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Multilateralism and Global Governance

Mario Telò

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Multilateralism and Global Governance

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This paper aims to provide the project with both a theoretical and historical background regarding the concept of, and theoretical debate about, multilateralism and an analysis of perspectives concerning a new multilateralism for the 21st Century. It will cover, on the one hand, the many gaps of the multilateral legacy of the past six decades and, on the other, the new challenges of regional and global cooperation within an emergent, asymmetric, heterogeneous and multipolar world.

1. Multilateral cooperation: conceptual definition and history

Multilateralism has been defined in wider and narrower ways: according to Robert O. Keohane it is an “institutionalized collective action by an inclusively determined set of independent states”; it is also defined as a “persistent sets of rules that constrain activity, shape expectations and prescribe roles”¹. According to John G. Ruggie, “multilateralism is an institutional form that coordinates relations among three or more states on the basis of generalized principles of conduct...”². The minimum requirement (the number of club members) is very relevant when looking at multilateral arrangements from an historical point of view. Multilateral agreements, regimes and organizations emerge in the 19th century and consolidate their role despite the failures and tragedies of the violent first half of the so called “short century” (the 20th) because a number of states, notably the European states, are interested in increasing cooperation.

Research on multilateralism has had to take into account the challenge of the realist and neo-realist theoretical questioning, emphasizing competition among states, wars, protectionism and anarchy. How does multilateral cooperation interact with the self-interest of states? Several realist approaches even argue for dyadic cooperation. However, critics question the realist approach on two fronts:

a) under certain conditions, the theory of the state of nature, and game theory as well, views the rational self-interest of an autonomous state as a sufficient background for a contractual relationship with one or more other states: repeated game, side payments, negotiation in the longer run, may allow for an explanation of bilateral cooperation. However, a deepening of multilateral arrangements needs more preconditions in addition to self-interest: a certain degree of reciprocal trust, reputation, the support of domestic economic and non-economic demands, ideas and common aims of states, in some cases, a shared perception regarding external threats, extended state cooperation not tied to specific short term gains but based on mid- to long-term promises, states’ goodwill including the acceptance of a limiting and/or sharing of national sovereignty.

¹ R. O. Keohane, *After Hegemony*, Preface, Princeton University Press, 2004.

² J. G. Ruggie (ed.) *Multilateralism matters*, 1993

- Multilateral arrangements highlight the classical security dilemma. The way out of anarchy is based on the various concepts of collective security, security with the other and not against the other, and the indivisibility of peace. This is not only the case of the UN but also of security communities such as the EU or MERCOSUR. Even in the case of the NATO alliance, the basic principle of 'all for one' plays a crucial role.

In this section we will try to explore the historical roots of multilateralism in the controversial and contradictory civilization process of multipolar international relations. The history of multilateralism offers examples of routes away from anarchy, beginning with bilateral arrangements, and then with an increasingly institutionalized multilateral setting of international relations. In some of its historical versions, the multipolar balance of power is incompatible with anarchy. Multilateralism can be both institutionalized and informal, legally founded or only politically founded. Multipolarism can be based on conflicting state interests or understood as aiming at some form of co-operation and convergence among states. In some cases multipolar orders included common objectives such as stability and/or peace. Building a "security complex" including one's enemies (the North-East Asian Security Complex and the emerging East Asia Security Complex³), and even opposing alliances (such as NATO or the Warsaw Pact), may be considered a first step away from anarchy. The 19th Century European Concert was a clear example of the regulating of interstate conflict by conference diplomacy. Already Metternich conceived the European Concert as oriented towards stability and peace (albeit in his reactionary understanding). Later on, during the *Belle Époque*, 1871-1914, the European multipolar balance of power did offer a framework for the development of the first civilian multilateral arrangements. We fully understand that, seen from a non-European point of view, notably from a Chinese point of view, the European Concert look like the cradle of colonialism and imperialism, in Africa, America and Asia, including in China at the beginning of the 20th Century. However, the highly contradictory "Belle Époque" also provided forty-five years of liberal peace and stability within Europe, was the context of the first civilian multilateral agreements regarding mail, measures and weights and so on, and of the first wave of liberalizing of multilateral trade under the UK hegemony. The political struggle between liberal multilateralists and imperialists marked several domestic political spheres during these decades. We think that, in spite of the breakdown of this trend towards a civilizing sovereignty during the "Thirty Years War" between 1914-1945, this European multilateral legacy was important, and still matters.

