



The Federalist Debate

Papers on Federalism
in Europe and the World

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Trump's Return to the White House

Lucio Levi

The US election result raises a troubling question we should not ignore. Why have the Americans chosen Donald Trump, in spite of the fact that he is a putschist who sponsored the attack on Capitol Hill, the temple of American democracy, and tried to rig the 2020 election result?

Nationalism is the political formula that summarises Trump's agenda. In fact, Trump promised to put his slogan "America first" at the top of his political programme. We should not forget that nationalism led the world to the tragedy of the two World Wars. The illusion of nationalism consists of the belief that the entrenchment of people within national borders will provide states with security. On the contrary, international anarchy in the 1930's generated a climate of insecurity which fostered an authoritarian surge. The unexpected consequence was the triumph of fascism first in Italy, then in Germany and Spain.

Supporters of nationalism suggest resorting to protectionism for dealing with economic disorder. But historical experience has shown that protectionism has increased international disorder and promoted inflation. The only exception is the case of infant industries, which lack the competitive strength to stand against well-established international competitors because they are still developing their technologies, production processes, and market presence. Governments provide support to infant industries to allow them to grow and become competitive on an international scale.

Another mistake of the nationalist agenda is to believe that raising walls and fences at states borders will stop immigration waves from underdeveloped countries, while it should be

evident that development aid to backward countries is the main road leading to a solution to the problem of migration. Yet Trump threatens to start the biggest deportation plan ever imagined against irregular migration. We should ask him how those who want to close the doors to immigrants suggest finding the workers necessary to keep the economic system working.

The victory of nationalism was the consequence of the crisis of the system of European states caused by the rise of Germany which, after its political unification, became the strongest state in Europe. This dominant position encouraged Germany to pursue the adventure of hegemony in Europe, which implied an economic and military challenge to the United Kingdom. The imperialist design of Germany produced two World Wars and in the end it was defeated. Europe was divided between the leaders of the new world system (the United States and the Soviet Union) and the nation-states were reduced to the level of satellites of the great powers.

But now the US power is in full decline. It has lost its capability to maintain world order. One figure shows this: the public debt, which has reached \$35.000 billion.

* * *

Trump's political success can be explained by the fact that he realized a symbiosis between the political power of the US and the powerful industrial, financial and communication corporations led by Elon Musk, the richest man in the world. This alliance portrays the neo-liberal formula that characterizes power relations in the post-bipolar world system. This kind of society generates increasing social inequalities, as it refrains from intervening in social and economic processes. Moreover, it

proves insufficient to govern the environmental emergency, since the polluting emissions in the atmosphere have continued to increase.

The great problem of our time consists in the contradiction between a market and civil society that has taken on global dimensions and a system of states that has remained national. Globalization produces an even deeper contradiction between the development of forces of production that unify the world and the states, the organized powers that should govern markets and civil society and operate in such a way that general interests can prevail over the private ones. Citizens feel that they have lost control of their destiny, because the most important decisions are taken at world level while democracy stops at states borders. Beyond those borders, relations of force dominate between states and non-state actors competing with one another to determine the lines of world politics. There ensues a crisis of consent towards political institutions and of legitimation of public powers. Consequently, the decline of the state brings about the triumph of private interests connected to the market and the decline of collective values on which political coexistence is founded.

Democracy has never shown such worrying signs of weakness as today. At world level there is a widening gap between states, whose power remains substantially confined within national borders, on the one hand, and market and civil society, which have become global, on the other. The latter have become global while politics remains national. This contradiction has a heavy impact on democracy. The decisions on which the destiny of peoples depends, such as those of security, control of the global economy, international justice or protection of the environment, tend to shift away from representative institutions. The feeling widely shared among citizens is that the most important decisions have migrated away from institutions under their control and towards international power centres free

from any form of democratic supervision. Ungoverned globalization thus brings about the crisis of democracy. In fact, seen from a global viewpoint, decisions taken at national level, where democratic powers exist, are relatively minor. At international level, on the other hand, where the most important decisions are taken, there are no democratic institutions. The danger we are facing is the depletion of democracy. More precisely, we should ask ourselves how long democracy can last in a world where citizens are excluded from participating in decisions which determine their destiny. Globalization must be democratized before it destroys democracy.

* * *

The EU represents an attempt to pursue economic and political unification in order to allow the old and declining nation-states to acquire the necessary dimension to compete with macro-regional states. The formation of macro-regional states or unions of states is a general tendency characterising the reorganization of the world system to which China, India, Indonesia and the European Union, the Community of Latin America and Caribbean States, the African Union etc belong. Democracies should be reformed according the federal model through a power redistribution at all levels from the local communities to the world, as occurred in Europe at the end of the WWII. International organizations should represent the regions and the peoples of the world. The European Union, being the laboratory of international democracy, is bound to become the leading country of this political experience and will be willing to extend that experiment to the world level. In other words, it has a strong interest to promote the democratization of the UN. This appears to be the most revolutionary change of our era, whose goal would be the removal of world governance from the control of the big powers and other private centres of power, like the multinational corporations, in order to put it in the hands of all the peoples of the planet.

The Draghi Report, the Answer to Europe's Decline

Antonio Longo

The Report that Mario Draghi presented to the European Commission on "*The Future of European Competitiveness*" is a long document (327 pages) that seems to be an economic text, but is in fact a highly political document. Commissioned last year by Ursula Von der Leyen (along with the one entrusted to Enrico Letta on the internal market), it already appears to be the European Union's governing programme for the next five years (and beyond). The analyses and directions it contains are important: not only for Europeans, but also for Americans, Chinese, Indians, Africans, Latin Americans, and so on. Indeed, there is a need for common political, economic, social, and cultural approaches to mature around a new spirit capable of restoring a multilateral order to global economic and security problems. The Draghi Report is also a contribution to that end.

If implemented, the Draghi Report will represent a "revolution," in the precise sense of the word, because it will make the Union stronger and more effective in decision-making. Indeed, this lengthy document does not just say "what" needs to be done, but also "how" to do it. It represents, therefore, a decisive step toward a European federal government in the field of the economy and security (in its the economic aspects.)

The starting point of Draghi's analysis is well-known. Three facts have accompanied European growth so far, but they no longer work as they did before: globalisation was driving European exports (China guaranteed the market); energy was relatively cheap (Russian gas allowed it); and political and military security was guaranteed by the U.S.

and allowed Europe a higher standard of welfare than the U.S.

That world is over, Draghi says, the pandemic and then the war (Ukraine) showed that. Growth faltered at a time when it was necessary to start decarbonising the economy and the world became more insecure. The U.S., with substantial financial resources, was able to foster massive investment in technological innovation, gaining in competitiveness. The EU, with no fiscal resources of its own and weak governance, was left standing on the sidelines.

The Draghi report is not just a rallying cry. It is an action plan, setting out guidelines, with 178 concrete operational indications. Investment of up to about €800 billion a year is needed to ensure growth, decarbonisation, and security. The alternative – a dramatic choice for Europe – is between these options: either to be a leader in new technologies or to be a beacon of climate responsibility or, again, to be an independent player on the world stage, without being able, in any case, to finance its own social model. It is, therefore, an existential challenge. Europe's core values are prosperity, equity, freedom, peace, and democracy in a sustainable environment. The Union exists to ensure that Europeans can always benefit from these fundamental rights. If Europe can no longer provide them to its citizens – or if it must trade one for the other – it will have lost its *raison d'être*. The only way to meet this challenge is to grow and become more productive while preserving our values of equity and social inclusion. And the only way to become more productive is for Europe to radically change.

The Report indicates three areas of focus.

Growth and innovation. Europe must profoundly refocus its efforts to close the innovation gap with the U.S. and China. Europe spends € 270 billion less per year on research and innovation than the U.S. There is no EU company with a market capitalization of more than € 100 billion created from scratch in the last 50 years. Only 4 of the top 50 technology companies in the world are European. There is no lack of ideas or ambition in Europe. Innovation is blocked at the next stage, that of commercialization. Innovative companies are hampered at every stage by inconsistent and restrictive regulations. Many European entrepreneurs prefer to seek funding in the American market. Between 2008 and 2021, nearly 30 percent of startups with more than \$1 billion moved abroad, most of them to the U.S. Europe should match the U.S. in terms of innovation, while also being able to surpass it in education, safeguarding social inclusion.

Decarbonisation and competitiveness. If Europe's ambitious climate goals are accompanied by a coherent plan, decarbonisation will be an opportunity for Europe (and the World). But if we fail, there is a risk that decarbonisation will work against competitiveness and growth. In the medium term, decarbonisation will shift energy production to clean, secure, and low-cost energy sources, but fossil fuels will continue to play a central role in energy pricing, at least for this decade. Decarbonisation is for the good of the planet, but to also become a source of growth for Europe, there needs to be a joint plan that embraces the industries that produce clean technology and the automotive industry.

Increasing security and reducing dependencies. Security is a prerequisite for growth. Rising geopolitical risks increase uncertainty and hold back investment – it puts growth and freedom at risk. Europe is particularly exposed. We rely on a few suppliers for critical raw materials. We

are hugely dependent on digital technology imports. We are vulnerable. The EU will need to coordinate preferential trade agreements and direct investment with resource-rich nations and create stockpiles in selected critical areas and industry partnerships to secure the supply chain for key technologies.

What are the obstacles?

Europe lacks focus. We define common goals, but we do not support them by setting clear priorities or following up with joint policy actions. Our Single Market is fragmented, with regulatory burdens on businesses. Without a Capital Market to finance investment, Europeans miss opportunities to increase their wealth: EU households save more than American households, but the gap in per capita income has widened.

Europe is wasting its common resources. We have a large collective spending capacity, but we dilute it in multiple national and EU instruments. We do not favour competitive European defence companies; 78 percent of total procurement spending goes to non-EU suppliers, of which 63 percent goes to the U.S. The EU public sector spends as much on R&I as the U.S. as a share of GDP, but only one-tenth of this spending occurs at the European level.

Europe is not coordinating where it matters. Industrial strategies today combine multiple policies (fiscal, trade and foreign economic) to secure supply chains. Linking them requires a high degree of coordination between national and EU efforts. Because of its slow and disaggregated decision-making process, the EU is unable to produce such responses. Decisions are made issue by issue, with multiple vetoes along the way. The result is a legislative process with an average time of 19 months, from the Commission's proposal to the signing of the adopted act, not counting the implementation phase in the member states.

Toward a European response

Europe urgently needs to accelerate its rate of innovation, and strengthen productivity growth, household incomes, and domestic demand, especially in the face of unfavorable demographics. Labour productivity in the EU was 95 percent of that in the U.S. in 1995; now it is below 80 percent. Europe still has a chance to change course if it can compete in the digital revolution (AI), remedying its shortcomings in innovation and productivity and thereby restoring its potential.

Second, Europe needs a common plan for decarbonisation and competitiveness. Transportation can play a key role, but it will depend on its planning. The automotive sector is a key example of the lack of planning (a climate policy without an industrial policy). We need, then, to address a possible trade-off between energy-producing industries, clean-technology industries, the automotive industry, and energy-intensive industries. For the energy sector, the first key objective is to lower the cost of energy for end users, passing on to them the benefits of decarbonisation. To this end, the EU should develop the governance necessary for a true Energy Union so that decisions and market functions of cross-border significance are taken centrally.

Third, Europe needs to increase security and reduce dependencies. Europe is lagging in the global race to secure supply chains: we need a genuine “foreign economic policy” that coordinates preferential trade agreements and direct investment with resource-rich countries, builds stockpiles in critical areas, and the creation of industrial partnerships to secure supply chains for key technologies. The EU will need to strengthen its industrial capacity for defence and space. The European defence industry is notoriously fragmented, which limits its size and operational effectiveness.

The EU must, in addition, overcome capital

market fragmentation and aim to complete the Banking Union. Finally, the EU budget should be reformed to increase its focus and efficiency, as well as be better leveraged to support private investment. The EU should move toward the regular issuance of safe assets to enable joint investment projects among member states and to help integrate capital markets.

Strengthening governance

This is the last point of the Report. A new industrial strategy for Europe will not happen without parallel changes to the institutional set-up and functioning of the Union. *“Industrial policies today require strategies that span investment, taxation, education, access to finance, regulation, trade and foreign policy, united behind an agreed strategic goal.”* European decision-making norms have not evolved. The slowness of EU decision-making is well known. Results are not being produced at the level and speed that EU citizens expect.

To the question many are asking (should the Treaties be amended?) Draghi’s answer is clear: *“Strengthening the EU requires Treaty changes, but it is not a precondition for Europe to move forward: much can be done with targeted adjustments. Until the consensus for Treaty changes is in place, a renewed European partnership should be built on three overarching goals: refocusing the work of the EU, accelerating EU action and integration, and simplifying rules.”*

How to refocus the work? Draghi suggests a radical change, with the establishment of a “Competitiveness Coordination Framework” in priority areas, eliminating current overlaps. Policy directions would be debated, formulated, and adopted in European Council conclusions at the beginning of each policy cycle. Thereafter, all economic policies relevant to the EU’s strategic priorities would be merged into this “coordination framework”, broken down into action plans for each strategic priority, with clearly defined objectives, governance,

and financing. We would then have very clear guidelines and operations for each strategic policy. The Commission would obviously have a guiding role: in areas of exclusive competence (Art. 3 TFEU) it would have a mandate to act directly; in areas of shared competence (Art. 4 TFEU) it would provide the guidelines, sharing the institutional set-up for implementation with the relevant national bodies. In specific areas, an arrangement bringing together the Commission, industry, and member states, as well as the relevant sectoral agencies, could be envisaged. The consolidation of the various coordination mechanisms should be matched by that of its budgetary resources. EU resources should focus on financing public goods that are fundamental to the EU's strategic priorities.

The second point (Accelerating the work of the EU) is a consequence of the first. Here the aim is to overcome the power of the veto in the EU Council, with the extension of qualified majority voting (QMV) "*in all policy areas in the Council,*" using the "*passerelle*" clause (Art.48, 7 TEU). In this case, the European Council, thanks to the "*upfront agreement*" on the "strategic principles" agreed on in the "Competitiveness Coordination Framework" (mentioned above) can authorize, by a unanimous vote, the EU Council of Ministers to vote by qualified majority. In other words: having outlined, upstream, the principles on which a certain policy should be based, it will then be possible, downstream, to vote by a qualified majority in the Council. Draghi indicates the working method, then the path, to make it possible to overcome the veto without changing the Treaties.

Another method is "enhanced cooperation" under Art. 20 TEU and 329 TFEU, which can (in the example Draghi gives) establish a special regime for innovative companies that harmonizes company and insolvency law, as well as some key aspects of labour law and taxation. Intergovernmental cooperation, on the other hand, has serious drawbacks due

to the absence of judicial control by the CJEU, democratic legitimacy via the EP, and the Commission's involvement in preparing texts.

In conclusion, the Draghi Report on Competitiveness paves the way for the completion of the Economic and Monetary Union which was announced at Maastricht (1992), but then only partially implemented (the monetary part). The Recovery Plan opened a breach in the question of the Union's ability to plan its future, mobilizing new resources, without changing the Treaties. The Draghi Report shows that the breach can turn into a wide and safe path, again without changing the Treaties.

Von der Leyen's governing programme will undoubtedly be dictated by the "Draghi Report," which comes, not coincidentally, at a time when the European Commission has assumed not only the form but also the substance of a real European government. This is the outcome of a political process that has seen, for the first time, a clash of power between states and at the same time between European political forces, to define the parliamentary majority. This has gone beyond its traditional boundaries (EPP, S&D, Renew), to include also the Greens and a part of the Conservatives (ECR), thus configuring a majority of constitutional unity, necessary to make the Union stronger, develop the Draghi Report, and isolate the anti-European forces.

Finally, this Report shows that the process of European unification can move forward if it offers the right answers to the crises and pursues them with determination, combining the policies that need to be enacted with the expansion of the powers of the European government. We are in the presence of a possible new advance in the process of federalisation of the Union. It is up to the economic, social, and cultural forces, as well as pro-European political forces, to support it.

Is Federalism Inevitable? (Part 3)

Jean-François Drevet

Chapter 3. Towards a Federalist Shift?

Possible Solutions

As long as it was only a matter of exercising economic competences, the EU could move forward through compromises, for which we were all the time in need, but which are no longer possible today. When it comes to security, we need to be able to act quickly and more effectively.

The qualitative leap demanded in recent years has become an emergency¹. The history of federalism tells us that it is often under such circumstances that it has been decided to move forward: as said above, no one became a Federalist by conviction, but because it was, at some point, the only possible solution. The EU could soon become confronted with this need².

