that is American isolationism. After all is said and done, the whole world secretly recognizes that, as Churchill used to say with a shrug, «Americans will be Americans, but they are the only Americans we have». Under the pressure of events, world-wide Obamamania may soon fade. Honeymoons are mainly about learning to live together. Which is what needs to happen worldwide. Initially between America and its European partners.

A new trans-Atlantic agenda should become the driving factor in a restoration of world governance of the kind drafted in San Francisco in 1945, whose purpose it was to promote the convergence of diversities. The West should in other words improve its narrative that has most obviously been 'lost in translation', specifying the overall purpose, arguing the usefulness of multilateral statecraft over unilateral initiatives, urging like-minded States (the misrepresented 'League of

Democracies’) to accept their share of responsibilities, persuading them to become shareholders, stressing the importance of free trade, making one and all accountable for crisis-prevention and crisis-management purposes, establishing the relevant conditionalities and eventual sanctions.

Present transitional circumstances are not as bad as they appear. Academics have time and again been confronted with such situations. The ‘chaos theory’ argues that some order can be found in random data and that patterns can be detected in any disorderly situation. The ‘catastrophe theory’ similarly claims that instability is inherent to any dynamic order, such as the present one. Nothing to worry about then. If only human behaviour abided by academic theories!

Western countries, who still cling to the vision of a cosmopolitan community of nations, should address together the priority of priorities, i.e. making explicit a commonality of intentions among the members of the G20, aspiring at the helm of world governance. Which implies striving to identify the underlying empirical models, while keeping an eye on the big picture and the general direction. In other words a results-based utilitarian approach, rather than a values-based ideal one, while reaching out for the hearts and minds of a very dispersed and diverse public opinion. A web of institutions and alliances should reconcile diversities and stimulate participation and responsibility-taking. In the direction of a self-organising framework of international relations, designed essentially to contain and reduce the current levels of unpredictability. A requirement more akin to the pruning skills of a gardener than to the geometric blue-prints of an architect.

In the end, maybe, Fukuyama wasn’t that wrong, after all. Maybe Friedrich Hegel, Immanuel Kant and John Stuart Mill are finally back, peering over yet another American revival of international liberalism. Walter Lippman, Truman, Marshall, as well as E.B. White and H.G. Wells, Wendell Willkie, even Alfred Steichen, in their respective heavenly dens, must be smiling.