However, it is true that the history of European multilateralism and its relationship with multipolarism is controversial and that the revived European multilateralism after 1945 was essentially based on US pressures (the Marshall Plan and the OECE) following the failure of the previous European state system. All in all, the current routinized multilateral intergovernmental relations, the set of regimes that distinguishes the EU co-operation system among member states (European Council and Council of Ministers) is also the legacy of a *longue durée* process which emerged during several centuries, before the era of American hegemonic stability. The deepening and broadening of European regional multilateralism in a post-hegemonic context strengthens the need for this kind of *longue durée* approach.

The gradual process of civilization of state sovereignties had already started in the 15th and 16th centuries among the Italian small states, and was Europeanized and definitely set in motion by the Westphalian Treaty (1648) and continued over three centuries until the final breakdown of the European Concert. The political principle which explains the roots of this "European states society" (F. Chabod⁴) became explicit only with the Wilsonian (1919) and Rooseveltian (Bretton Woods Conference) idea of American international multilateralism (Ruggie⁵). Already prior to this, and for several centuries, the balance of power had no longer

³ B. Buzan/ O. Weaver *Regions and powers*, CUP, 2003

⁴ F. Chabod, *Storia dell'idea d'Europa* in Y Hersant *Europes* Paris 2000 and *Idea d'Europa e politica d'equilibrio*, Bologna 1995

⁵ J. Ruggie, *Multilateralism matters*, New York, 1993

been an occasional alliance, but a project both theorized and consciously sought by state leaders as a principle of political action. What is the historical context of this? It happened after the crisis of the *Respublica Christiana* and the end of Middle Ages, in secularized Europe, when religion began to be a political instrument of independent national sovereigns. Modern diplomacy develops in the context of the mutual recognition of treaties, of borders, and the new habit of choosing a third party as referee and warrant of bilateral treaty implementation; and, last but not least, the system of “*copartagéant*”, limiting, on behalf of the balance of power, the minor states’ sovereignty. Stanley Hoffmann in his early book (1961) stressed the continuity between such an early step of reciprocal recognition between states (beyond anarchy) and the highest step of international law developing towards a ‘community law’⁶.

The literature is in agreement that for a properly working ‘balance of power’ the main (around five) actors must be similar, inasmuch as their economic and military power is concerned. In the past a system of the balance of power could exist thanks to a kind of hegemonic power. It is a matter of fact that in the 18th and 19th Centuries, England increasingly became the “holder of the balance” of a dynamic, multipolar, inclusive balance of power system, which, in spite of the 25 years “revolutionary system” (1789-1915, S. Hoffmann), and its conservative features, was able to adjust to change and eventually to integrate new emerging powers such as Russia, Germany and Italy. The historian F. Chabod emphasises that such a system of states was “interdependent” while “articulated”, and despite the division between states, politically united on the principle of the balance of power, the symbol of the recognition of the states’ common interests, as a kind of European *international distinctive identity*⁷. It was also the background for a kind of common rule for states’ behaviour, a political norm of action including diplomacy and war (*and jus in bello*). Combining unity and diversity was indeed the distinctive principle of European civilization, when compared with other continents; it is rooted in the common cultural background provided by both the Renaissance and the Enlightenment. It was in contrast to Europe of the Middle Ages on the one hand, and to non-Europeans, on the other, in two ways, first because nowhere had inter-state relations evolved in that way, and second, because of its colonial and imperialist relations with other continents.

H. Kissinger’s idealized picture of the European Concert of the 19th century⁸ ignores the evidence of such a combination of a setting of internal peace and the destabilizing global ‘age of empires’. However, in the 19th century “the concert of Europe carried out similar functions to those performed by contemporary international organizations, providing access to decision making by states not directly involved in a conflict, offering assurance to members about each others’ intentions, and requiring conformity to shared norms as a condition for acceptance as a member in a good standing”⁹.

Secondly, how does one explain the first multilateral arrangements regarding civilian issues, what D. Mitrany calls the specific “common interest”, for example the International Telegraph Union in 1865, without taking into account such a co-operative kind of multipolarism? This was the most significant of a series of significant multilateral arrangements¹⁰. Mitrany is wrong in contrasting functional cooperation with intergovernmental regimes, which are really two sides of the same coin. Multilateral cooperation and the central role of the British Pound (the *Gold Standard*) are some of the main pillars of the “*Pax Britannica*”, the instruments of the British

⁶ St. Hoffmann (1961) *International law...*

⁷ F. Chabod, *Idea d’Europa e politica d’equilibrio*, op cit, p.13-14

⁸ H. Kissinger, Speech at the Berthelmann Foundation Forum, 2006

⁹ R. O. Keohane, H. Haftendorn and C. A. Wallander, Conclusions, in *Imperfect Unions*, Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 325

¹⁰ Universal Postal Union (1865), International office of weights and measures (1875), International meteorological organization (1878), International agriculture office (1907), International public hygiene office (1907), International statistics office (1913).

hegemonic stability¹¹, in the 19th century and, thanks to the illusory Washington treaty of 1922, again after WW1, until its final breakdown in August 1931¹².