Since the negotiations of the Maastricht Treaty, European governments have tried to find answers to these problems by changing the institutional framework, without achieving results commensurate with expectations. Should we resume the process of integration within the framework of monetary union by setting up a “*political community of the euro*”, deliberately and explicitly federalist. Another option would be to achieve federalism without saying it, as has been implicitly the case since the implementation of the European single market, for example by using the *grey areas* that the European institutions can *de facto* use, as the ECB did in the euro crisis.

In this way, the banking union³ could be consolidated, going beyond what was done by strengthening shock resistance through the establishment of a *centralised deposit insurance*

system. The tax reform, currently blocked by unanimity rule, is increasingly necessary in order to address new European responsibilities, such as Defense and Environment. As major beneficiaries of the Single market, economic agents should contribute to the European budget, for instance through an additional corporate tax.

Externally, “*the burden of European security is not equitably distributed*”⁴. It is necessary to clarify the conditions for an increased engagement of the European armies. At the very least, it is a question of respecting and enforcing economic sanctions already decided and of carrying out coherent diplomatic actions, which means going beyond the “*coalition logics*” dictated by the circumstances, which governed the previous operations.

As regards internal security, the threat of terrorism and the factors that produce it have not diminished. As François Hollande pointed out⁵, “*it doesn't take less Europe, it does take more Europe to fight terrorism*”. If the EU does not want a *Patriot act*, it is expected that effective initiatives will result from this diagnosis. Is it necessary, as has often been said, to have a European FBI, or can we live with a system of structured cooperation? For many, a supranational authority is clearly necessary.

Public opinion is not fundamentally hostile to a qualitative leap. Despite the economic difficulties and hardships that the EU has imposed on some countries, Eurobarometers regularly point to strong majorities in favour of maintaining the euro⁶ and of strengthening the European foreign and defence policy. When it comes to internal security, citizens want effective measures, not only in countries recently hit by terrorism. Even if they sometimes

have confusing electoral attitudes, people can also be more lucid than their leaders.

Finally, the role of exogenous factors remains to be assessed. Throughout history, the rise of external perils has often been a stimulus to cohesion. Best NATO recruitment sergeant as he is, will Vladimir Putin become an architect of European integration, pushing the EU towards more integration? If Europe needs enemies to awaken its *sleepwalkers* of the 21st century he is indeed the best candidate. Similarly, unlike those who celebrated it loudly, Brexit does not seem to have harmed European integration.

Since the great clash between Girondins and Montagnards and the repression of a "*federalist insurrection*", which had raised 60 out of 84 departments against the Convention⁷, the latter got no good press in France. Though Federalists are no longer liable to the guillotine,⁸ the concept and its institutional reality remain poorly known and sometimes decried.

Nevertheless, since the proliferation of crises, from Covid to war in Ukraine, the prospect of the transformation of the EU into a federal structure is regularly discussed. Those who advocate it recommend a *qualitative leap forward* that would remedy the complexity and '*democratic deficit*' of the current institutions. *Those who fear a move towards an Orwellian "super-state"* that would definitely put nation states and their democracies under tutelage have lost British support, but remain quite numerous, especially in the Nordic countries. In Poland and Hungary, recently inclined to develop their version of Euroscepticism, would fear of the Russian bear be the beginning of wisdom?

Today, the time for "*the state must do everything*" is over. We have seen this with the devolution, which has led, in the name of democracy and subsidiarity, to give local authorities the powers and sometimes the means to better serve the citizen. The same applies to the supranational

level of our house of governance where the shared sovereignty must be democratically managed, instead of being subject to opaque political bargaining.

At European level, only three Member States (Germany, Austria and Belgium) are federations, not counting Cyprus, which would become federalised in the event of reunification. The others implement different forms of decentralisation, but remained unitary states, in particular because some of them are small and even former members of a federation⁹. The current functioning of the Union is therefore dominated by relations between the national and Community levels. As a Union of States, the EU has given local and regional authorities only an advisory role (in the Committee of Regions), a few of them (in Belgium and Germany) have international competences.

The supranational process

The overlapping of political constructions is nothing new in Europe. In the course of history, after the hegemonic competition of the pope and the emperor, we have witnessed above all processes of "*top down*" unification of the imperial type. This was often the result of conquests, of which the Ottoman Empire or that of the Romanovs offer good examples, also of inheritances or marriages, as with the Habsburgs, which brought together very different entities of the Danube basin¹⁰. The *bottom-up* process is less frequent, but we have seen that the United States, Switzerland or Australia are the product of a unification dynamic that is analogous to that of Europe, having built a federal level above the constituent states, by a relatively consensual evolution, but dictated by necessities.

By increasing from 6 to 28 and then to 27 Member States (1958-2024), it even showed greater territorial dynamism than the United States (from 13 to 50 States from 1776 to 1960). But the same is not true of the transfer of competences. Building a federal state in those

days took a long time, although implying scarce populations: the United States had 2.5 million inhabitants in 1788, as much as Switzerland in 1848. When Australia became federal in 1900, it had 3.75 million inhabitants and Germany from Bismarck had 40 million in 1871. There is no precedent for the voluntary creation of a supranational group with a population of more than 450 million souls. If today we had to grant the 330 million Americans in 50 states a federal organisation, a George Washington of the 21st century would face much more difficulty.

Though the Founding Fathers were in favour of a European federation, they knew, a few years after the end of two world wars, that this objective was not achievable in the medium term. They therefore used the *small steps method*, hoping that the solidity of economic links (the common market) and then monetary links (the euro) would create a dynamic. By a process of *spill over* which has not materialised, it was supposed to lead to a political union, which is indispensable to definitively stabilise a Europe which still has strong sovereigntist, if not overtly nationalistic parties.

This expectation is not without analogy with the German case, where the *Zollverein* (1834) that prepared the imperial unification of 1871 was also the result of wars won against neighbouring countries: Denmark (1864), Austria (1866) and France (1870-1871). Though Europe does not yet have a military capability, it already has high-ranking enemies, for example in Russia and Turkey. Instead of the *ring of friends* expected to develop through its neighbourhood policy, it is now surrounded by a *ring of fire*. Would war, or rather the need to defend oneself effectively, produce federalism?

As experience had shown the impotence of confederal structures, the creators of the ECSC and the Common Market invented the Community method. While retaining their sovereignty, the Member States were placed in

an institutional framework strong enough to decide jointly and be bound by the outcome of their decisions: the Commission proposes and executes, the Parliament and the Council decide and the Court of Justice has the final say in the event of disagreement. This is not federalism, but it looks that way by the legal preeminence of European law which derives from international treaties. It is not yet democratic enough, but since the Treaty of Lisbon, the European Parliament has gained new powers that bring it closer to a full-function assembly.

The last three decades, while greatly increasing the competences of the European level, have reinforced the Council's weight, thus the pre-eminence of intergovernmental cooperation over the Community method. The definition of new areas of intervention, managed by the Member States outside the Community framework, have shown the persistence, if not the renewal of a sovereigntist vision in the functioning of European institutions, which is neither effective nor democratic.

As such, the record of the last decade is not very positive. Instead of having a role as a driving force on the whole, the Council was the scene of the affirmation of national egoism, where the general European interest is not defended. We saw it well with the chaotic management of the euro, then with the inability to adopt a migration policy, as well as the refusal to make a fiscal reform. The institutional system, designed for 6 Member States, which worked fairly well up to 12, has become clearly inadequate. But the reform missed in the 1990s-2000 is even more difficult to achieve today. The revision procedure, from an intergovernmental conference to referendums, is totally ineffective; ratifications may be suspended by a single Member State for reasons which have nothing to do with European issues.

The disadvantages of such complexity are obvious. The recently revised study on the cost of non-Europe¹¹ estimates losses related to the

inability to cope with the latest financial crisis at several hundred billion euros. Conversely, the benefits of the banking union would amount to 0.3 to 0.8 % of GDP. In terms of security and defence, in comparison with the United States, the study believes that a common defence policy would be much more effective at a lower budgetary cost. Unfortunately, the benefits of an integrated Europe on these issues have not been assessed, in particular in better management of increasing threats coming from the periphery of the continent. Peacekeeping seems costly only before a conflict, and the war in Ukraine has answered that question.

In the euphoria of the 2000s, Europe thought that its *soft power* would suffice to develop cooperation with its neighbours and share its values, while allowing its Member States to adhere more or less enthusiastically to the convolutions of Washington's foreign policy: warmonger with Bush, abstentionist with Obama, chaotic with Trump. A decade later, the EU faces the consequences of its naivety and followership: in the absence of appropriate responses to the aggressive behaviour of Moscow and Ankara, the continent's security has greatly diminished.

The need for "A Europe that protects"

Since there is a political will to create a *Europe that protects*, it is essential to overcome its impotence

by setting up a more efficient organisation, which implies developing more shared sovereignty¹² in policies deemed to be "*regalian*". Obviously, the aim is to increase security, both internal (against terrorism), and external (through peacekeeping), policies: even economic and monetary ones should be developed.

As the intergovernmental management of these problems has shown its limits, there is no other choice, but to implement genuine common policies through a supranational decision-making structure, as has been done with the single market. If we want this level to be as democratic as the others, we need to transform our institutions to have a full-functioning parliament and an executive accountable to it.

In May 1918, faced with an imminent rupture of the Western Front, Allied governments decided, after more than three years of war, to entrust the single command of the armies to General Foch. No calculation has ever been made of the number of deaths that would have been avoided, had this decision been made earlier, and of how many lives were saved in the final weeks of the war.

Today, the dilemma is not the same, but it looks like it. We can treat it without talking about federalism, as Monsieur Jourdain did for prose. But this is what it's all about.

¹ Roger Gaudino, Fabien Verdier, *Towards the European Federation, Europe of the Last Chance*, policy paper Notre Europe, 11 February 2014, 20p.

² According to Bernard Guetta, MEP, in his book, *The European Nation, How Trump, Putin and COVID Transformed the Union*, Flammarion Editions, Paris 2023,

³ "*euro banks were European in life but national in death.*" (Mervyn King, Governor of the Bank of England).

⁴ Statement by Jean-Yves Le Drian, then French Minister of Defence on February 19, 2015 in Riga.

⁵ In a speech of 23 February 2015, cited in *Le Monde* of 25 February 2015.

⁶ 2/3 of the inhabitants of the euro area are in favour of maintaining the single currency. Even the Greeks want to stay in the eurozone.

⁷ French Federalists at the time were against centralisation and in favour of local empowerment.

⁸ 10 % of the 13800 people executed during the revolutionary period.

⁹ This is the case of Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia and the Baltic States which belonged to the late federations of Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and the USSR.

¹⁰ "*Bella gerant alii, tu felix Austria nube!*" (let others wage war, thou, happy Austria, marry).

¹¹ *Assessing the Cost of Non-Europe 2014-2019*, European Added Value Unit, Directorate-General for Parliamentary Research Services, European Parliament, Brussels, April 2015, 95p.

¹² Emmanuel Macron at the Ambassadors' Conference, *Le Monde* 31st August 2017.

France, Germany, Europe: A Copernican Revolution

Junius

Recently, the protracted phase of domestic political controversy has made Emmanuel Macron and Olaf Scholz look like lame ducks, raising real questions about the health of democracy in their countries. On the contrary, European democracy is thriving, after the re-election of Ursula von der Leyen in Strasbourg on July 18. She is the real winner of the elections to the European Parliament on 9 June and has a chance to transform the European Commission into a true government of the European Union.

After a devastating result at the European elections, the German government coalition also suffered defeats in Saxony and Thuringia, where voters rewarded far right - and far left-wing anti-system parties: Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) and Bund Sarah Wagenknecht (BSW), respectively. The sum of their votes makes it impossible to ignore them in future local coalitions. In the meantime, disagreement among coalition parties has been unprecedented. It is highly unlikely that the current 'traffic light' coalition will win a new mandate to govern at the forthcoming federal elections early autumn 2025. More generally, the tone of political exchanges among political forces has become rowdy due to the radicalisation of significant proportions of public opinion and, more broadly, the general sense of frustration over the quality of government. The attempt by governments and coalitions to find agreement on key issues, like migration and industry, has failed.

At the same time, President Macron faced the Herculean task of getting a majority for

a new government, after the snap national elections (which he imprudently called after his defeat at the European elections) resulted in a completely split chamber. While a new coalition of left parties (New Popular Front) managed to achieve the best result in terms of votes, Macron deemed them unable to secure a larger majority and assigned the task of setting up a government to the centrist Michel Barnier, after a long phase of uncertainty where several possible candidates were considered and dismissed because of reciprocal vetoes between parties. Macron chose Barnier after being assured of the non-opposition of the far-right Rassemblement National. Such an (albeit indirect) involvement by the far right in government is a major change in French politics although no longer in Europe.

Around the same time, Mario Draghi presented to Council and Parliament his report on "The future of European competitiveness." Ever since, there has been endless talk of epoch-making decisions if the European Union is to survive as an independent force. Hopefully, the report will be the policy basis for the political appointments of the new commissioners which Ursula von der Leyen will make next week. This doesn't mean everything will be plain sailing. Quite the reverse, the political nature of the new Commission means that the EPP, SDR and Greens will continuously measure their relative power, and some wrangling has already started. European parties will need to prove that they can live up to expectations. If they keep the bar high, the Commission will have room to set the scene for initiating

key European reforms. Given the weakness of national governments, Von der Leyen can de facto behave as the head of government of Europe.

These developments suggest that the phase in which the European Union derived its strength from France and Germany is coming to a close. We have now started a new phase in which the European Union will not be able to survive without a fully-fledged federal government and political system of its own. France and Germany will only be able to avoid further collapse as part of a federal European government which delivers common goods and services to its citizens. Without this there can be no political stability in these countries and they risk returning to the weakness of the Fourth and Weimar Republic respectively.

The crisis of France and Germany

The crises of France and Germany stem from the political failure of two projects that were in themselves reasonable and necessary. It is precisely the original rationality of the policies swept away by recent events that aggravates the current situation.

In France, Macron came to power in 2017 with the idea of reforming a country unable to achieve the necessary social and political consensus to reform itself, partly because of the face-off between Gaullism and socialism, as in the 1970s. Macron deftly exploited the weakness of the traditional parties and won the presidency, emerging as the young and modern leader of a new liberal political force. In hindsight, the focus on himself and the incapacity to broaden consensus beyond the urban, affluent and inclusive electorate were his downfall.

In addition, Macron failed to get sufficient support from Chancellors Merkel and Scholz when he pleaded for the establishment of a European fiscal capacity in his two famous

speeches at the Sorbonne. In the absence of a shared, supportive European economic policy, the costs of modernizing the French economic and social system soon became apparent. Important layers of French society turned against Macron during his first term, for example when the *Gilets Jaunes* started protesting in 2018 against ecological taxation. The second presidential term failed to live up to Macron's hopes even more, as he immediately lost his absolute majority in the National Assembly within weeks of re-election. The unfavourable results of the European and national elections have created a situation of radical uncertainty: will Prime Minister Barnier manage to govern France during the one-year period during which the National Assembly cannot be dissolved for new elections? Meanwhile, the economy is deteriorating and economic radicalisation has reared its head once more, with increased severity. To put it plain, Macron has failed.

The German fiasco is similarly the failure of a political project. The new 'traffic-light' government of Olaf Scholz, elected at the very end of 2021, sought to end 14 years of Merkel's control on power and – in many respects – policy inaction. Social Democrats, Greens and Liberals joined forces to give Germany a technological boost, such that the country's manufacturing would lead the way in climate-conscious innovation and the green transition. The intention was to help save the planet while enhancing Germany's economic strength: an extraordinary export capacity that made its trade surplus (second only to China in GDP terms) an enormous economic powerhouse for society.

None of this materialized. Instead, Germany's manufacturing is in crisis, partly due to adverse external factors (Putin's attack on Ukraine; the trade war between China and the United States). The public sector, ensnared in very

strict constitutional rules mandating a balanced budget introduced in the Grundgesetz since 2009, has also failed to make up for the weakness of private investment. Over the past months, German citizens have witnessed with astonishment the exacerbation of two adverse developments. First, instead of an ecologically driven boom, growth has tapered off, the cost of living has exploded, and unions have imposed massive wage increases which have further reduced competitiveness and exports. The economic system has gone into a tailspin and a gloomy pessimism has spread. Second, the efficiency of public facilities has collapsed due to the chronic lack of investment: public transportation does not work, the quality of hospitals and schools has deteriorated, the public administration still works with fax machines at a time of Artificial Intelligence. Germany has discovered it is grossly inefficient and backward. The emigration of skilled labour has intensified, the illegal immigration of an uneducated workforce is seen as a threat to economic, social, and political stability.

Copernican revolution

In France, the recent developments have weakened democracy, raising the question of how Macron's new government can have emerged from such an election result. In Germany, politicians with a clear neo-Nazi orientation such as Björn Höcke have won local elections. Today the only stable governing coalition is the one that elected Ursula von der Leyen to the European Parliament on July 18.