It is relevant for understanding the background of the current pluralist international trade system that multilateralism was not the only principle of international trade at that time. For example, the process leading to the German *Zollverein* (1834), and the Anglo-French commercial treaty (1860) were based on bilateral arrangements provoking, by domino-effect, trade liberalization (W. Mattli, 1999). In spite of the conflict with German (and other powers') protectionism, the British liberal multilateralism was a way of stabilizing and adjusting the system of balance of power, even if it eventually proved incapable of managing the emergence of Germany as a power within the system.

Complementary interpretations also suggest a bottom-up emergence of multilateral cooperation in Europe at the middle of the 19th century, thanks to the spilling-over of domestic codification of universally constraining norms, from national to international life (Caffarena 2001 and Ch. Reus-Smit 1997). However heterogeneous and pluralistic the international system may have been between the 19th and early 20th Centuries, the British-led multilateral system and the multipolar European states system both ended at the very same epoch, that is between the two world wars, in the context of what I. Wallerstein calls the European "Second Thirty Years War".

This was an historical turning point. It is maybe true that the emerging global actors and specifically the two superpowers were partly dependent on European culture. However, what is certain is that Europe was no longer the world's centre. The main actors of classical multipolarism itself, namely the Great Powers of the 19th Century, were declining, and Europe's relative weight within the international system reducing, even if Europe still typically has a bridge-making capacity with any part of the world.

However, the new epoch of European US-led multilateralism did not start from zero. European multilateralism was not re-born only because of the new US hegemony after 1944/45. How does one explain the huge difference between the type of US hegemony in Western Europe after WW2 and in East Asia –where regional multilateralism was not even sought by US– and the bilateralism that characterized the new relationships with Japan, Southern Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, Philippines etc? The rebirth of economic and political multilateralism in 1944-47 was already happening in Europe before the beginning of the Cold War (1947): the Bretton Woods conference on the monetary system, the IMF, the World Bank, in 1945 the UN, in 1947 the GATT and the "Marshall Plan" (with the 16 member Organization for European Economic Cooperation). Even when global multilateral options (the UN Security Council) are prevented by the emergent bipolar threat and resulting new power hierarchies, multilateral security remains US-centred as far as Western Europe is concerned (i.e. NATO).

It would be impossible to explain this distinctive feature of US hegemony in Western Europe without taking into account the European political history mentioned above. Implementing and deepening multilateralism, according to the federal/functionalist view of the grounding fathers of European unity, was consistent with internal demands arising from civil society, with endogenous factors and rule-making, rooted in modern history, all of which in a relationship of both continuity and discontinuity with the controversial vicissitudes of the European state system. Of course, within the new international system born in 1944-47, what used to be obvious during the centuries of the Westphalian European state system became increasingly problematic, that is the identification between infra-European order and global order.

¹¹ Ch Kindleberger, *The twenty years crisis*

¹² K. Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, 1944

Realists would argue that the Western and European multilateral institutions would have been inconceivable without the bipolar nuclear confrontation, which, in Europe, meant longstanding US leadership¹³. However, the strength of European continental political culture made the balance between new global US-led and regional multilateralism a controversial issue from the very beginning. For example, the division between the UK-led EFTA (1960) and the 6 EC members (Treaties of Paris, 1950, and of Rome, 1957) resulted out of two very diverging concepts of multilateralism, both compatible with US hegemony, but only the second of the two included deeper integration and supranational institutions. US tolerated EC trade and agrarian protectionism, as well as national Keynesian policies, for decades because of both strategic (anti-URSS) reasons and its commitment to the internal social stability of the allies (Ruggie). GATT Art. 24 appears to be a soft compromise framework for a real problem, which by 2006 is still largely unresolved: on the one hand, the widening to 27 members of the EC-EU shows that the model of deeper integration has won the competition with the current 4 member-state EFTA, but on the other hand the external and internal pressures for an EFTA-style type of European multilateralism have been greatly increased by both enlargement and globalization.