This is a Copernican revolution. Political competence is moving from Member States to Europe. Of paramount importance is the understanding that adversity can better be faced by a united Europe than by countries acting alone.

Obviously, no political endeavour is free from tensions nowadays and the new Parliamentary term will be eventful and probably dramatic. But Ursula von der Leyen has a real chance to accomplish two tasks. First, to show Europeans that we can have a common future even in a world so hostile to us (from climatic to geopolitical conditions). Second, to prove to the French and Germans that democracy still works.

Reestablishing a Europe-Wide Security Zone

René Wadlow

On June 15, 2024, Russian Federation Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov stated that “Russia will not view Western European countries as possible partners for at least one generation. The acute phase of the military-political confrontation with the West continues and is in full swing.” He was echoed in an interview by Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov who said that NATO is “a group in which we feel not an ounce of trust, which triggers political and even emotional rejection in Moscow.”

It is likely that the two Sergeys express a view held by many governmental decision-makers in Moscow. Where they are wrong is that the world cannot wait for one generation to reestablish a Europe-wide security zone but must start now. Given current governmental preoccupations, it is likely that nongovernmental organizations must take the lead.

In the 1960s, the idea of a European security conference was launched by the USSR followed in 1966 by a proposal of the Warsaw Pact Organization. After a good deal of discussion and some modifications of policies, especially the West German Ostpolitik, it was decided to convene a Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. At the invitation of the Finnish government, multilateral preparatory talks began near Helsinki in November 1972. There were numerous preparatory aspects, especially the subjects of such a conference.

Thus, the main issues of the conference were transferred for negotiation to Geneva, Switzerland to be undertaken by experts.

During this period of negotiations in Geneva, nongovernmental organization (NGO) representatives in Geneva who were known for their activities at the United Nations (UN) were able to present proposals for possible consideration. The Association of World Citizens (AWC) was particularly active in presenting ideas on the resolution of conflicts and the possible use of arbitration as an appropriate means of dispute settlement. The Helsinki process later created an arbitration body in Geneva, but it is little used. The Association was also active with other NGOs in what was called the “human dimension” of the Helsinki agreement. The conference had deliberately not used a human rights vocabulary. The extensive participation of nongovernmental representatives is recognized in the text of the Final Act and encouraged to continue. The results of the Geneva negotiations led to the signature of the Final Act in Helsinki on August 1, 1975.

Today, it is likely that the Russia-Ukraine conflict starting with the 2014 annexation of Crimea has ended the effectiveness of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Thus, in many ways, we are “back to square one” in the organization of a Europe-wide security zone with many more States to be involved due to the breakup of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. There is also the issue of what has been called “The Phantom Republics”: Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia, Transnistria in Moldova, Kosovo, formerly part of Serbia, and the disputed Donetsk and Luhansk People’s

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Republics in Ukraine. These are “ministates” economically fragile, potentially manipulated by more powerful States but which will not be reintegrated into their former State even if granted significant autonomy.

There is a rich heritage of efforts made within the OSCE. However, the OSCE has also very real limitations. It has a tight budget and a lack of specialized personnel. Much of the

staff are diplomats seconded from national governments. This results in a high turnover of staff and a lack of primary loyalty to the organization. Nevertheless, the OSCE has been able to respond to situations which were not foreseen at its creation. Much of the future depends on the attitude of the Russian Federation which at present seems negative. New avenues are likely to be needed, and NGOs may again be able to play positive roles.

Reflections of a Willkieist: How “One World” Changed My Life

Matthew Rozsa

One of the political thinkers who most influenced me in high school – a man whose ideas are especially relevant today, as amply illustrated by the ongoing Middle East crisis – was once nominated by a major political party for the presidency, but ultimately did not succeed in reaching that ostensibly distinguished office.

His book convinced me that humanity needs a world government.

I refer to Wendell Lewis Willkie, an Indiana leftist radical-turned-Wall Street lawyer who won the Republican presidential nomination in 1940. He later wrote a book called “One World” that, like this organization, advocated for international federalism. I have been a global federalist ever since.

One would have hardly envisioned this future for Willkie during the 1940 election. That was the year when President Franklin D. Roosevelt was seeking his unprecedented third term; by campaigning as a centrist, Willkie hoped to inspire heavy turnout among the conservatives that always loathed Roosevelt while appealing to moderates turned off in equal measure by Republican reactionism and Roosevelt’s bid for a third term. Although Willkie outperformed the previous two Republicans to run against and lose to Roosevelt (President Herbert Hoover and Kansas Gov. Alf Landon), he still lost in a landslide. The president won 38 states with 449 electoral votes compared to Willkie’s 10 states worth 82 electoral votes. In the

popular vote, Roosevelt amassed 27.3 million to Willkie’s 22.3 million, or 54.7 percent to 44.8 percent.

It was a thumping defeat for Willkie, but he had still finished a historic campaign. Until Donald Trump won the Republican presidential nomination in 2016, Willkie was the last person to win a presidential nomination from a major party without previous political or military experience; while Trump was most famous as the host of a reality TV show called “The Apprentice,” Willkie had been best known as a crusading lawyer who took on Roosevelt’s liberal New Deal programs. Yet just as Trump ended the 2016 campaign as a changed man – a president, for better or worse, forevermore – Willkie also concluded his 1940 campaign as a changed man.

Yet whereas Trump decided to become a far-right president who to illegitimately seized power in a coup when he lost in the 2020 election, Willkie chose the exact opposite course. Instead of nursing grievances against his erstwhile opponent, Willkie put aside partisan differences and worked directly with Roosevelt. America was sucked into World War II by the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, and Willkie believed Americans had a moral responsibility to focus on both winning the war and creating a lasting peace.

To this end, Roosevelt dispatched Willkie in August 1942 on a worldwide trip, one that

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would eventually form the basis of “One World.” Brimming with optimism, Willkie departed on an airplane called *The Gulliver* flown by Major Richard T. Kight, D. F. C. The itinerary included the Middle East, Soviet Union and China, with Willkie appearing as the president’s personal representative while gathering information and creating postwar alliances. After a successful trip through the North African front at El Alamein with the legendary General Bernard Law “Monty” Montgomery, and an equally fruitful session with the iconic General Charles de Gaulle in Beirut, Willkie’s wanderings finally brought him to Jerusalem.

This was almost six years before Israel would become an independent nation – a reality that Willkie would not live to see.

It is here that one must pause and read some of Willkie’s observations about Palestine in their entirety. It is not an understatement to observe that Willkie was prophetic about the intractable nature of the conflict between the diverse groups in Palestine, then controlled by the British Empire. He described the “polite but skeptical people” who greeted him everywhere he went in the region. They were painfully aware of America’s own problems with racism and imperialism, and therefore were among the colder visitors in terms of their reception of Willkie.

Yet the once and future presidential aspirant did not hold this against his hosts. Quite to the contrary, he empathized with the abject poverty all around him.

I understood in Jerusalem for the first time how so many other Americans have gone there with a real feeling of returning to Biblical times. The reason was that they were in truth returning to Biblical times, where little has changed in two thousand years.

Willkie picked up on one major exception to this rule – the areas in British – controlled Palestine where Zionist colonies had been established. In this respect, Willkie compared the world Zionist movement to the Arabs in Baghdad who had achieved self-government. He argued that when people are provided with autonomy and the tools for success, they will succeed.

Four things, it seemed to me, these people need, in varying degree and in different ways. They need more education. They need more public-health work. They need more modern industry. And they need more of the social dignity and self-confidence which comes from freedom and self-rule.

With a tone one would find shocking in a modern Republican, Willkie argued that income inequality and colonialism were the two major problems in the Middle East. Blame for both could be placed in large part at the feet of the world’s major powers, at that time the sprawling global European empires promulgated by Britain, France and Germany. As these nations carved up lands and civilizations among themselves as if they were portioning food during a meal, Willkie reported that the peoples in those societies despised their overlords.

I was talking with one of the high officials of the Lebanon about the struggle that was then going on between the French and the British for the control of Syria and the Middle East. I asked him where his sympathies lay, and he replied, “A plague on both their houses.” The intellectual leaven of the Middle East has little faith in a system of mandates and colonies, whatever power controls.

Speaking with leaders of the Arab and Jewish communities, Willkie mused that “I felt a great

temptation to conclude that the only solution of this tangled problem must be as drastic as Solomon's." He turned with hope to the words of Henrietta Szold, the founder of the Hadassah Women's Zionist Organization of America, who informed Willkie that foreign powers were intentionally stirring up prejudices between Arabs and Jews to consolidate their own control. After explaining that Jews no longer believed antisemitism would go away in their lifetimes, and that the only practical solution was a homeland of their own, Szold concluded thusly:

"I am an ardent Zionist, but I do not believe that there is a necessary antagonism between the hopes of the Jews and the rights of the Arabs. I am urging my fellow Jews here in Jerusalem to do those simple things that break down the prejudices, the differences between people. I urge each of them to make friends with a few Arabs to demonstrate by their way of life that we are not coming as conquerors or destroyers, but as a part of the traditional life of the country, for us a sentimental and religious homeland."

Willkie wished that matters could be as simple as the vision expressed by Szold, but he emphatically saw that material conditions would have to improve first. He was appalled by the rampant diseases and lack of adequate infrastructure, dismissing the then-pervasive racist belief that "the natives don't want anything better than what they have." Instead, he felt that a higher standard of living produced a superior quality of public health and education whenever it was introduced in a society.

Unfortunately for the Middle East, Willkie's period of prominence on the American political scene was destined to be brief. After completing his travels through the Soviet Union and

China, Willkie returned to the United States in October 1942 and described his trip in a radio broadcast "Report to the People." Thirty-six million individuals listened to Willkie's speech, and millions more bought "One World" when it was published the following April. Edited by his lover, New York Herald Tribune book review editor Irita Bradford Van Doren, "One World" was an immediate bestseller, selling one million copies in its first month.

Yet this was the peak of Willkie's career. The iconoclasm that charmed Republican delegates in 1940 had become a liability by 1944; the tousle haired Hoosier's full-throated support for Roosevelt's interventionist foreign policies was deeply unpopular among the GOP rank and file. Willkie did so poorly in his bid for the Republican presidential nomination in 1944 that he soon dropped out, and shortly thereafter he literally dropped dead: the portly 52-year-old paid a fatal toll for his lifetime of eating excessively, heavy drinking and smoking and little exercise. He suffered a dozen heart attacks in less than a month at New York City's Lenox Hill Hospital, eventually dying. He was mourned by Democrats and Republicans alike, who praised his support for world peace and an end to racism.

Like most failed presidential candidates, Willkie quickly faded into obscurity. The ideas in "One World," however, did not. They were promoted by luminaries like former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, Indian civil rights activist Mahatma Gandhi, and physicists like Albert Einstein and Robert Oppenheimer. All of this leads to the thesis of "One World" and how it changed my life. The book was not compelling enough to cause me to immediately abandon my Zionism – that was a slow process which took decades, as I had been raised to dismiss criticisms of Israel as at best suspect and at worst bigoted – but it certainly was the genesis of my belief in world federalism.

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While I believe one can be both a Zionist and a world federalist, I do not believe that a person can support the human rights violations perpetrated by many Israelis in the name of Zionism. The same is true of the anti-Israel movements which, in seeking justice and liberation for the oppressed Palestinians, engage in antisemitism and violence: They too cannot adhere both to those beliefs and world federalism.

To understand why, look at Willkie's explanation of the basic precepts of world federalism.

To win this peace, three things for me seem necessary – first, we must plan now for peace on a world basis; second, the world must be free, politically and economically, for nations and for men, that peace may exist in it; third, America must play an active, constructive part in freeing it and keeping the peace.

While paying due respect to the nationalist aspirations of all peoples, Willkie told his readers that humans would need to start viewing their interests globally rather than parochially. He criticized documents like the Atlantic Charter, an August 1941 statement of post-World War II goals signed by Roosevelt and his British counterpart (Prime Minister Winston Churchill), as being too weak to effectively create global peace and justice. After the experience that crushed Wilson in the post-World War I years, Willkie doubted that politicians – whether elected or authoritarian – could set aside their narrow self-interest to create a truly better world.

Instead, he argued that any successful world federalist structure would need to draw its power directly from the people it serves. Peoples who had previously been exploited with relative impunity by Western powers were self-educating and self-empowering.

They understood that societies across the globe are interdependent, and as such effective political structures would need to meet the transnational needs of the struggling, working masses.

Our Western world and our presumed supremacy are now on trial. Our boasting and our big talk leave Asia cold. Men and women in Russia and China and in the Middle East are conscious now of their own potential strength. They are coming to know that many of the decisions about the future of the world lie in their hands. And they intend that these decisions shall leave the peoples of each nation free from foreign domination, free for economic, social and spiritual growth.

A world federalist government that competently implemented these principles in good faith would be able to impose a just outcome on the situation in Israel. It definitely would not be easy or quick. But a solution can only come from outside authority that recognizes the legitimate grievances on both sides.

The Palestinian Arabs have suffered ever since the Nakba, or the violent displacement of Palestinian Arabs from their land in 1948. Immediately prior to the Nakba, the Jewish colonists in Palestine – a territory soon to be abandoned by the British Empire – prepared to declare their independent statehood. Upon doing so and being recognized by President Harry S. Truman, the surrounding Arab nations declared war on Israel and vowed to push the Jews into the sea. Meanwhile the Zionists forcibly removed 750,000 Arabs from their homes and killed another 15,000 in dozens of village massacres, setting in motion a cycle of bloody wars and tense interludes marked by unremitting hostility on both sides.

Today there are more than one million

Palestinian Arabs in the Gaza Strip and an additional 750,000 in the West Bank. *According to Amnesty International*, they face regular discrimination as they are segregated in strictly monitored territorial and legal domains. Families are often separated involuntarily. Thousands of people are regularly removed from their homes by force, with their property seized. Israel has imposed an economic blockade on the Palestinians since 2007, severely restricting the population's access to vital resources as well as their right to freedom of movement. This is why Israel's treatment of the Palestinians meets the six standards that Amnesty International lays out as necessary to be considered an official apartheid state.

Israel also has valid criticisms of the Palestinian Arabs. *More than 24,000 Israelis have died* defending their homeland since 1860, and thousands more have died in terrorist attacks. On Oct. 7th, 6000 Gazans poured across the border while 1,000 more fired rockets from across the border in the Gaza Strip. They managed to kill 1,139 people, the largest single loss of Jewish life since the Holocaust, including 695 Israeli civilians (including 38 children), 71 foreign nationals and 373 members of Israel security forces.

Adding salt in the fresh and raw wounds of these horrifying crimes, Israelis and the world Jewish community have witnessed a resurgence of vicious antisemitism. While the majority

of pro-Palestine protesters are peaceful and non-bigoted, a vocal minority has been hateful and incendiary against Jews more broadly. In perhaps the most repulsive manifestation of this trend, many critics of Israel defend, downplay and/or deny Palestinian atrocities, such as the widespread and credible reports of rape against victims. As *The Atlantic columnist* Michael A. Cohen wrote:

Since allegations of sexual violence first appeared in the fall, a contingent of anti-Israel activists have sought to disprove them. "Believe women" and "Silence is violence" have been rallying cries of progressive feminist organizations for decades. But the same empathy and support have not been shown for Israeli victims.

The spirit of Willkieism – the ideas laid out by Willkie in "One World" and his other writings, particularly those after his 1940 presidential campaign – is inimical to both the colonialist oppression of Israel and the vile bigotry of the antisemites. Meanwhile the practice of Willkieism would provide all of the sides in this conflict with neutral outside sources that could mediate a just and peaceful resolution to the complex and massively entangled conflict.

No one knows for sure how to successfully win these battles. But in his book "One World," Willkie gave us a good idea about how we can start.

A Global Wealth Tax on the Super Rich

Alberto Majocchi

In the post-war period, significant improvements in income distribution were achieved globally, but inequality, net of withdrawal and transfers, has risen almost steadily over the past two decades. This phenomenon largely reflects the fact that tax policy has become less redistributive, with a less progressive income tax.

Another factor that greatly affects inequality is the distribution of property. In his 2021 book, *Une brève histoire de l'égalité (A brief history of equality)*, Thomas Piketty shows that in Europe, in 1913, 40% of the population, between the richest 10% and the poorest 50%, owned about 10% of total property, while by 2020 their share had grown to 40%, especially in the form of real estate. The redistribution of ownership has been heavily skewed towards the middle class, leaving the poorest 50% with a mere 5% of all property in 2020, while the richest 10% has amassed 55%.

According to data collected by Gabriel Zucman in *Global Wealth Inequality*, wealth inequality in the United States has increased dramatically since 1980, with the top 1% of the income distribution scale holding nearly 40% in 2016, up from 25-30% in 1980. A similar trend of increasing wealth concentration has occurred globally: the combined wealth share of the richest 1% in China, Europe, and the United States has increased from 28% in 1980 to 33% today, while the share of the bottom 75% barely reaches 10%.

While the accumulation of large amounts of capital is the result of personal ability and commitment, the social environment and

access to public goods play a crucial role. A progressive wealth tax should ensure that after accounting for wealth and inheritance tax – which help finance the production of public goods essential for supporting individual efforts – there remains sufficient residual wealth to reward the activity and commitment that enabled the accumulation of assets. Individuals can choose to pass on their residual wealth to heirs, allocate it to socially useful causes or support activities of collective interest. A progressive wealth tax would thus contribute to strengthening social cohesion and promote economic growth in a society with reduced inequality.

In Europe, as spending rises to support the ecological and digital “twin transitions” and to fund the necessary measures for defence of the continent and the security of Europeans, the tax burden falls on ordinary tax payers, while the super-rich virtually manage to avoid paying any taxes. According to the *Global Tax Evasion Report 2024*, compiled by the EU Tax Observatory, the super-rich can exploit numerous tax loopholes to effectively pay little to no tax, amounting to only 0%-0.5% of their total wealth. Meanwhile, wealthy individuals who do not use these loopholes pay between 20% and 50% in income taxes.

This situation is increasingly politically unsustainable, although some progress has been made with the creation of a new form of international cooperation – an automatic, multilateral exchange of banking information in force since 2017 and implemented by over 100 countries in 2023 – and with a historic international agreement for a global minimum

tax on multinational corporations approved by over 140 countries and territories in 2021.

To address growing wealth inequality, a recent meeting of G20 finance ministers put forward a *proposal* by four countries – Germany, Spain, Brazil and South Africa – *to introduce a wealth tax* with a rate of 2% on the approximately 3,000 billionaires that exist globally. The *Global Tax Evasion Report 2024* estimates this could generate about \$250 billion in tax revenue annually, helping to reduce inequality – at least partially – and raise public funds, which have been strained by the economic shocks of the pandemic, the climate crisis and military conflicts in Europe and the Middle East.

The Report estimates that Europe’s 499 billionaires possess a collective wealth of €2,260 billion, averaging €4.5 billion per individual. A 2% wealth tax on this group could generate a revenue of €45.3 billion. After subtracting the amount of personal taxes that the super-rich currently pay (estimated at around €5.6 billion), the additional revenue would be approximately €40 billion, impacting each taxpayer by roughly €80 million.

As the four ministers (two from EU Member States, two from BRICS countries) who signed the proposal stated, “Of course, the point that billionaires can easily move their fortunes to low-tax jurisdictions, and thus avoid the new form of taxation, is strong. And that is why such tax reform must be on the G20 agenda. International cooperation and global agreements are fundamental to making this form of taxation effective. What the international community was able to do with the global minimum tax on multinationals, it can do with billionaires.”

A minimum tax on the rich would certainly not solve all the problems of tax equity. It is only one part – albeit an important one – of a fair tax system, together with a highly progressive income tax and an equally progressive inheritance tax. In addition to indirect taxes on luxury consumption in advanced societies and on the excessive, harmful use of natural resources, the financing of public goods will have to increasingly rely on wealth taxation. A substantial wealth and inheritance tax could gradually reduce income inequalities, which make social cohesion in our communities increasingly precarious.

The UN Review Conference on Program of Action - Small Arms & Light Weapons and Arms Trade Treaty

James Arputharaj

Global conflict has been a prime driver for pushing 117 million people in 19 countries to extreme hunger and leaving millions more as refugees. According to Oxfam, global military spending reached \$2.2 trillion last year which was enough to cover the UN global humanitarian appeal 42 times. Non-state actors, warlords and mercenaries are also benefiting from illegal and off the book sales and transfers. Between 2004 & 2011, the five permanent members of the UN Security Council alone exported 85% of global arms sales. We all know that many of the weapons illicitly traded were originally produced legally. Transit points in several instances have become end users, and the supply tap of weapon production is open, and fuels the conflicts, which increases the demand for and heightens risks of diversion of small arms and light weapons (SALW) to unauthorized recipients, therefore Governments have a responsibility to be more serious in addressing proliferation and diversion of SALW. The development of 3D printing of guns poses altogether a new challenge as it is beyond the scope of any regulatory body. The President of the Review Conference, the ambassador from Costa Rica, stressed the need for urgency and the search for multi-faceted solutions.

Until recently I worked for 10 years in Afghanistan, we all know who profited from the 2 decades of war in Afghanistan.

We need not only to put in place export controls

but also control of the production of weapons, the supply side needs to be regulated, while controlling the demand side as well. "Earlier we were manufacturing weapons to sell, but now we are manufacturing wars to sell weapons."

Some countries, to increase their economy are engaging in the production and export of weapons. Do we need weapons of any kind at all – legal or illegal – to maintain international peace and security? Negotiations are key to resolving conflicts. Only 74 countries have accepted the compulsory international jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice (ICJ). The World Federalist Movement is campaigning to enhance the jurisdiction and use of the ICJ through the "Law not war" project which is supported by the Global Challenge Foundation.

Many arms control activists around the world hoped that member states who adopted the UN Program of Action on SALW in 2001 and ratified the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), would live up to the expectations of people around the world by implementing the treaty provisions in order to create a peaceful environment.

The fourth United Nations conference held in New York in July 2024 aimed to review progress made in the implementation of the Program of Action to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in SALW in all its aspects. While the program of action on SALW was adopted in

2001, the International Tracing Instrument (ITI) was adopted subsequently. This calls for record keeping and monitoring end users. Marking and tracking arms transfer is an important component of arms control. There are still some member-states who have not even formed a national coordinating agency, the first step. Some countries have not submitted reports. Only 96 member-states have submitted reports to UN Office for Disarmament Affairs.

For example, the last report from Sri Lanka was in 2008. We at South Asian Federalists (SAF) are working with the governments of Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal to ensure regular reporting and other capacity building activities.

We appreciate the reference to ammunition in the (zero draft outcome) document¹, recognizing the implementation of applicable policies and practices on conventional ammunition management. One of the studies conducted by South Asia Small Arms Network (SASA-Net) in its publication, “Small arms proliferation: a big problem?” some years ago highlighted the fact that while there are illegal gun manufacturing factories, ammunition comes through pilferages from government stockpiles. There should be more support from the European Union/western countries for capacity building of governments in stockpile management, weapons collection and destruction.

The draft document notes, “States resolve: To put in place, where they do not exist, adequate laws, regulations and administrative procedures to exercise effective national control... of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons”.

In the publication “Small arms proliferation – a big problem” SASA-Net emphasized the need to bring amendments to national FireArms Acts in response to the UN Program of Action.

In the debate on the final outcome of the document, the main issue of contention concerned regulations on ammunition. This was resolved. We are glad that there is a treaty adopted in 2023 on Conventional Ammunition Management at the UN. The UN has scheduled a meeting in Nepal in Dec 2024 to review progress in this regard. The Arab countries objected to the language on gender focused implementation; this objection was also withdrawn after negotiations.

During the Review Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty only 15 countries who had ratified the ATT had submitted reports to the ATT secretariat, although this is mandatory. China had submitted its report and called it confidential. China continues to export to non-state actors in Asia (to both the government and rebels in Myanmar) and Africa and there is no way of finding this out.

Some delegations including Palestine, Maldives and the Islamic group condemned the fact that some European countries and others are violating the provisions of the ATT by exporting arms to Israel, a conflict zone. However, the President mentioned that he had received the statement but there was no further discussion. One wonders what “legally binding” really means. The Fire Arms protocol and ATT are the only legally binding instruments that came into force after much dedication and struggle by small arms activists around the world.

According to a report by Saferworld³ UK, ATT faces several challenges that threaten its potential to deliver on its primary purposes of furthering peace, security and stability, reducing human suffering, and promoting transparency and responsibility in the international arms trade. These challenges include: the Treaty’s worsening financial position – largely arising from the failure by some States Parties to meet their obligations to fund the ongoing business of the Treaty (such as the annual Conference

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of States Parties and the work of the ATT Secretariat); declining levels of engagement in the formal ATT process; and a reluctance of States to discuss the widespread transfer of arms to situations where they are then misused. These issues raise questions about whether the process is now adequately meeting the needs of ATT stakeholders – primarily States Parties, States Signatories and civil society. This has led to growing discontent with the Treaty process as it stands. The ATT program of work is organized predominantly via three working groups – on Effective Treaty Implementation (WGETI), on Transparency and Reporting (WGTR), and on Treaty Universalization (WGTU). Usually meeting twice a year over three days, these working groups have produced a raft of guidance to support key aspects of Treaty life. Each three-day session is followed by a one-day preparatory committee meeting which addresses administrative matters prior to the annual Conference of States Parties. The ATT Management Committee is now reviewing the ATT program of work. This briefing offers recommendations for the Committee’s and State Parties’ consideration.

I would like to end with the opening declaration

of the UN Program of Action zero draft outcome document, “A renewed commitment to peace, security, and sustainable development by preventing, combating and eradicating the illicit trade and diversion of small arms and light weapons”...This aims to reduce human suffering, gender-based violence; enhance participation of women in the electoral process, strengthen democracy and ensure a more peaceful and environmentally peaceful world thereby SAVING LIVES in line with the preamble to the UN Charter:

“We the Peoples of the United Nations Determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war.....”

Conclusion: There is a continued strong lobby of the so-called “international community” who continue to promote wars one after another, for their own profit maximization. The democratic deficit at the UN in terms of veto power at the Security Council needs to change as even now we cannot enforce UN General Assembly resolutions on ceasefire in Ukraine and Gaza. Only a Parliament at the UN could defeat the vested interest of this dominant power structure.

¹ [https://docs-library.unoda.org/Programme_of_Action_on_Small_Arms_and_Light_Weapons_-_Review_Conference_\(2024\)/2024_05_13_Zero_Draft_Outcome_Document.pdf](https://docs-library.unoda.org/Programme_of_Action_on_Small_Arms_and_Light_Weapons_-_Review_Conference_(2024)/2024_05_13_Zero_Draft_Outcome_Document.pdf)

² <https://catalogue.nla.gov.au/catalog/3698694>

³ <https://www.saferworld-global.org/resources/publications/913-saferworld-our-history>

The North-South War Regulates the Planet

Raúl Zibechi

The war in Ukraine “is a unique situation and cannot be compared to any other war or conflict in the world,” the International Olympic Committee (IOC) tells *Time* magazine to justify Russia’s exclusion from the Paris Games. Russia’s invasion of Ukraine is a regrettable event that must be strongly condemned. But where does the IOC’s idea that this is a unique and unprecedented war come from? Undoubtedly from the colonialist mentality that still dominates in the West, which underlies institutional decisions and mainstream media propaganda, which no longer inform, but rather impose concepts/visions/points of view.

The truth is that **we** are in the midst of the transition from a unipolar world centered on the global North (the United States, part of the European Union and its allies) to a multipolar world with different powers and regions interacting on an equal footing, with none of them able to settle the world according to their own interests, any reasonable analysis fades in the colonial winds that are blowing again with unusual intensity.

The new order that is likely to emerge after a series of local and perhaps global wars will be anchored in several countries and regions of the Global South and is taking shape in recent years in the wake of the wars in Ukraine and Gaza. Let’s remember that the majority of the Global South (85 percent of the world’s population) did not support the sanctions imposed on Russia by the Global

North (15 percent of the world’s population) and, with some exceptions, recognizes the Palestinian state, an awareness that is slowly “contaminating” nearly half of the countries in the European Union. The contradiction of the Global North vs. the Global South orders and subordinates all others. The conflict between workers and owners (bourgeoisie and proletariat in Marxist parlance) no longer plays an important role in any scenario, although it has not disappeared, just as the meaning of family, work, and savings has evaporated as values defensible by a progressive or even conservative sensibility.

I believe that there has been fraud in the recent elections in Venezuela, for reasons that I think are inappropriate to discuss since the evidence speaks for itself, although I have read intellectuals I appreciate who claim otherwise. In short, there is an authoritarian or dictatorial regime in Venezuela that is corrupt and repressive. However, I think the biggest problem is not the fraud, which is very serious because of the degradation it shows, but the systematic violence against popular sectors. I rely on the annual reports of Provea (Venezuelan Program for Human Rights Education-Action) and particularly the latest one, on human rights in 2023. Provea is an organization created in 1988 that played an important role in exposing state crimes during the 1989 Caracazo, when the «social democracy” of Carlos Andrés Pérez, a great friend of Felipe González and the United States, was in power.

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The 2023 report begins by denouncing the fact that authoritarianism has become standard policy in much of the world: Hungary, Turkey, El Salvador, Poland, the Philippines, India, Nicaragua and Venezuela, among others, many of which are accepted as full-fledged “democracies.” As for our region, he also claims that there are “serious human rights violations in countries such as Cuba, Nicaragua, Peru, El Salvador, Venezuela, Guatemala, and even Canada and the United States.”

In Venezuela, 620 murders were committed by state forces in 2023 alone. “The Bolivarian National Police (PNB) is the agency with the highest number of alleged extrajudicial killings. A total of 185 people were killed under its command; in other words, the PNB is responsible for 30 percent of these murders. The Bolivarian National Armed Force (FANB) was responsible for 99 deaths, or 16 percent” – the report said.

The highest figure is chilling: “Since Nicolás Maduro came to power, 9,995 violations of the right to life have been recorded,” or 10,000 people killed by the state in a decade. In parallel, Provea denounces the government for “high levels of abuse against the population; a deliberate and arbitrary use of lethality by the police; and for turning young people in popular areas into targets. These policies have been led by the Ministry of Interior and Justice, where most of the ministers have been military, a situation that has led to greater involvement of the Armed Forces in security tasks, which, by constitutional mandate, correspond to the police force.”

Why does the international community care so much about the “murder” of voter rolls and leave in the shadows the mass murders of poor young people in the urban suburbs of Venezuela? Again, there is a double standard here.

Venezuela has the largest conventional oil reserves in the world. Saudi Arabia is in second place. Venezuela is characterized as a dictatorship and its electoral processes are monitored. There are no elections in Saudi Arabia, and reports of human rights violations would make even Maduro’s toughest opponent pale. Human Rights Watch reported that “Saudi border guards killed at least hundreds of Ethiopian migrants and asylum seekers who attempted to cross the Yemen-Saudi border between March 2022 and June 2023.”

However, the mainstream media speak of dictatorship when they talk about Venezuela and monarchy when they refer to the regime in Riyadh. Readers can read the headlines in Clarín, Infobae or La Nación to verify the propaganda manipulation.

Between 2013 and July 2024, U.S. police killed 13,091 people, according to the Mapping Police Violence project. An absolute number slightly higher than Venezuela’s, although the United States has a population ten times larger. But Maduro’s dictatorship and Washington’s democracy share another aspect: most of the people killed are black and young.

The *Washington Post’s Fatal Force* database states that “more than half of the people killed by police are between the ages of 20 and 40.” “African Americans are about 12 percent of the population, but between 2015 and 2019 they accounted for 26.4 percent of all such deaths,” summarizes the BBC based on this database (3-VI-20).

“Compared to other countries, U.S. police killed people at three times the rate of Canadian police and 60 times the rate of British police,” reads the report *Mapping Police Violence*. New Mexico has the highest rate of police fatalities. The reader unfamiliar with maps should know that it is a border state with Mexico.

Geopolitics, a cursed discipline, is organizing international relations. No one in Uruguay would dare to sanction or disrupt relations with China, even though it is clearly not a democracy. Perhaps because it is the main market for our exports?

We are navigating turbulent waters in

which self-interest and advantage are the dominant values. Speaking the truth seems ridiculous to more than a few, on both sides of the barricade. Maduro is a dictator, but so is Xi Jinping, is not something governments and parliament members are willing to say, each minding their own business.

The International Criminal Court and the Crime of Ecocide

Vanuatu, Fiji, and Samoa, three small Pacific countries particularly at risk from an environmental perspective, recently requested the International Criminal Court to recognize ecocide, that is, the determination of serious, widespread, and persistent damage to the natural environment, as an international crime. The request highlights the Court's possible role in building a global legal order, without which none of humanity's great common problems, from peace to environmental security, can be truly addressed and solved. The Court, established in 2002, has specific jurisdiction over genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and crimes of aggression, and is the only permanent court in existence that can prosecute individuals (not just states like the International Court of Justice) for these crimes. The Court, whose Attorney General Karim Khan recently called for the arrest of some Hamas leaders, Israeli President Netanyahu, and his government's defense minister for the ongoing massacres in the Middle East war, is not a UN body but currently includes 123 countries of the world. Even with its obvious limitations (decisive countries such as the United States, China, Russia and Israel are not members and refuse its jurisdiction), it is therefore to some extent legitimized and representative from an international perspective. Through its Prosecutor's Office, the Court can issue international arrest warrants and subpoenas, the enforcement of which is left to member states.