In conclusion, in a narrow sense, multilateralism can be seen as an instrumental tool, successively subordinated to the European multipolar balance of power and to the bipolar confrontation after WW2. However, multilateralism is an expression of long-term dynamics of civilization of the relations among states, increasing civilian and sequential exchanges. Multipolarism and multilateralism are distinct and to some extent conflicting concepts, even if we have shown that they are somewhat linked in modern European history: both are in opposition to unipolar/unilateralism, on the one hand, and an anarchical international system on the other.

The culture of multilateral cooperation is deeply rooted in Europe; as opposed to the hard versions of the balance of power, it can be considered as a form of implementing the political principle of state cooperation. In our opinion, these historical roots and the link between internal experience largely explains the asserted European interest in global multilateral cooperation, diplomatic conflict prevention and crisis management, its interest in post-war reconstruction, and the distinctive European “tradition of making a political analysis of conflict, pragmatically looking for compromises” (Hettne 2005, p. 286).

2. The challenge of an emerging multipolar world

The emergence of the new Asian economies is challenging the European Union to adapt its multilateralism to a changing world, whose axis is shifting eastwards. Markets for goods and services and growing Asian pro-capita income pose a range of opportunities for the European exchange system. Asian technology powered economy and its buyout of some ICT is up-ending the supply chain and value creation. Asian demographic trends are complementary to the European one and may provide an increasingly educated labour force. Contrary to the first three rounds of globalization (ancient times; European empires; and US hegemony), we do share a consciousness of common global challenges: in terms of financial architecture, climate change, poverty, peace, Europe is no longer at the centre and risk becoming marginal in a world where the axis is moving towards the Pacific. Eurocentric thought is over. As an example we can quote G. W. F. Hegel, “Lessons on philosophy of History” (published after his death in 1832), where the most important German philosopher

¹³ R. Gilpin 1995

writes: “Universal history moves from East toward West, because Europe is really the end of history, whereas Asia is her beginning”. It is not difficult to find the roots of this great Eurocentric idea in a broad stream of political thought from ancient Greece (Xenophones and Plutarch), to Machiavelli and Montesquieu, Voltaire and Kant: the idea of Europe as a place of freedom and individual liberties versus a collectivist and authoritarian Asia. What about the impact of the dramatic change which is occurring in economic interdependence and in the redistribution of economic power, demography, and social development, on the structure of the 21st Century world?

What kind of multipolar world is about to emerge? By multipolarity we may understand two different tendencies: either the less important descriptive fact that the distribution of powers shift from one or two to several centres, or a conceptual framework for a new international system - a world system where only the balance of nuclear and military power can prevent war. Several comments mention the old European system of 5-6 great powers (changing as far as its composition is concerned), which stabilized Europe, though challenges and wars, between 1648 and 1914. Is such a “back to the future” scenario likely to occur at a global level?

Despite the relevance of power-politics in Central Asia, East Asia, South Asia and North-east Asia, national powers do not entirely share the traditional multipolar, power politics agenda. On the one hand, the world is witnessing not only local crises but the strongest threats to peace and to stability. On the other hand, there is much evidence of the emergence of a highly asymmetrical multipolar world, where a classical balance of power logic does not work because of the diverse and changing nature of each participating power (India, China, Japan, Iran, Russia, the US).

First, there is and will remain a structural and increasing gap between the military and nuclear power of EU/India/China on the one hand, and of the US on the other. Second, Chinese, Japanese and Indian defence budgets are still substantially smaller than that of the US and also of France and the UK.

Table 1. SIPRI report on armaments, Stockholm 2008.

1	USA (4.5% of GDP)	: 528.7	1756 per capita
2	UK	: 59.2	990
3	France	: 53.1	875
4	China	: 49.5	(37)
5	Japan	: 43.7	341
6	Germany (1% of GDP)	: 37.0	447
7	Russia	: 34.7	(244)
8	Italy(1% of GDP)	: 29.9	514
9	Saudi Arabia	: 29.0	1152
10	India	: 23.9	21

In millions of dollars, SIPRI 08. In ‘market exchange rate’ terms. Some variations are possible, depending on purchasing power

After looking at the SIPRI report, the question which should be addressed is that of the quality of multipolarism. Is a kind of an enlarged and new society of great powers (for example, through an extension of the G8 or UNSC, for example) sufficient as a background for a new kind of multilateral cooperation, beyond

mere instrumentalism, 'free rider' practices, the logic of power, and a rhapsodic implementation of multilateralism as a 'consumption good'?

The current international economic crisis offered opportunity for the return of political choice, both at domestic and global levels. Does this mean the return of a narrow understanding of multilateralism, enhancing national sovereignty, both as its internal and external dimensions are concerned? Several facts suggest prudence in terms of this conclusion:

- the asymmetrical primacy of the US (according to the SIPRI report 2008, the US alone is spending in 2007 for its military budget more than the next 10 powers and ten times more than China).
- the evident heterogeneity of the five to six major powers (USA, Russia, India, China, Japan, UE, Brazil);
- the continuing influence of the multilateral network and of complex interdependence, where incentives for participation are based on reduction of transaction costs, cost-benefit calculations, etc;
- the nature of global challenges favouring multilateral cooperation for the common good, beyond a narrow understating of reciprocity: climate change, financial instability, poverty of the 'Bottom Billion', terrorism, etc. (with their huge respective implications for comprehensive security) - military power is not the best means to address such threats.
- the evidence of a growing linkage between the internal and external dimension of policies and policy cooperation, suggesting a deeper understanding of international cooperation, beyond a narrow understanding of rational choice and closer to the "social exchange" model.

3. East Asian cooperation and the European perception of China's multilateral approach

The emergence of a multifaceted East-Asian multilateralism is an extraordinary innovation of the last twenty years. The end of the cold war has fostered already-existing tendencies rooted in traditional regional ties, whose roots in turn can be found in the pre-colonial tributarian system surrounding China and including many of the current members of ASEAN. A large literature already exists underlining the long term evolution and the perspective of development of multilateral cooperation in East Asia. Every state of the region has its own multilateral approach conditioned by national culture, regime and economic strength. However a multilateral, multilevel, multi-actor architecture of regional and global cooperation is already framing East Asia and will shape the international relations of the 21st Century¹⁴.

Let us start by evaluating the framework of the East Asian changes now occurring. The economic crisis may bring further regional cooperation or a growing risk of increased traditional and new conflicts in this economically decisive region. Asia is still characterized by both inter-state and internal uncertainties.

¹⁴ M. Green, B. Gill (eds.) *Asia's new multilateralism*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2009; K. Calder and F. Fukuyama (eds.) *East Asian Multilateralism*, Baltimore, East Asian University, 2008; M. Timmerman, and J. Tsuchiyama (eds.) *Institutionalizing East Asia*, Tokyo, UN University 2008; Acharya and Johnson (eds.), *Crafting Cooperation*, Cambridge, CUP, 2007.

On the one hand, the international context is the most unstable in the world, because of both local and major unsettled disputes (Iran, Afghanistan, Iraq, Kashmir, the Korean peninsula, China- Japan relations). With regard to internal uncertainties, there is no doubt that with the exception of Japan, and to some extent South Korea, East Asia is still characterized by extensive internal uncertainties and the potential instability of young democracies or centralized political systems. Even democratic Japan has not yet had a mature experience of alternating centre-right wing and centre-left wing national governments. These factors suggest prudence, and that the future will be unpredictable.

On the other hand, the extraordinary Asian economic and trade development occurs in a situation where there is a competition of two currencies (yen and yuan) for regional leadership which is still undecided, and will not be easily settled in the coming decade. However, what is new is that both bilateral cooperation and regional multilateralism are not only growing up –thanks to ASEAN and its capacity of inclusion, in several circles, of the other countries of the region– but that “asianization” is going to be strengthened. Compared with the time of the APEC hegemony, internal Asian pressures are more significant. ASEAN remains in the driving seat: ASEAN plus 1 (FTA with China before 2010 and 2015), ASEAN plus 3 (China, Japan and S. Korea), plus 6 (plus India, Australia and New Zealand), and the Asian Regional Forum (ARF, inviting EU, US and non-Asian powers to discuss once a year sensitive security issues). Furthermore, China has been able to establish the Shanghai Cooperation Organization with its secretariat in Beijing (SCO), and is leading the six-party talks regarding the Korean peninsula. Nobody expected such a development twenty years ago.

Are the foundations of Chinese multilateral cooperation strong enough to realistically allow us to rely on its commitment to multilateral cooperation¹⁵? On the one hand, the Chinese cooperative approach looks to be structural and long-term. The evolution of the external economic relations and foreign policy of the People’s Republic of China has been combining, for several decades already, in a distinctive way, Chinese national interests and bilateral/multilateral cooperation. We can categorise the PRC’s external relations in four successive epochs.

A) In the first epoch, from 1949 to 1971, Chinese isolation in the context of US containment policy and the break with the USSR in the early sixties was balanced by its links to Third World countries and the Non-aligned movement: here we can mention the participation of Chou en Lai at the Bandung Conference of 1955 among another 27 nations.

B) After the dramatic change of US and Western policy towards China and its diplomatic recognition (1971), the PRC joined the UN Security Council and had its first experiences with political multilateralism: however China kept to a merely instrumental approach to the UN, specially avoiding any commitment to UN peace missions.