The problem of the enforceability of international criminal law, as well as its legitimacy, is one of the major problems facing the international community. The recognition of the crime of ecocide could be a significant opportunity to help address this fundamental challenge operationally (*gb*)

The United Nations and the War in Gaza. The Necessary Compromise

Giovanni Maria Flick

The international press is reporting news of a Palestinian draft resolution to be presented at the UN General Assembly that would incorporate the July 2024 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice and demand that Israel comply with international law, withdraw troops from the Palestinian territories, put an end to Israeli settlements there, send settlers back, remove barriers between Israel and the West Bank and ensure the return of displaced Palestinians to their homes, and compensation for damage suffered. Israeli authorities have contested that advisory opinion. Among the major criticisms advanced: it did not take into account the historical ties of the Israeli people to the territories; it focused only on Israeli conduct; it ignored UN Security Council resolutions; and it did not consider the interim agreements of the 1993 Oslo Accords.

In addition to the images of violent war, the international political confrontation is amplified by states which are formally uninvolved in the conflict but are interested in taking advantage of the current situation, in controlling resources, controlling outlets on the Mediterranean and conditioning the behavior of Middle Eastern countries.

The gravity of the situation with the war should not prevent negotiations. The Oslo Accords were concluded despite the previous 20-year Israeli occupation and the Palestinian Intifada after the fall of the Berlin Wall and Operation Desert Storm. The spirit of the Accords must be revived. Their focus on the cultural, social and economic development of Palestine is crucial.

Economic cooperation, mutual security, free transit of people to and from Gaza. Only by identifying common goals for the pursuit of the welfare of both peoples can the influence of religious and political radicalism in the relationship between the two positions be set aside. This was the insight of European states and the basis of their path to integration: 75 years of peace thanks to a Europe of well-being. Other insights are found in the Italian Constitution: no to war as a means to resolve international disputes; yes to the acknowledgement of the need for cohesion.

It is clear that it is necessary to take a wider viewpoint: to pursue peace in the whole of the Middle East. It is necessary to involve other Arab countries. We had an attempt at this recently with the Abraham Accords between Israel, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, under the auspices of the US. We need to take note of the profound change in the social and political environment, caused precisely by the non-compliance with those Accords. It is impossible to achieve peace in the absence of an effective willingness to compromise. The actions of the Israeli government appear disproportionate to the extremely serious events of October 7: military incursions, the closure of Gaza, continuous evacuations imposed on Palestinian civilians, aggressive statements (there is speculation about changing the legal status of the Esplanade of Mosques).

The path to reconciliation must include the

involvement of the most influential states. Peace is not built on learned interpretations of international law or on legal acrobatics and formulations exploited as a pretext to obstruct dialogue and refuse reciprocal renunciation of claims. Peace requires concrete actions and the pursuit of balance among the interests at stake, which often turns into the identification of the lesser evil. It requires the coexistence of two

states for two peoples and not the victory of one over the other. There is a need to ensure the progress of the Palestinian territory so that it emancipates itself from the influence of fundamentalisms and from political conditioning due to the military power of other countries, perhaps more interested in maintaining the de facto situation than in resolving the dispute.

10 Principles for Perpetual Peace in the 21st Century

Jeffrey D. Sachs

The resolution Next year will mark the 230th anniversary of Immanuel Kant's celebrated essay on "*Perpetual Peace*" (1795). The great German philosopher put forward a set of guiding principles to achieve perpetual peace among the nations of his day. As we grapple with a world at war, and indeed at dire risk of nuclear Armageddon, we should build on Kant's approach for our own time. An updated set of principles should be considered at the United Nations Summit of the Future in September.

Kant was fully aware that his proposals would face the skepticism of "practical" politicians:

The practical politician assumes the attitude of looking down with great self-satisfaction on the political theorist as a pedant whose empty ideas in no way threaten the security of the state, inasmuch as the state must proceed on empirical principles; so the theorist is allowed to play his game without interference from the worldly-wise statesman.

Nonetheless, as historian Mark Mazower noted in his *magisterial account of global governance*, Kant's was a "text that would intermittently influence generations of thinkers about world government down to our own day," helping to lay the groundwork for the United Nations and international law on human rights, the conduct of war, and arms control.

Kant's core proposals centered on three ideas. First, he rejected standing armies. Standing armies "incessantly menace other states by their readiness to appear at all times prepared

for war." In this, Kant anticipated by a century and a half the *famous warning by U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower* of the dangers of a military-industrial complex. Second, Kant called for non-interference in the internal affairs of other nations. In this, Kant inveighed against the kind of covert operations that the U.S. has used relentlessly to topple foreign governments. Third, Kant called for a "federation of free states," which in our time became the United Nations, a "federation" of 193 states pledged to operate under the U.N. Charter.

Kant put great hopes on *republicanism* as opposed to one-person rule as a check on war-making. Kant reasoned that a single ruler would readily succumb to the temptation of war:

...a declaration of war is the easiest thing in the world to decide upon, because war does not require of the ruler, who is the proprietor and not a member of the state, the least sacrifice of the pleasures of his table, the chase, his country houses, his court functions, and the like. He may, therefore, resolve on war as on a pleasure party for the most trivial reasons, and with perfect indifference leave the justification which decency requires to the diplomatic corps who are ever ready to provide it.

By contrast, according to Kant:

...if the consent of the citizens is required in order to decide that war should be declared (and in this [republican] constitution it cannot but be the case), nothing is more natural

than that they would be very cautious in commencing such a poor game, decreeing for themselves all the calamities of war.

Kant was far too optimistic about the ability of public opinion to constrain war-making. Both the Athenian and Roman republics were notoriously belligerent. Britain was the 19th century's leading democracy, but perhaps its most belligerent power. For decades, the U.S. has engaged in non-stop wars of choice and violent overthrows of foreign governments.

There are at least three reasons why Kant got this wrong. First, even in democracies, the choice to launch wars almost always lies with a small elite group who are in fact largely insulated from public opinion. Second, and equally important, public opinion is relatively easy to manipulate through propaganda to stir the public backing for war. Third, the public can be insulated in the short term from the high costs of war by financing war through debt rather than taxation, and by relying on contractors, paid recruits, and foreign fighters rather than conscription.

Kant's core ideas on perpetual peace helped move the world toward international law, human rights, and the decent conduct in war (such as the Geneva Conventions) in the 20th century. Yet despite the innovations in global institutions, the world remains dreadfully far from peace. According to the Doomsday Clock of the *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, we are 90 seconds to midnight, *closer to nuclear war than at any time since the clock's introduction in 1947*.

The global apparatus of the U.N. and international law has arguably prevented a third world war to date. U.N. Secretary-General U Thant, for example, played a vital role in peacefully resolving the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. Yet the U.N.-based structures are fragile and in need of an urgent upgrade.

For this reason, I urge that we formulate and adopt a new set of principles based on four key geopolitical realities of our time.

First, we are living with the nuclear Sword of Damocles over our heads. President John F. Kennedy put it eloquently 60 years ago in his famous *Peace Speech*, when he declared:

I speak of peace because of the new face of war. Total war makes no sense in an age where great powers can maintain large and relatively invulnerable nuclear forces and refuse to surrender without resort to those forces. It makes no sense in an age where a single nuclear weapon contains almost 10 times the explosive force delivered by all the allied air forces in the Second World War.

Second, we have arrived at true multipolarity. For the first since the 19th century, Asia has overtaken the West in economic output. We are long past the Cold War era in which the U.S. and Soviet Union dominated, or the "unipolar moment" claimed by the U.S. after the demise of the Soviet Union in 1991. The U.S. is now one of several superpowers, including Russia, China, and India, with several regional powers as well (including Iran, Pakistan, and North Korea). The U.S. and its allies cannot unilaterally exact their will in Ukraine, the Middle East, or the Indo-Pacific region. The U.S. must learn to cooperate with the other powers.

Third, we now have an extensive and historically unprecedented set of international institutions for formulating and adopting global goals (e.g., regarding climate, sustainable development, and nuclear disarmament), adjudicating international law, and expressing the will of the global community (e.g., in the U.N. General Assembly and U.N. Security Council). Yes, these international institutions are still weak when the great powers choose to ignore them,

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yet they offer invaluable tools for building a true federation of nations in Kant's sense.

Fourth, humanity's fate is more tightly interconnected than ever. Global public goods – sustainable development, nuclear disarmament, protection of the Earth's biodiversity, prevention of war, pandemic prevention and control – are far more central to our shared fate than at any previous time in human history. Again, we can turn to JFK's wisdom, which rings as true today as then:

So let us not be blind to our differences, but let us also direct attention to our common interests and the means by which those differences can be resolved. And if we cannot end now our differences, at least we can help make the world safe for diversity. For in the final analysis, our most basic common link is that we all inhabit this small planet. We all breathe the same air. We all cherish our children's futures. And we are all mortal.

What principles should we adopt in our time that could contribute to perpetual peace? I propose 10 Principles for Perpetual Peace in the 21st Century, and invite others to revise, edit, or make their own list.

The first five of my principles are the *Principles of Peaceful Coexistence proposed by China 70 years ago* and subsequently adopted by the Non-Aligned nations. These are:

1. Mutual respect of all nations for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of other nations;
2. Mutual non-aggression of all nations towards other nations;
3. Mutual non-interference by all nations in the internal affairs of other nations (such as through wars of choice, regime change operations, or unilateral sanctions);

4. Equality and mutual benefits in the interactions among nations; and

5. Peaceful co-existence of all nations. To implement these five core principles, I recommend five specific principles of action:

6. The closure of overseas military bases, of which the *U.S.* and *U.K.* have by far the largest number.

7. The end of covert regime-change operations and unilateral coercive economic measures, which are grave violations of the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other nations. (Political scientist Lindsey O'Rourke has carefully *documented* 64 *U.S.* covert regime-change operations during 1947-1969, and the pervasive destabilization caused by such operations.

8. Adherence by all nuclear powers (*U.S.*, *Russia*, *China*, *U.K.*, *France*, *India*, *Pakistan*, *Israel*, and *North Korea*) to *Article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty*: "All Parties must pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to the cessation of the nuclear arms race and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control."

9. The commitment by all countries "not to strengthen their security at the expense of the security of other countries," (as per the *OSCE Charter*). States will not enter into military alliances that threaten their neighbors, and commit to resolve disputes through peaceful negotiations and security arrangements backed by the United Nations Security Council.

10. The commitment by all nations to cooperate in protecting the global commons and providing global public goods, including fulfillment of the Paris climate agreement, the

Sustainable Development Goals, and reform of U.N. institutions.

Today's great power confrontations, notably the U.S. conflicts with Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea, are largely due to America's continued pursuit of unipolarity

via regime change operations, wars of choice, unilateral coercive sanctions, and the global network of U.S. military bases and alliances. The 10 principles listed above would help to move the world to peaceful multilateralism governed by the U.N. Charter and the international rule of law.

The European Parliament and “Restoring Nature”: a New Directive Against Ecocide

In February 2024, the European Parliament approved a new directive on “ecocide”, based on a proposal made by the Commission in 2021, aimed at the “restoration of nature”. This effectively configured a new type of crime, ecocide, and established an obligation for member states to adapt their legislation within 2 years. This important reform originated from a debate that began in 1970, when the term ecocide was introduced by biologist Arthur Galston in reference to the devastation caused by Agent Orange (a particularly toxic defoliant used by the United States during the war) on Vietnamese and Cambodian territory.

In essence, ecocide is understood as a set of acts intended to result in serious, widespread, and persistent damage over time to the natural and human environment. More specifically, Article 3 of the directive defines ecocide as “the destruction or widespread and substantial, irreversible or lasting damage to an ecosystem of significant size or environmental value or to a habitat within a protected site, or widespread and substantial, irreversible or lasting damage to the quality of air, soil or water.” Under the directive, states must introduce prison sentences for this type of offense ranging from a minimum of 3 years to an undefined maximum, but no less than 10 years. There are also non-criminal penalties, such as restoration of environmental conditions if the damage is reversible, or financial penalties in proportion to the damage if it is irreversible.

The European Parliament directive has received the approval and support of environmental movements, such as in particular the *Stop Ecocide International* Foundation, according to which it establishes a clear moral and legal “red line” that can help determine the behavior of businesses and social, institutional and political actors. It should be noted, in order to understand the importance of the directive, that currently in Europe only France and Belgium have criminal penalties for large-scale environmental damage, and globally, only 14 other countries include the crime in their legal systems. In contrast, major countries such as the United States, China, and Russia do not recognize any crime of this nature.

Recently, three small Pacific countries, Vanuatu, Fiji, and Samoa, which are particularly at risk environmentally, have also asked the International Criminal Court to recognize ecocide as an international crime. It should be remembered, however, that the Court is not recognized by precisely the United States, China and Russia, as well as many others, so the deterrent effect of this recognition, while important, would still be limited. But intelligence, as opposed to stupidity (the ability to hurt oneself without even realizing it), is a not a widely spread human quality. This is an anthropological and political truth which, for the sake of prudence, should be remembered at all times and by all. (gb)

Kant, Einstein and ‘Perpetual Peace’

Guido Montani

Jeffrey Sachs, adviser to successive secretaries-general of the United Nations, has published an important proposal, based on ten principles, for a possible reform of the UN as its Summit on the Future looms later this month in New York. Noting that next year will mark the 230th anniversary of Immanuel Kant’s celebrated essay, ‘Toward perpetual peace: a philosophical sketch’, Sachs writes:

The great German philosopher put forward a set of guiding principles to achieve perpetual peace among the nations of his day. As we grapple with a world at war, and indeed a dire risk of nuclear Armageddon, we should build on Kant’s approach for our own time.

Although Kant could not have imagined the destructive potential of nuclear arms and other contemporary technologies – from bacteriological weapons to artificial intelligence – that make it practically impossible to draw a clear dividing line between civil society and the military arena today, the worrying international situation indeed threatens an atomic conflagration between great powers. And Sachs’ ten principles for gradually reforming the UN and promoting a peace process, based on a greater willingness to co-operate between large and small powers, are valid. But two additional considerations are necessary, to broaden the available forces and to outline more precisely the long-term institutional goal which Kant outlined – a world federation.

Economic governance

The first observation concerns the peace process, which does not necessarily have to involve the military potential of the great

powers. Recall the initiative of the postwar French government for pacification with defeated Germany via what became the European Coal and Steel Community, the start of the process of European unification. The Schuman Declaration of May 1950, prepared by the senior official Jean Monnet and presented by the French foreign minister, Robert Schuman, affirmed:

“The pooling of coal and steel production should immediately provide for the setting up of common foundations for economic development as a first step in the federation of Europe, and will change the destinies of those regions which have long been devoted to the manufacture of munitions of war, of which they have been the most constant victims.”

Today the international situation is very different. The wealth gap between rich and poor countries cannot be solved without a serious reform of the governance of the international economy – also demanded by the threat of irreversible ecological disaster. And while nuclear technology is being used by national governments to threaten world war, the climate crisis is forcing all nations to co-operate for the salvation of their citizens.

At the Bretton Woods conference of 1944 in the United States on the postwar international financial order, the British economist John Maynard Keynes proposed new international currency, the *bancor*. Keynes’ proposal was rejected in favour of the US dollar acting as a global reserve, a policy Washington abandoned in 1971. Today what is required is a reform of the International Monetary Fund – one of

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the Bretton Woods institutional products – to enable its Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) to act as an international reserve.

This plan was developed by Robert Triffin in the 1960s and has been proposed many times since. Five currencies make up the basket of SDRs: the dollar, the renminbi, the euro, the pound sterling and the yen. A world reserve currency – let's call it the *bancor* – would enable global economic governance among the US, China, the European Union, the United Kingdom and Japan, which could soon be extended to other G20 countries. In addition to the IMF's global monetary reform, a new Bretton Woods, engendered by inclusive multilateral co-operation among great powers, would make it possible to relaunch the World Trade Organization, paralysed by the failure of its dispute-settlement mechanism.

Baruch plan

The second concern is the ambiguity contained in any disarmament plan that leaves intact the system of international political and legal relations. Here the postwar resonance is the failed Baruch plan developed by the US financier and governmental adviser Bernard Baruch.

Urged by the peace movements following the explosion of the two atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, in August 1945, the following year the US government proposed to the Soviet Union a plan for a world authority, within the UN, to which all nuclear weapons and the resources necessary for their construction would be entrusted. This authority would have the power to inspect places of production and report individuals responsible for violating the rules it established to an international court.

The Baruch plan however soon ran aground. Washington proposed the abolition of the

right of veto held by the 'permanent five' in the Security Council, but the Soviet government refused to endorse this. Conversely, Moscow demanded the destruction of US nuclear weapons stockpiles – the Soviets did not then yet have the atomic bomb – which the Americans rejected. So, in the end the plan failed. A historian of those events observed:

“As the essence of the American proposal was limitation of sovereignty, so that of the Soviet was equality of sovereign power. The Americans demanded agreement on a control system before abolition of nuclear weapons; the Soviets, abolition before control.”