C) The economic opening decided by Deng Xiao Ping from 1978 profoundly changed China’s external economic relations. It was more open to the pressures of the Committee on disarmament and international economic organizations; even before the hard times following the Tiananmen crisis of 1989, the government’s report to the fourth session of the 6th People’s National Congress (1986) asserted that “China would participate in various international conferences and organizations, develop positive multilateral diplomatic activities, and make efforts to enhance cooperation in all areas”.

¹⁵ Peng Qing, “On China’s multilateral foreign policy viewed from report of the work of government :1986-2005” in Foreign Affairs Review, 2005

D) The current period is characterized by a more mature combination of bilateralism, regionalism and multilateralism. After a first stage focusing on the membership of global multilateral organizations, notably the WTO, the PRC has been asserting in its own way multilevel multilateral cooperation both at global and regional levels, which entails a very strong role in underpinning Asian multilateralism. The 9th National People's Congress (from 1998 to 2003) supported every kind of commitment to international cooperation, whatever global or regional and both the 16th (2002) and 17th (2007) Congresses of the Communist party statements include open commitments to multilevel multilateral cooperation: at a regional level the need of good relationship with neighbouring countries was promoted, by emphasizing that Chinese development is an opportunity for the whole of Asia (in the security, economic and environment spheres). Among the variety of forms of multilateral cooperation, the CPC has emphasised the roles of state diplomacy (strategic links with the US, France, UK, Japan, Mexico, EU and ASEAN, etc.) within the framework of the UN Charter, but also of transnational links in terms of "folk diplomacy" and party diplomacy.

However, the nature of this regional cooperation around a peacefully emerging China is not yet clear: historians mention the old tributary system of China of pre-colonial times as a reference point. What form will the Chinese role take (leader, regional hegemon, feared great neighbour) within these new regional frameworks? Will it be of a hierarchical or multilateral nature¹⁶? Second, which will be the limits and borders in terms of the call for an East Asian Community, a community desired by ASEAN and an Asia-Pacific community advocated by the Australian Prime Minister and open to the US? Third, what about the link between regional cooperation, the rule of law and democratic consolidation? The "ASEAN charter" of 2007 announces a greater respect for human rights in the region, while the double Myanmar crisis of 2007/2009 (the uprising in the winter and tsunami in the spring of 2008) confirms the continuing strength of the traditional principle of non-interference and the idea of sovereignty as protection of a national regime (dictatorship). Fourth, international literature is increasingly looking at a new concept of "institutionalization" of regional relations which bridges the two alternative paths of regional cooperation: the hyper-institutionalized EU method and the informal Asian way¹⁷.

Notwithstanding these significant current problems, is it realistic enough to image a long term commitment of several East-Asian states, including China, within the multitier multilateral framework? And will multilateral cooperation bring change with regard to the gradual and free self-limitation of the classical absolute understanding of national sovereignty? Will the high officials and diplomats representing the participating countries experience a kind of learning process, not only limiting transaction costs, but also sharing information, and developing mutual trust within institutionalized organizations at regional and global levels (including the WTO, the UN, the International Olympic Committee, the World Health Organization etc)?

Several statements and practices of China, including the Party Congress resolution of 2007, mention the transition "from multipolarism to multilateralism as a strategic option for China".

The research should deepen this crucial subjective and discursive variable as complementary to the assessment of cooperation practices. Only to the extent that the answer to these questions is at least partially in the affirmative, could the EU type of multilateral culture be of some help within this challenging region.

¹⁶ See the article by Bhavan Rwangsilp 'Regional bloc' in South East Asian History. A Brief Overview, in the "Asia Pacific Journal of EU studies", no. 2, winter 2007

¹⁷ See the chapter by R. Higgott in M. Telo' (ed.) *EU and new regionalism*, Ashgate 2007

On the contrary, in the case of a new imperial logic, in the case of a return to the classical balance of power logic, the EU will necessarily become even more marginal than now. Contrary to the abovementioned new multilateral scenario, several theoreticians of the alternative models of capitalism (Singapore, China, Vietnam etc.) argue that the Asian century will not include multilateral dialogue with Europe as an essential feature, precisely because of the multipolar character of the emerging world. A second caveat is that a number of representatives of China and India argue that ‘multilateralism needs multipolarism’, according to the lessons of both the movement of developing countries after 1945 towards the principle of equal sovereignty of states and the relevance of unipolarism in destabilizing multilateral organizations and dividing regional entities (2001-2007). We must not forget, as asserted by Chen Zhimin, that China, by combining its interests, principles and capacities within its concept of responsible diplomacy, is often subjected to contradictory demands, not only by southern and northern partners, but also by countries in the West¹⁸.