Today, with a plurality of nuclear powers – some big, some small – the historical and political situation is much more complex than at the time of the Baruch plan, when there were only two superpowers. Moreover, technological development is such that even a conventional war could cause endless destruction, as with the war between Russia and Ukraine and that between Israel and Hamas. As in the two world wars, there are countless casualties among the military forces and the civilian population.

Now between war and civilian technology the boundaries are uncertain. The system of information and data transmission is based on satellite networks that are becoming a target for world governments. China has developed lasers for the destruction of satellites. Russia and the US are working on possible forms of space sabotage of satellite communication networks, through the explosion of nuclear bombs in extra-terrestrial space.

Global public good

Global security – and therefore the lives of the citizens of the world and the future of young people – has become a public good that can no longer be guaranteed by national governments. A treaty among a few great powers today will

not prevent some other power from building new instruments of domination based not only on nuclear technologies (think of genetic manipulation, for instance).

When the Baruch plan was under discussion, Albert Einstein observed: 'It is not feasible to abolish one single weapon as long as war itself is not abolished.' His institutional proposal was inspired by Kant's Perpetual Peace. In 1947 he wrote:

"The nation-state is no longer capable of adequately protecting its citizens; increasing the military strength of a nation no longer guarantees its security. Mankind must give up war in the atomic era. What is at stake is the life or death of humanity. The only military force which can bring security to the world is a supranational police force, based on world law. To this end we must direct our energies."

Today, in a climate of serious international political and military tensions, Einstein's

proposals will be considered by political 'realists' an unattainable utopia. Utopias are however the modern formulation of the great perspectives of common life, hope and transcendence, articulated in the past in the language of the great religions and still shared by millions of the planet's inhabitants. 'Progress,' said the Irish writer Oscar Wilde, 'is the realisation of Utopias.'

Humanity has organised itself in its history into different civilisations but the civilisation of the citizens of the world does not yet exist. It is therefore necessary to initiate a dialogue among all the civilisations of the planet to identify the necessary path, step by step, to 'abolish war' and build a 'supranational police force, based on world law'.

Without a compass, it is very difficult to reach the destination. Einstein's proposal must be the North Star for all those who intend to reform the UN with the intention of guaranteeing perpetual peace to the citizens of the world.

For Oppenheimer, a World Government Was the Only Way to Save Us from Ourselves

Tad Daley and Jane Shevtsov

Blink and you'll miss it.

In a scene in the new *Oppenheimer* film set right after the successful 1949 atomic bomb test by the USSR, there is a brief exchange between the film's two main antagonists. Lewis Strauss, chair of the Atomic Energy Commission, asks J. Robert Oppenheimer what he thinks should be done now. "International control," Oppenheimer immediately replies.

"You mean world government?" Strauss fires back.

It sounds like a throwaway line, or one of those accusations routinely hurled at those trying to make global institutions marginally more effective. But in this case, Chairman Strauss' epithet was spot on.

The tremendous destruction of World War II, even before Hiroshima and Nagasaki, prompted a radical rethinking of the world political order. In particular, the idea of world government as the solution to the problem of war was placed front and center in this country's foreign policy debate, and argued about passionately in diners, dorm rooms, and dinner parties all across the land. Unfortunately, however, the legions of moviegoers who buy tickets to Christopher Nolan's otherwise excellent film this summer will have no idea that one of the leading proponents of that singular idea was J. Robert Oppenheimer.

After the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, Oppenheimer threw himself into working to control nuclear weapons. Like other atomic scientists, he was fully aware that the Soviet Union would likely develop its own atom bombs in just a few years, and that time was short to prevent an unrestrained nuclear arms race. The movie refers to his activities as working for "international cooperation." But his actual ideas were much deeper and more radical than those anodyne words imply.

In 1946, Oppenheimer participated in the development of a report for the secretary of state's Committee on Atomic Energy about what might be done to control nuclear weapons. The report, which became known as the Acheson-Lilienthal report but which was authored chiefly by Oppenheimer himself, proposed an international Atomic Development Agency that would have the sole right to mine and process uranium and to run reactors of any kind. This was a radical proposal, but, as its authors explained, they could see no alternative.

In June 1946, Oppenheimer published an article in *The New York Times Magazine* explaining the proposal to the public. The article discussed the relationship between peaceful and military uses of atomic energy, evaluated a couple of other ideas for controlling atomic weapons, and then discussed the proposed Atomic Development Agency.

It is here, in a section entitled “Sovereignty,” that we come across a striking passage:

Many have said that without world government there could be no permanent peace, and without peace there would be atomic warfare. I think one must agree with this. Many have said that there could be no outlawry of weapons and no prevention of war unless international law could apply to the citizens of nations, as federal law does to citizens of states, or we have made manifest the fact that international control is not compatible with absolute national sovereignty. I think one must agree with this. Similarly, in a January 1948 article for *Foreign Affairs* magazine, Oppenheimer wrote:

It is quite clear that in this field we would like to see patterns established which, if they were more generally extended, would constitute some of the most vital elements of a new international law: patterns not unrelated to the ideals which more generally and eloquently are expressed by the advocates of world government.

From the vantage point of 2023, the remarkable thing about these passages is the apparent assumption that the reader is familiar with the idea of world government, and arguments for and against it, to the point where they can just be mentioned without explanation or elaboration. And for much of the public for much of the 1940s, this was probably true – as remarkable as it might seem to us today, when this notion is entirely absent from the international affairs debate.

Even before the end of the war, world government advocacy had become a prominent feature of the political conversation in America. In 1943, the businessman and Republican presidential candidate Wendell Willkie published a book called *One World*. The book sold 1.5 million copies in the four months

following its release and played a key role in a blossoming of world federation advocacy – long before virtually anyone had heard of anything like an atomic bomb. To choose but one example, an organization known as the Student Federalists, founded in 1942 by a charismatic 16-year-old boy named Harris Wofford, over the next several years formed 367 chapters on high school and college campuses around the country. (Mr. Wofford went on to become a U.S. senator and a key civil rights aide in the White House of President John F. Kennedy.)

Then in 1945, just a few months before the Trinity test, came Emery Reves’ *The Anatomy of Peace*. While Willkie’s book was a travelogue describing his voyage around the world, Reves’ was an extended logical argument that only law could create peace and only a world federation – a union of nations with a government taking care of issues that could not be handled at the national level – could create meaningful law that applied to individuals rather than governments. Indeed, Oppenheimer’s passage above could have easily been a summary of Reves’ book.

It wasn’t just books. Beloved children’s book author and *New Yorker* editor E. B. White devoted a great many of his editorials to the problem of global anarchy. (These were later collected and published in a book called *The Wild Flag: Editorials From The New Yorker on Federal World Government and Other Matters*.) *Saturday Review* editor Norman Cousins, upon reading about Hiroshima, wrote a lengthy editorial for his magazine titled “Modern Man is Obsolete,” that passionately argued for immediate democratic world federation. “There is no need to talk of the difficulties in the way of world government,” wrote Cousins. “There is need only to ask if we can afford to do without it.”

Borderless Debate: World Government and Perpetual Peace

In a similar vein Walter Lippmann, a founder of both *The New Republic* magazine and the Council on Foreign Relations, and a key player later in the Cuban Missile Crisis, wrote in 1946: "There are few in any country who now believe that war can be regulated or outlawed by the ordinary treaties among sovereign states... no one can prove what will be the legislative, executive, and judicial organs of the world state... but there are ideas that shake the world, such as the ideal of the union of mankind under universal law."

Even General Hap Arnold, the only U.S. Air Force officer ever to hold the rank of five stars and founder of the RAND Corporation, said in 1946: "The greatest need facing the world today is for international control of the human forces that make for war." The atom bomb, he declared, presents "a tremendous argument for a world organization that will eliminate conflict... We must make an end to all wars for good."

And before the end of the decade, more than 50,000 Americans had joined the United World Federalists (UWF) - led for three years by a bright young man named Alan Cranston, who went on to serve as a four-term U.S. Senator from California. UWF has continued its operations to this very day and is now known as Citizens for Global Solutions.

A number of physicists also came to support world federation. "Conflicts in interest between great powers can be expected to arise in the future... and there is no world authority in existence that can adjudicate the case and enforce the decision," said Leo Szilard, who first conceived the nuclear chain reaction. But humanity had at its disposal, he insisted, "the solution of the problem of permanent peace... the issue that we have to face is not whether we can create a world government... (but) whether we can have such a world government without going through a third world war."

Even Edward Teller, accurately portrayed in the *Oppenheimer* film as pushing for the development of the immensely more destructive hydrogen bombs and eventually undercutting his colleague at the security hearings, appeared to embrace the idea! In 1948, he discussed the "Preliminary Draft of a World Constitution," written by a committee of eminent scholars chaired by the chancellor of the University of Chicago, Robert Maynard Hutchins, and aimed at establishing a "Federal Republic of the World." And Teller said about this enterprise: "[America's] present necessary task of opposing Russia should not cause us to forget that in the long run we cannot win by working against something. Instead we must work for something. We must work for World Government."

But the most prominent and most active proponent of world government among scientists was Albert Einstein himself. He had always opposed nationalism, and supporting world federation was a natural extension. Einstein wrote articles, gave interviews, and helped found the Emergency Committee of Atomic Scientists. The Student Federalists of Princeton, New Jersey, held meetings in his living room. And he served as the founding advisory board chair of the United World Federalists.

The type of world government that Einstein promoted would exclusively have power over security issues and a few internal circumstances that could lead to war. But this kind of limited world government was a must. "A new kind of thinking is essential if mankind is to survive and move to higher levels," he said. "Often in evolutionary processes a species must adapt to new conditions in order to survive... In light of new knowledge... an eventual world state is not just desirable in the name of brotherhood; it is necessary for survival."

Oppenheimer's focus in the post-war years was more near-term. He worked for international control of nuclear matters – both weapons and civilian reactors that could be used to make weapons. But that international control was to take the form of an agency with a strict monopoly on such activities. His 1946 *New York Times Magazine* piece says about the plan: "It proposes that in the field of atomic energy there be set up a world government. That in this field there be renunciation of national sovereignty. That in this field there be no legal veto power. That in this field there be international law."

Why would this be significant? In a lengthier article published in 1946 in the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, Oppenheimer wrote, "the problem that we are dealing with," in seeking to prevent atomic war, "is the problem of the elimination of war." Proposals for addressing nuclear issues were to be judged on whether they also advanced this goal. The article was titled "The Atom Bomb as a Great Force for Peace" - not because of the simplistic and banal argument that the bomb would make war too horrible to contemplate, but because its control would lay the foundation for a world government that truly could abolish war.

And in his 1948 *Foreign Affairs* article, again, Oppenheimer maintained: "If the atomic bomb was to have meaning in the contemporary world, it would have to be in showing that not modern man, not navies, not ground forces, but war itself was obsolete."

At the end of this essay, Oppenheimer returned to the noble aspirations that so

many held in the shattering initial weeks after Trinity, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki. "The aim of those who would work for the establishment of peace," he insisted, "must be to maintain what was sound in the early hopes, and by all means in their power to look to their eventual realization. It is necessarily denied to us in these days to see at what time, to what immediate ends, in what context, and in what manner of world, we may return again to the great issues touched on by the international control of atomic energy... (But) this is seed we take with us, traveling to a land we cannot see, to plant in new soil."

Should we consider all this just a mere historical curiosity? Is anything about these conversations eight long decades ago relevant to the challenges of the 21st Century? As politically unlikely as it might now appear, might something like a genuine world republic provide humanity with the kinds of tools it will require to get a grip on existential perils like the climate emergency, runaway artificial intelligence, and who knows what kinds of new weapons of mass extermination that Oppenheimer's heirs will almost surely invent in the decades and centuries to come?

The best possible answer to that is the same one purportedly given by China's Premier Zhou Enlai in 1971, when asked by Henry Kissinger what he thought about the consequences of the French Revolution.

Mr. Zhou, the story goes, considered the question for a moment, and then replied: "I think it is too soon to tell."

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New Research: Citizens Worldwide Support Democratic Global Government*

Farsan Ghassim and Markus Pauli

In a new study, recently published and freely available in *International Studies Quarterly*, we find that overwhelming majorities in 17 countries across the global South, North, East, and West support the creation of a democratic world government to tackle pressing global challenges like climate change. However, one country stands out as an exception: the United States.

Vast support for democratic world government focused on global issues

After World War II, public figures like Albert Camus, Albert Einstein, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Bertrand Russell supported the eternal idea of a world government – to foster global peace and security. Today, scholars promote similar ideas – though under different banners such as “*cosmopolitan democracy*”. However, such proposals are often discarded quickly among scholars, diplomats, and other practitioners, claiming that most people would not support it. But is this true?

We implemented an international survey experiment to explore public support for different notions of a world government. Between 2017 and 2021, we surveyed more than 42,000 respondents in 17 countries worldwide, representing 54% of the world population. We find that the proposition of a world government finds substantial global support varying by the specification and country in question.

Respondents in each country were randomly

assigned to either the control or a treatment group. People in the control group were asked to what extent they support or oppose “the establishment of a world government”. In another condition, the proposed world government was specified as democratic; while yet another condition conceptualized the global government as focused on transnational issues – both common specifications in the academic literature. Lastly, the full proposal combined the democratic and global issues specifications:

The establishment of a world government which should be democratic in that people worldwide would be represented through free and fair elections or other ways of citizen participation, and which should have the right and the power to deal with global issues like climate change, world poverty, and international peace; while national governments would maintain control over issues that are not global.

Figure 1 shows that the support across countries (weighting each country equally) rose from 48% when unspecified to 68% when it was made clear that the proposed world government would be democratic and 67% when focused on global issues. Moreover, 69% of respondents across countries support a democratic world government focused on transnational issues.

During the pandemic, when we specified the focus of a democratic world government as dealing with COVID-19, support rose to 71%

across countries. When weighting countries based on their population sizes (rather than equally), 73% across our survey countries support a democratic world government focused on transnational issues. With population weights, even the unspecified world government proposal was supported by 58% across our survey countries.

Let us now discuss our results in individual survey countries, focusing on the fully specified proposal of a democratic world government that addresses transnational issues.

First and foremost, majorities in all countries – except for the United States – support the proposal of a fully specified world government. Egypt, India, Kenya, Indonesia, South Korea, Columbia, and Hungary have the largest majorities in favor, ranging from 75% to 82% of respondents supporting the idea. The diversity of these countries – among others, in terms of population, development, freedom, and power – illustrates the idea’s broad appeal across the world. The least supportive nations – apart from the United States – were Russia and Argentina, where support was at 56 and 58% respectively – still comfortable absolute majorities.

The outlier is the US, where only 45% support the idea. Hence, US public opinion constitutes a potential obstacle to any efforts for the establishment of a world government. This is also reflected in the by far largest share of “strongly oppose” answers in the US with 24%, followed with a distance by 16% in Argentina and 15% in Russia. The US is the only surveyed country without majority support.

Generally, support for a democratic world government focused on transnational issues is *even* stronger in more populous, less free, less powerful, or less developed countries.

Our article discusses the hope for more international influence (in populous and less powerful countries) and a more democratic say on global issues (in less free countries) as some of the possible reasons.

On the flipside, fears of global wealth redistribution in such an alternative world order might explain why support in richer countries (66% on average) is six percentage points lower than in poorer countries. Similarly, even though clear majorities in free countries support a democratic world government focused on global challenges (56% on average), support there is substantively lower than in partly/not democratic countries (75% on average), indicating that fears of losing democratic privileges may be a factor in the former group.

Findings encourage NGOs advocating global governance transformations

Our study reveals a largely overlooked side of present-day world public opinion: majoritarian support for much stronger global governance institutions than those that currently exist. These findings are especially relevant at a time when the world faces major transnational challenges such as climate change, wars, pandemics, poverty, mass migration, and environmental degradation.

International organisations like the United Nations that have embarked on reform processes and NGOs advocating global governance transformations such as Democracy Without Borders may feel encouraged in their efforts. Our *study* indicates that there are strong popular mandates in countries around the world to pursue visions of stronger and more democratic global governance to tackle the transnational issues we face.

* Article originally published by Democracy Without Borders

Ahead of UN Summit of the Future, Civil Society Presented a People's Pact

Andreas Bummel

In September 2024, the United Nations convened a long awaited "Summit of the Future" at its headquarters in New York. While governments were still busy putting final touches on an official outcome document, the Pact for the Future, a platform of civil society groups released its own People's Pact for the Future.

Published by the Coalition of the UN We Need (C4UN), the document "represents the culmination of nearly two years of work to articulate a set of recommendations, based on numerous civil society-led online, regional, and global consultations, to determine what participants agree is necessary for the United Nations to meet the needs of humanity and the planet today."