That is why we cannot conclude this paragraph simply by contrasting alternative concepts and approaches to multilateral cooperation in the EU and in East Asia. On the one hand the “Asianization” of multilateral cooperation in East Asia and the centrality of the RPC within this dynamic are a matter of fact; this makes the scenario of a “pluralist multilateralism” realistic for the decades to come. However, on the other hand, interdependence matters more than relativism and self-isolation: the multilateral, multidimensional, multilevel, multi-actor interaction between the West and East Asia, and particularly the EU with China and East Asia, is already provoking communication, mutual recognition, cross-insemination, reciprocal understanding and adaptation, in one phrase, a process of change. The door is open to a new global and regional multilateral cooperation. What we do mean by this concept?

4. The chance for a new multilateralism

The theoretical framework for a new epoch of multilateralist studies can only be provided by combining area studies, notably, European studies, with international relations studies. On the one hand, European studies have to overcome inward looking approaches and Eurocentric understandings of reconciliation between previous enemies only through the ‘community method’ of supranationality; on the other hand, international relations studies should reject marginalization of the EU experience as totally irrelevant for other continents and on the global scale, and learn from comparative regionalist studies. Provided these conditions are met, new multilateralism is heuristically fruitful, an important extension of government research programs, an alternative agenda in global governance studies: a modification (not an abolition) of the logic of sovereignty and maybe, the first step towards a bottom-up universalism.

In accordance with what has been said before, three features are already characterizing the new multilateralism:

A) A post-hegemonic leadership at a global level. The US still has the capacity and the will to lead a new multilateral world; however this leadership cannot be comparable with its previous hegemony. Secondly, it has to be implemented as a co-leadership where the US and the EU show the emerging powers that there is reciprocal interest in cooperation. Given the globally positive record of increasing international autonomy after 1989 and after 2001, the EU is and can in the future still be a credible leader in global change,

¹⁸ Chen Zhimin, “International Responsibility, Multilateralism and China’s Foreign Policy” in M. Telo and F. Ponjaert (eds.) *Multilateralism and State*, Springer, Berlin 2010, forthcoming

development policy and trade regulation. More than ever in the past, the defeat of unipolarism and unilateralism provides the world with an extraordinary window of opportunity for an equal partnership between America, Europe and Asia

B) The new multilateralism needs a new role for regionalism and interregionalism. This ‘ multilevel multilateralism’ should include regional and interregional governance as structural features, consistent and not conflicting with the global dimension; comparative research monitoring the trend of development of regional entities from mere state-centric regimes to intergovernmental and transnational entities.

The growing importance of the regional dimension will be confronted with two challenges: on the one hand, much of the literature in favour of free trade accuses regionalism of promoting ‘preferentialism’ and the risk of shifting towards a fragmented ‘spaghetti bowl’. On the other hand, a mainly philosophical literature sees regionalism as a route towards cosmopolitanism.

According to the European experience, a multidimensional regional cooperation (not limited to a regional preferential trade area) will have the capacity available to face both nationalism and preferentialism (as a reaction to a WTO DDA blockade). However, the true question is not to assert a useless condemnation of the fact of regional cooperation, but rather the following one: how to multilateralize regionalism? And how to provide the global multilateral network with regional roots, strengthening its efficiency and legitimacy?

On the other hand, cosmopolitanism argues that such pessimistic assessments of regional cooperation are far from being confirmed by the EU experience and ‘Kantian trends’. On the contrary, with this understanding, regionalism could also bring us to a new universalism, based on the respect of others’ traditions and an understanding of shared values: some scholars call it a “processual cosmopolitanism”¹⁹.

Regionalism is interacting with interregionalism as cooperation with two regional entities or areas belonging to two different continents; interregionalism as a distinctive feature (identity-marker?) of the EU’s contribution to global governance (ASEM, Barcelona process, ACP, Rio de Janeiro process etc.). It entails an open process of dialogue and cooperation, open to many actors, multidimensional (political dialogue matters in parallel with economic and cultural equal partnership based on respect and mutual benefit; driven by meetings at a *high level* (heads of state or government, ministers and senior officials) complemented by ministerial and working-level meetings and activities on a wide range of political, economic and cultural subjects. Interregional agreements also focus on people-to-people contacts: Europe and the partner continent, through cultural, intellectual and people-to-people contacts. Finally, a controversial topic is the relationship of the EU with individual countries.