Over 35 pages, the People's Pact outlines numerous proposals in the areas covered by the summit and the intergovernmental outcome document: sustainable development and financing for development; international peace and security; science, technology, innovation and digital cooperation; children, youth and future generations; as well as transforming global governance.

The People's Pact calls on the UN to recommit to the universal aspirations enshrined in the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Among other things, the civil society document points out that the international community "must shift models of governance" from "defending state-centrism"

to "rebalancing decision-making to the local, national, regional, and global levels, under the principle of subsidiarity".

Recommendations include the introduction of "innovative forms of global taxation and financial re-allocation to finance the Sustainable Development Goals" and the establishment of an International Court for the Environment. A meaningful reform of the UN Security Council would entail "the ultimate objective of abolishing the veto". The role of the UN General Assembly should be strengthened "to prevent or respond to acts of aggression when the Security Council fails to do so". The jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice should be expanded.

Strengthening the engagement of young people should be done "by expanding the UN Youth Delegates program, developing an intergenerational Town Hall, and further resourcing the UN Youth Office". The document calls for "UN Mechanisms on Future Generations: a Special Envoy, a Council for Future Generations, and a Future Generations Fund."

In the field on "transforming global governance", the People's Pact recommends the establishment of a UN Parliamentary Assembly to "enhance global governance legitimacy and expand participation." The new assembly should give "elected representatives, reflecting a broad political and societal spectrum, a formal voice and role at the UN

that includes advisory and oversight functions.”

The document endorses “the participatory mechanism” of a UN World Citizens’ Initiative and says that the UN General Assembly in addition should “convene global citizens’ assemblies, composed of individuals selected by civic lottery and demographically representative of the global population, to deliberate and make recommendations on matters of global concern.”

The People’s Pact recognizes the need for a review of the UN Charter and recommends that a review conference “should be convened as a follow up to the Summit of the Future and commence as soon as possible.”

Democracy Without Borders was among the organizations involved in the consultations on the People’s Pact. We strongly welcomed the document’s bold approach and forward-thinking proposals. The People’s Pact represents an important reference now and in the future. At the same time, the official intergovernmental outcome document, the Pact for the Future, in many ways is a disappointment, in particular in the field of participation. While there is a paragraph expressing a commitment on the part of the UN to establish stronger partnerships with “relevant stakeholders”, there are no specific recommendations and follow up processes will be needed to identify what exactly is to be done.

Numerous civil society groups participated in the UN’s official consultations on the intergovernmental outcome document. In a joint statement published earlier in 2024, hundreds voiced concern that their input was being overlooked. Many feel that this has

not changed despite the UN’s Civil Society Conference in May which was devoted to the summit and despite ongoing consultations on the outcome document’s various revisions. For a proposal to be inserted into the draft, it needed to be put forward by a UN Member State and accepted by consensus.

This is why calls for continued and meaningful follow up processes after the summit have been moving into the focus. In a submission to the co-facilitators of the intergovernmental negotiations, Democracy Without Borders, Iswe Foundation and Democracy International suggested that the Pact for the Future should mandate the UN Secretary-General to present recommendations on the UN’s engagement with parliamentary bodies as well as deliberative and participative mechanisms “based on open and inclusive consultations with relevant experts and stakeholders.”

In July, an open letter signed by dozens of former heads of state, released by C4UN and the Club de Madrid, noted that the Summit of the Future should “establish robust and accountable follow-up mechanisms in order to effectively revitalize global governance with the United Nations at its core.”

None of this materialized. Still, the Pact for the Future and its two annexes, a global digital compact and a declaration on future generations, offer hooks civil society organizations can use as reference points. Overall, however, the contrast between the intergovernmental Pact for the Future and the ambitious People’s Pact is a stark one. While the latter shows pathways and elements for meaningful changes in global governance, the former is a failure in this regard.

21 September: Day of Peace: Action Needed!

René Wadlow

21 September is the United Nations designated International Peace Day, set out in 1981 by a UN General Assembly resolution as being a day close to the start of the General Assembly. The Day is devoted to creating a culture of peace through dialogue in a spirit of mutual understanding and a consciousness of the unity of humanity. As the psychoanalyst Erick Fromm wrote "I believe that the One World which is emerging can come into existence only if a new man comes into being - a man who has emerged from the archaic ties of blood and soil, who feels himself to be a Citizen of the World, whose loyalty is to the human race and to life."

This year 21 September is one of the two Action Days of the Summit for the Future being held at the U.N. in New York. We are all aware that in many parts of the world there is armed conflict, political rivalries and growing tensions. The current heavily State-

centric approaches to world politics hampers the effectiveness of the United Nations and its Specialized Agencies. In these times of insecurity when many people feel uncertain about the future, when anxieties and fears are promoted and then exploited by political populists, old-fashioned nationalists and religious fundamentalists, we need to present a positive vision and to build bridges of understanding over the current divides of nationalism, ethnicity and social classes.

Today, the revolutionary character of our times is recognized by many observers. Those who live in the midst of swift social change confront the upheaval of their way of life. We are entering a period of change for which there are no blueprints. Therefore, it is essential that we learn to work together. We celebrate our similarities rather than our differences. Thus on this Day of Peace, we are called to new levels of creativity and constructive action.

Proposal for the Creation of the World Carbon Community

Troy Davis

His Holiness Pope Francis
Apostolic Palace
Vatican City 00120

Strasbourg, 8 March 2024
Ref: Proposal for the creation of the World Carbon Community
Most Holy Father,

I am writing to Your Holiness regarding an innovative concept that may be helpful to Your Holiness and to the Church in its teachings regarding climate change.

Your Holiness called on world leaders in 2021 at COP 26 to “bring about effective solutions to the ecological crisis”, and notably issued a cry of alarm about the “deterioration of our common home” (1). Your Holiness also rightly stated in the encyclical *Laudato Si* (2015) (2), the following: *Beginning in the middle of the last century and overcoming many difficulties, there has been a growing conviction that our planet is a homeland and that humanity is one people living in a common home.*

Unfortunately, the world has not lived up to these calls. But what is more surprising is that we apparently have not internalized the painful lessons of 20th century history, which show us the way forward.

History teaches us it is difficult, if not impossible, to persevere in a collective political decision if no robust monitoring mechanism is put in place. This is a crucial lesson of the 20th century. We learned in 1945 what we did not

learn in 1918, that only permanent institutions can bring peace, and that the pieces of paper we call ‘peace treaties’ are not enough. So, in addition to replacing the League of Nations with the United Nations, we began a process of creating *permanent institutions*, to implement the historic ambitions of creating a lasting European peace to enable real progress.

It began in 1950 with Robert Schuman, Minister of Foreign Affairs of France, who launched the process of European integration in his speech on May 9 :

“World peace cannot be safeguarded without creative efforts commensurate with the dangers that threaten it.

The contribution that an organized and vibrant Europe can make to civilization is essential to maintaining peaceful relations. By championing a united Europe for more than twenty years, France has always had the essential aim of serving peace. Europe was not built, and we had war.

Europe will not be built all at once, nor in an overall construction: it will be built through concrete achievements that first create de facto solidarity.”(3)

The goal from the start was not to create European peace, but world peace. Indeed, the Founding Fathers of United Europe, Robert Schuman, Konrad Adenauer, Alcide de Gasperi, Paul-Henri Spaak, Joseph Bech, Jean Monnet (as well as the great Jacques Delors) – all Christian Democrats – not only

came out of the worst war in the history of Humanity, but had also experienced the first Great War – which was to be “the very last one” – as young men. They therefore knew that European peace could ultimately only be a by-product of universal peace.

Their goal was therefore not, as some politicians want today, to create a “Fortress Europe”, but a Europe united in peace, a catalyst for a world united in peace. How to achieve this world peace? By first making peace in Europe following clear principles and in an innovative way, then by sharing this experience with all men and women of good will. In other words, after having been the greatest laboratory of war in History, Europe became the greatest laboratory of peace in History.

As we know, the Founding Fathers, as educated Catholics, had been influenced by the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891) of His Holiness Leo XIII, which defined the social doctrine of the Church, criticizing both unbridled capitalism and nascent communism (4).

Europe was not, and is not, a chemistry laboratory, but it is a laboratory of good governance, fundamental rights and democracy. The Founders’ idea which everyone forgot was that the world would later unite, using the European experience as inspiration or model. That is indeed what happened in several regions, such as Africa and South America, with regional supranational institutions inspired by the Council of Europe, its Parliamentary Assembly and its European Court of Human Rights, as well as the European Communities, which became the European Union with its European Parliament.

We are therefore today in the second historical stage envisaged by the Founders, but we seem to have forgotten that the stage after the construction of Europe should be that of

the construction of the World. The founders did not know what new challenges we would face but were convinced that they had found the right method: the construction of common institutions dedicated to clear tasks.

The current challenge is therefore this: what institutions does the world need to manage the global climate crisis, to “no longer postpone but implement” (5) international diplomatic agreements such as the Paris Accords? Because of successive crises (the economic crisis, the global pandemic, war in Ukraine, Israel/Gaza, etc.), it is difficult for States to focus and fulfill their commitments if their attention is taken elsewhere. It is precisely to respond to this systemic and recurring problem that Humanity has invented dedicated institutions. When we forgot to do this, we paid an exorbitant price. This is particularly evident with the Treaty of Versailles (1919), which – in addition to its disastrous provisions – failed to create a European institution dedicated to the peace agreement. The League of Nations came into being but was ineffective, and so after World War II, we created the United Nations, and drastically changed course in Europe. Step by step, we then built the European Union, in a pragmatic and reasoned manner, institution by institution.

The Church has stimulated, understood, and reintegrated the European message and the lessons of history in a virtuous spiral. Moreover, the European method itself was inspired by the history of the Church, because the latter is the perfect example of a dedicated institution which endures beyond the vicissitudes of history and individual personalities, certainly important, but powerless without a global framework. For example, the term “community” was taken from the Church, then used for the first three communities (coal and steel, atomic, economic)

as well as the principle of “subsidiarity”.

In *Laudato Si*, Your Holiness alerted us, once again, to “the great deterioration of our common home” which is this beautiful blue ball spiralling in space, as well as to “how weak international political responses have been” (¶54). Your Holiness pointed out, in particular, the increased risks of war because of ecological crises, an important link but too rarely underlined. Your Holiness was then in the direct line of His illustrious predecessors. Thus, Your Holiness pointed out the inadequacy of the current system, whether in general or in a particular area such as the oceans:

173. *Enforceable international agreements are urgently needed, since local authorities are not always capable of effective intervention. Relations between states must be respectful of each other’s sovereignty, but must also lay down mutually agreed means of averting regional disasters which would eventually affect everyone. Global regulatory norms are needed to impose obligations and prevent unacceptable actions, for example, when powerful companies or countries dump contaminated waste or offshore polluting industries in other countries.*

174. *Let us also mention the system of governance of the oceans. International and regional conventions do exist, but fragmentation and the lack of strict mechanisms of regulation, control and penalization end up undermining these efforts. The growing problem of marine waste and the protection of the open seas represent particular challenges. What is needed, in effect, is an agreement on systems of governance for the whole range of so-called “global commons.*

(The underlined parts are underlined by this letter’s author.)

In 1963, Saint John XXIII made this method explicit in the encyclical *Pacem in Terris* (6) (citing subsidiarity as a founding principle

in paragraph 140) and explained in detail its applicability to the global problem of peace, which remained the main problem then, in the middle of the Cold War, with two nuclear superpowers in global competition. But while Robert Schuman in 1950 only mentioned world peace at the beginning and then focused on Europe, Saint John XXIII made a masterful demonstration and explained that the world system was structurally inadequate, in general, to solve the problems.

His Holiness demonstrated this in the section entitled, *Inadequacy of Modern States to ensure the universal common good* :

133. *In the past rulers of States seem to have been able to make sufficient provision for the universal common good through the normal diplomatic channels, or by top-level meetings and discussions, treaties and agreements; by using, that is, the ways and means suggested by the natural law, the law of nations, or international law.*

134. *In our own day, however, mutual relationships between States have undergone a far reaching change. On the one hand, the universal common good gives rise to problems of the utmost gravity, complexity and urgency – especially as regards the preservation of the security and peace of the whole world. On the other hand, the rulers of individual nations, being all on an equal footing, largely fail in their efforts to achieve this, however much they multiply their meetings and their endeavours to discover more fitting instruments of justice. And this is no reflection on their sincerity and enterprise. It is merely that their authority is not sufficiently influential.*

135. *We are thus driven to the conclusion that the shape and structure of political life in the modern world, and the influence exercised by public authority in all the nations of the world are unequal to the task of promoting the common good of all peoples.*

Federalist Action

Saint John XXIII could just as easily have described the current UN and COPs and their inability to “ensure the universal common good”.

His Holiness continued:

137. Today the universal common good presents us with problems which are world-wide in their dimensions; problems, therefore, which cannot be solved except by a public authority with power, organization and means co-extensive with these problems, and with a world-wide sphere of activity. Consequently the moral order itself demands the establishment of some such general form of public authority.

As Your Holiness mentioned in *Laudato Si* (¶175), His Holiness Benedict XVI reaffirmed this concept in 2009 in the encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*:

To manage the global economy... to guarantee the protection of the environment... for all this, there is urgent need of a true world political authority, as my predecessor Blessed John XXIII indicated some years ago ... The integral development of peoples and international cooperation require the establishment of a greater degree of international ordering, marked by subsidiarity, for the management of globalization (¶ 67)

Concretely, although the “universal common good” implies “a public authority whose power, constitution and means of action also take on global dimensions...”, the European experience demonstrates that an approach bringing together a few voluntary States at the start and extending through the demonstration of its effectiveness and legitimacy is convincing. This progressive approach is confirmed a little later in *Pacem in Terris*:

162. We would remind such people that it is the law of nature that all things must be of gradual

growth. If there is to be any improvement in human institutions, the work must be done slowly and deliberately from within. Pope Pius XII expressed it in these terms: “Salvation and justice consist not in the uprooting of an outdated system, but in a well-designed policy of development.

That is why we suggest that the member states of the COP negotiate, drawing inspiration from the real, historical and convincing example of the European Coal and Steel Community, a global carbon community. This non-partisan global community would aim to implement the political decisions of its Member States, keeping in mind the admonition of Saint John XXIII, “this general authority equipped with worldwide power and adequate means for achieving the universal common good cannot be imposed by force. It must be set up with the consent of all nations. If its work is to be effective, it must operate with fairness, absolute impartiality, and with dedication to the common good of all peoples.” (¶ 138, *Pacem in Terris*).

The undeniable fact of the success of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), which started the historic process of creating a united and peaceful Europe, a European Union which is a sui generis creation, should help the leaders and diplomats, thinkers and journalists, activists and citizens, to support the project of this necessary global community. The goal of the ECSC was different from the goal of the future World Carbon Community, but the principle of such an institution, the symbolic parallel, the structure too, should convince the world to move forward.

The World Carbon Community alone will not be able to save us from the worst consequences of climate change, because political decisions will always have to be taken by leaders inserted in a World-System which is no longer up to the demands of a globalised economy. However, the simple fact that this community will help

its Members in a technical way to fulfil their political obligations will be of crucial help, and will open up new room for manoeuvre.

Furthermore, what few remember, including the Members of the European Parliament to whom I had the privilege of asking the question, is that the European Parliament, the first democratically elected supranational institution, is the direct continuation of the Parliamentary Assembly of the ECSC. Indeed, this first Common Assembly, which met in Strasbourg on September 10, 1952, acquired more and more functions, becoming the assembly for the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom) and that of the European Economic Community (EEC). Ten years later, in 1962, members changed (on their own initiative) its name to European Parliament.

The first direct elections by universal suffrage to the European Parliament then occurred in 1979. This seminal symbolic and political step for humankind, the creation of a supranational

democratic assembly, joins the other unique supranational institution of Humanity, the European Court of Human Rights (under the Council of Europe), also sitting in Strasbourg. The European Parliament, this unique and essential institution, is therefore a child of the ECSC. Similarly, the World Carbon Community will include a parliamentary assembly of its member states, as well as an executive body and a court of justice, like the ECSC before it, guarantors of its legitimacy and effectiveness.

I remain at Your Holiness' disposal and hope to discuss a concrete strategy to implement this idea, as well as similar democratic concepts applied to other major issues of our time such as peace in the Middle East, during an audience with Your Holiness, at your convenience.

Please accept, Most Holy Father, the expression of my highest consideration,

Troy DAVIS

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Making Sense of China's Economy*

Adriana Castagnoli

Tao Wang

Making Sense of China's Economy
Routledge, London, 2023

Beijing's economic power has grown steadily since China overtook Japan as the world's second-largest economy in 2010. Yet the enormous size and luxury consumption of its affluent classes do not detract from the fact that China is still an emerging country. In 2020, its GDP per capita was ranked 83rd in the world, lower than the level of the United States in the 1940s on a comparable basis.

In highlighting the changing dynamics of China's economy, the influence of key stakeholders, the history of reforms, and the evolution of the country's development strategy, Tao Wang, Chief China Economist at UBS Investment Bank in Hong Kong, explains its complex trajectories from the 1970s to the present, of which dualism is the hallmark. China is a developed but still emerging economy, in transition from centralized planning and state ownership to greater market orientation, one of the most populous nations on Earth but with limited natural resources, led by the Chinese Communist Party but with a decentralized governance structure.

Data on the ownership structure of the Chinese economy suggest that private ownership is the majority (60-70%). However, one must analyze the role of the state from multiple angles, including how resources

are allocated, the use of industrial policy, government intervention in the market, and the role of the state in providing public goods. While government stimulus and proactive development strategy have helped China respond to shocks and challenges, there are many problems related to the excessive presence of the state in some areas and its absence in others.

State-owned enterprises in resource, finance and infrastructure-related sectors have grown rapidly. Policymakers regard them as indispensable when it comes to economic security, job provision and social services.

The government still plays an active role in guiding development strategy and uses five-year plans to set medium-term goals in crucial areas such as major infrastructure.

In recent decades, the market has played an increasingly important role in the allocation of productive resources, including labour, capital (and capital goods), land, energy, and natural resources. But progress has been uneven, and reforms have been resisted and constrained by the government's desire to maintain control, especially in sectors such as energy, banking and telecommunications, which are considered strategic to China's economic and national security.

The market has played an increasing part in capital allocation, but the state has maintained a strong influence through ownership of the banking system, persistent control of interest rates, and involvement of local government agencies. The importance of the market in capital allocation increased when China established commercial banks to lend rather than subsidize enterprises as interest rates gradually liberalized and the money

market, stock market and credit market grew.

Unlike the early years of reform, much of China's capital allocation is now driven by market forces. However, the banking system remains predominantly state-owned, and the government interferes in banks' business decision-making, especially during periods of economic shocks or challenges (as in 2008-2009), putting pressure on banks to support growth.

No other industry, perhaps, can demonstrate the successes and challenges of China's industrial policy like the solar photovoltaic industry. The policy has been instrumental in dramatically increasing its production, lowering prices, and driving out international competition with low-cost products. But also by establishing domestic industrial funds with investment from the central government to act as a catalyst to attract private investment and open the sector to foreign investment.

Digitalisation, automation and green technology are development trajectories already mapped out for the coming years. Nevertheless, the dualism between rural and urban lands – such as the hukou system of household registration – still underlies China's social and economic structure. China, says the author, should gradually shift to a more equitable society, with less "savage" capitalism, better social protection and a narrower social gap. But even a moderate redistribution effort is likely to meet strong resistance from powerful and noisy interest groups. Outside of potential collaboration on major global issues such as climate change, Beijing's relations with the West and, primarily, the United States are likely to remain strained, with a rising China becoming increasingly assertive.

However, the greatest damage caused by geopolitical tension may come from the way

it can affect the course of China's domestic politics and development strategy with a more self-focused government and a more nationalistic public turning away from certain policies and strategies because they embrace "Western" norms or ideals.

* Article published in *Il Sole 24 Ore*

Political Systems and Information Flow According to Yuval Noah Harari*

Stroncatore

Yuval Noah Harari

Nexus. A Brief History of Information Networks from the Stone Age to AI
Penguin Random House, New York, 2024

In his latest book "Nexus", Yuval Noah Harari addresses an issue that has often been discussed in *Stroncatore*, namely the flow of information in different political regimes such as democratic and totalitarian systems. In democracies, information networks are distributed, that is, information circulates freely through a multitude of independent channels. This allows for the existence of an open and pluralistic public debate in which different opinions and viewpoints can be compared. The free circulation of information promotes the transparency of institutions, the accountability of rulers to citizens and the participation of citizens in decision-making. In other words,

in democracies, power is checked and limited by the dissemination of information and the possibility of criticism and dissent.

However, Harari notes that the distributed nature of democratic information networks also has some disadvantages. First, it can lead to fragmentation of public debate, with the formation of “bubbles” of homogeneous opinions that struggle to communicate with each other. In addition, freedom of expression can be exploited to spread disinformation and fake news, undermining trust in institutions and the ability of citizens to make informed decisions. Finally, the multiplicity of voices and interests at play can make it difficult to achieve the consensus needed to address complex and urgent challenges, such as climate change or economic inequality. To function effectively, therefore, democracies, according to the author, must strike a delicate balance between freedom of information, which is essential to the vitality of public debate, and the need for coordination and social cohesion, which is necessary to make collective decisions and pursue common goals.

In contrast, totalitarian systems aim to concentrate information in a single power center, strictly controlling its production and dissemination. This centralized structure allows for greater control over the population and more effective mobilization of resources toward common goals. However, the lack of transparency and debate makes totalitarian regimes more vulnerable to error, abuse and authoritarian drift.

The point is that the absence of self-correcting mechanisms in the centralized information networks of totalitarian regimes can lead to disastrous and even catastrophic decisions, as the cases of Stalinism in the Soviet Union and Nazism in Germany tragically demonstrate. When the flow of information is rigidly controlled and manipulated by a single power

center, with no possibility of criticism or dissent, even the craziest and most harmful ideas can be transformed into state policies, with devastating consequences for millions of people. Stalinism, with its brutal forced collectivization of agriculture and mass purges, and Nazism, with its racist and genocidal delusions, are extreme examples of how the total centralization of information can divorce power from reality, dragging entire nations into a vortex of murderous madness.

In both cases, the systematic repression of dissent and the elimination of any critical voice prevented the leadership from correcting their mistakes and adapting to changing circumstances, instead accelerating the drift toward the abyss. The lack of transparency and debate has blinded these regimes to their own contradictions and signs of crisis, fueling a spiral of paranoia and violence. Without the corrective feedback provided by a pluralistic public sphere and independent institutions, totalitarian leaders found themselves prisoners of their own ideological fantasies, unable to recognize the failures of their policies until it was too late.

While democracies, with their institutional counterweights and vibrant civil society, may still fall prey to dangerous illusions, they nevertheless retain the ability to self-correct through the free flow of information and the possibility of criticism and dissent. Totalitarian systems, in contrast, deprive themselves of this fundamental safety valve, by stifling all forms of pluralism and debate. Devoid of self-correction mechanisms, they are structurally incapable of recognizing and correcting their own errors, often ending up as the victims of them. Their apparent strength thus proves to be a fatal weakness, condemning them to implosion under the weight of their own lies and contradictions.

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Borrell: Reforming the EU Is Difficult but Inevitable

Sara Bertolli, Simone Cantarini and Roberto Castaldi

The European Union must “do more” to ensure its defense and economic security including the development of a defense industrial base, including with common forms of debt. This is according to the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of the European Union and Vice-President of the Commission, Josep Borrell, in an interview with Euractiv Italia conducted as part of the 43rd *Ventotene Training Seminar*, organized by the Altiero Spinelli Institute.

The EU diplomacy chief takes stock five years after the “Geopolitical Commission” announced by Ursula von der Leyen, analyzing the main challenges ahead for the EU. In the interview, Borrell claims the progress and unity shown by the EU in supporting Ukraine, stressing that he does not see the possibility of “a peace agreement with Putin’s Russia in the immediate future.”

In the interview Borrell also addresses the sensitive issue of relations with China, noting that “despite the lucid and realistic assessment of the past five years, the EU remains firmly committed to continuing dialogue” with Beijing.

Finally, the High Representative also addresses the issue of reforming the EU Treaties, which is seen as increasingly necessary to ensure effective joint action, especially in foreign and defense policy. Borrell stresses how the

current system, based on unanimity, represents today with a union of 27 countries “a huge obstacle,” noting that at 37 “it will simply be unsustainable.” For the High Representative, while “difficult, uncertain and politically controversial,” treaty reform will also be “inevitable in the medium term,” as “the status quo is unacceptable.”

Below is the text of the full interview with Josep Borrell.

In 2019, Ursula von der Leyen promised a “Geopolitical Commission.” Five years later, the EU is still perceived as weak on foreign and security policy, unable to be a mediator in Ukraine or Palestine. What is your assessment of the improvements made and the challenges facing the next Vice President/High Representative Kaja Kallas?

The cases of Ukraine and Palestine are very different. On Gaza, it is true, it has been much more difficult to act united, even historically [as my predecessor Federica Mogherini experienced]. In Ukraine, we act with great unity, and our role is not as a mediator, at least until Putin is willing to stop his aggression and open negotiations in good faith but to support the Ukrainians in their right to self-defense. We provide arms and financial assistance; we passed 14 sanctions packages on Russia. Overall, I think in these five years we have strengthened our geopolitical profile and our position as a security provider. We now provide substantial military support to our partners through the European Peace Facility. We have made progress toward a common security and defense strategy with the Strategic Compass. We are working to operationalize the rapid deployment capability of 5,000 soldiers.

The EU is Israel’s largest trading partner and Palestine’s largest donor. How much do member states’ divisions over the Middle

East affect the EU's ability to play a role?

We must be more united on this issue because Israel's right to self-defense cannot be subject to any exception to the principles of proportionality and full compliance with International Law, including Humanitarian Law. There is an urgent need to stop the killing of civilians and the humanitarian disaster, the spread of diseases (polio), with a permanent cease-fire, which must also lead to the overdue release of the more than one hundred Israeli citizens still imprisoned, and to relaunch the peace process. On this we have a clear and unanimous EU common position. Because Israeli settlements are illegal under international law and seriously erode the very possibility of the two-state solution, we have already adopted the first sanctions against several violent settlers in the occupied West Bank. Over the summer, I proposed sanctions against two Israeli ministers considering their messages of hatred and incitement to war crimes, and the creation of a new sanctions regime for those who act against peace. We discussed this issue among EU foreign ministers at the informal meeting on August 29. We could not make a decision as it was an informal meeting, but the exchanges were fruitful and many colleagues – beyond the usual divisions – saw the merits of this move. As always, the decision requires unanimity, and the proposal is now being discussed by Council working groups.

What are the differences between US presidential candidates Harris and Trump in foreign policy priorities and transatlantic relations?

It is obvious that there are significant differences between the two candidates when it comes to foreign policy; clearly on Ukraine, multilateralism, climate change, and NATO. Obviously, a future Harris administration would be much more in line with current EU policy. That said, both U.S. parties are extremely

focused on China. We will see what happens in the elections; it is really not in our hands. We need to do more to ensure our defense and economic security, including the development of our defense industrial base.

What are the prospects for EU-China relations? Could the results of the U.S. presidential election affect this dossier as well?

For us, the main geopolitical concern and threat is Russia. Despite the lucid and realistic assessment of the past five years, the EU remains firmly committed to continuing dialogue with China, both to explain and dispel differences and to seek strands of constructive joint work. Undoubtedly, our political systems are different, and, in this regard, there are ideological rivalries and concerns about human rights abuses and violations. Moreover, China is an economic competitor for the EU, but also a partner.

Future relations with China will also depend on how it conducts itself in the Ukrainian conflict. China's support for the Russian-led war has consequences for EU-China relations, therefore, we want to actively engage with China to discourage greater alignment with Moscow.

Trade and technology tensions between the U.S. and China also have very negative consequences for Europe, because China is trying to export to the EU products made from the huge overcapacities accumulated in China's manufacturing sector. We are trying to avoid a trade war with China, but we also have to defend our industries. We have already taken measures regarding solar panels and electric vehicles. However, we do not want to decouple our economies or stop cooperating with the Chinese on global governance, low-income countries' debt, and climate change.

Is there any chance that EU-RUSSIA relations will be restored in case there is a peace agreement and Putin is still in power? Can the EU talk to Putin again and trust his word?

I do not see a peace agreement with Putin's Russia in the immediate future. Putin is making it clear that he maintains his maximalist demands: conquest of Ukraine and subjugation of the Ukrainian people, and perhaps he has other ambitions beyond Ukraine (he seems increasingly obsessed with restoring the Russian empire as his main legacy). Moreover, Putin himself and some members of his circle have been indicted by the International Criminal Court for serious war crimes and crimes against humanity. It is important that Russia be held accountable for its actions in Ukraine. Its track record in negotiations is also well known. The Russian power system sees itself at war with the "West" and "Europe." In the distant future, in a post-conflict environment, there may be changes in relations with Russia, but the fact remains that the war is likely to continue and there is unlikely to be business as usual under these circumstances, which are red lines for us as the EU.

What was the role of Nord Stream 2 sabotage in the escalation of the conflict in Ukraine? Is it possible for the pipeline to return to operation in the future?

Nord Stream 2 was never operational, and I don't see any particular relation to the invasion of Ukraine. It is being investigated, there is too much speculation about what happened. I think this project was unnecessary and geopolitically wrong with respect to European interests (diversification of energy sources), the Commission has been clear on that.

The EU is surrounded by geopolitical crises. EU member states military expenditures

are a total of 45 percent of those of the United States but with an effective capacity of 10 percent. Moreover, member states are trying to increase them. What are the prospects for integration in foreign policy and defense?

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, we had decades of silent disarmament. The war in Ukraine showed that we were in a dangerous situation in terms of our defense capabilities. We reacted strongly, and our European defense spending is expected to reach almost 2 percent of our GDP this year, the NATO threshold. But we still need to cooperate much more closely, particularly on our equipment, to fill critical capability gaps, avoid duplication, and address interoperability problems. We currently buy only 18 percent of our equipment in cooperation, while we want to reach 40 percent in 2030. We also need to strengthen our defense industry. Since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, 80% of the equipment purchased by our armies has come from third countries. To strengthen our defense readiness and the European defense technology industrial base, I launched together with Commissioner (Thierry) Breton the European Defense Industrial Strategy. To be successful, we will have to be able to mobilize sufficient financial resources at the European level. To this end, I have advocated a new joint debt issue.

How can we get to a European defense, even as a European pillar of NATO? And how can we finance it?

We all agree on building a strong European defense pillar within NATO, but we need to define more precisely what it means, how it is managed and articulated with EU defense structures and policies. We need to strengthen European capabilities and resilience to strengthen the European pillar in NATO. The rapid deployment capability will also help

improve interoperability, which will benefit NATO and its deterrence capability. The threats we face are complex and include threats in space, cyberspace, terrorism, hybrid attacks, and disinformation. The EU and NATO have different tools at their disposal and we need to use both. We must work closely together to get the most out of limited resources and consider issues of overall planning and force deployment.

As mentioned above, security is a European public good. We should finance it together with green and digital transitions, issuing a common debt as we did to deal with the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, provided we agree on new own resources to repay the debt.

Does this require treaty change and/or multi-speed/differentiated integration?

There are still unused options in the Lisbon Treaty, such as passerelles to activate qualified majority voting, but some reforms will still be necessary. As I said in my speech at the 43rd Ventotene Seminar, we need a more federal EU. This means, at the very least, Parliament also voting on debt and taxation and overcoming the veto in the Council. Unanimity at 27 is already a huge obstacle; at 37 it will simply be untenable. I know that treaty reform is difficult, uncertain and politically controversial, but also inevitable in the medium term. The status quo is unacceptable.

* Article originally published in Italian by Euractiv.it Translated in English by TFD editorial staff.

Recommended Books



The volume “The formation of the European party system” is the result of the contributions of Ezio Mauro, Lucio Levi, Sergio Fabbrini and Gianfranco Pasquino on the occasion of the conference held in Ventotene (Latina) on September 4, 2021, at the “Altiero Spinelli” School, organized by the Einstein Center for International Studies (CESI) with the Institute of federalist studies Altiero Spinelli and the Centro Studi sul Federalismo (CSF).

“The European parliament is animated by political groups that are not connected to political parties at a national level. It lies in their ability to become “federative” of the new Union, and then to finally bring Spinelli’s battle to a constitutional status and then to an end. It is not an ideal goal, but certainly a real one, and political parties, albeit not being organised and osmotically represented in the European Parliament, can be real lifeblood if they set the goal of the European federation as an obligatory result for the salvation of democracies in Europe, and if they continue to be a beacon for the reform of the global government system.” (Mario Leone)

“The logic of federal parties is driven by the need to bring together a set of different parties, heterogeneous in a certain way, in a vast union of states such as the European Union in order

to form in the European Parliament and hence the large majorities that are necessary to lead the Union. The vote has a true democratic meaning if voters perceive that the exercise of their right allows things to change. If the stakes in the European elections tend to become the choice of the government of Europe, this means that an institutional evolution will bring us closer to the formation of an authentic European party system and it will be on the agenda.” (Lucio Levi)

“La Formazione del Sistema Partitico Europeo” (“The Formation of the European Party System”).

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