To what extent is bilateralism conflicting with multilateral interregionalism? There are two forms of EU bilateralism: first, trade partnership agreements with ACP members looked at by the Commission after the failure of the DDR in 2006/7. Secondly, ‘Strategic partnerships’ with the main powers. The latter are a consequence of the rise of the EU as a political actor: with USA, Japan, Russia, Canada and, more recently, with China (2003), India (2004), Brazil (2007). When looking to the statements, these strategic partnerships entail support for regional cooperation. However, both kind of bilateralism appear to be contradictory to the EU’s regional identity and are the cause of disputes. The same could be said for the bilateral trend as the Free trade agreements with individual countries are concerned.

¹⁹ J. M. Ferry, *La voie kantienne*, Paris, CERF, 2006 and F. Cheneval, *La Cité des peuples*, CERF 2007.

All in all, we have no doubt that the main research findings are likely to see more regionalism and interregionalism in the 21st Century than in the 20th, even if academic research has stressed alternative routes to regional cooperation. What is needed is monitoring as to whether potential relevant pillars of a global multilevel governance are developing, and whether the competing strategies of single states (G4) and regional entities will have an impact on the still controversial reform of the global network, the UN, WTO, IMF, towards enhanced legitimacy and efficiency.

5. The risk of a closed shop and the debate on smaller multilateral groupings

By mentioning J. Bhagwati's criticism to regional cooperation and cosmopolitan studies of regionalism, we have addressed a theoretical problem which constitutes a guideline for our study on multilateral cooperation: it is the relationship between small groupings of states and universal multilateral organizations. To what extent and how does the number of members of the club matter as far as the efficiency of multilateral cooperation is concerned?

J. Caporaso²⁰ provides a brilliant synthesis of what he defines as "the logic of the k group": the smaller the k group, the easier it is to ensure cooperation, but the less multilateral the arrangement will be. The larger the k group, the more multilateral the cooperative arrangement might be, but the more difficult it will be to pull it off". We have already presented a critical assessment of the normative evaluation of: "less universal as less multilateral". However, this approach is worthwhile, introducing the relevant topic of the advantages of smaller multilateral clubs, from a rational choice point of view. Within a smaller group, institutionalization may provide the opportunity of "*conditional co-operation*" (the strategy of co-operating on the condition that others co-operate), that is of *monitoring* the rules implementation by the others in a regular way. Also, a smaller and deeper group allows stepping away from specific *reciprocity* to *diffused reciprocity*; the *repetition game*, the lengthening of the *time frame*, the gradual construction of mutual trust and reputation. Many authors underline the positive impact of the *iteration* of the cooperation game, but, according to Michael Taylor²¹, the number of club members matters and a small size strongly plays in favour of successful cooperation because larger groups increase the costs of monitoring.

The question as to whether "transaction costs" grow for larger groups or are reduced within multilateral institutions is in general highly controversial, with a split between realists and institutionalists. By transaction costs, we mean the following canonical definition²²: all the costs incurred in exchange, including the costs of acquiring information, bargaining, and enforcement, as well as the opportunity cost of the time allocated to these activities. Whatever the theoretical approach, reducing transaction costs is relevant in explaining multilateralism.

However, for utilitarian, costs-benefit approaches, transaction costs are the true explanation of multilateral institutions, which are needed precisely to decrease transaction costs. Second, according to a realist view, wider multilateral arrangements are not only more various and heterogeneous but also more complex and complicated, which may raise transaction costs and increase implementation problems.

²⁰ J. Caporaso, 1983

²¹ M. Taylor, *The possibility of cooperation*, CUP, 1987

²² Douglas C. North, 1984

All in all, regime theory and game theory may indeed explain multilateral co-operation amongst states, being capable of providing public goods, even if conditional and on a limited basis, as its scope, scale and purposes are concerned. However, conditional cooperation and norm-setting may entail selective punishments and a trend towards bilateralism and exclusive clubs. That would be in conflict with diffuse reciprocity, indivisibility and long-term collaboration amongst states (which requires unconditional co-operation, according to Liza Martin, in Ruggie 1983)²³.

We will come back to this crucial question, when applying theories of reciprocity on a regional and global scale.

6. From a “specific reciprocity” to a “diffuse reciprocity”?

The pioneering book published by Stanley Hoffmann in 1961²⁴ emphasises the distinction between the law of the international structure, and the law of community, and classified the law of reciprocity between them. While reciprocity overcomes the bottom level of legalization of the international structure, the law of reciprocity does not address the level of common challenges of human-kind, necessarily entailing a pooling and limiting of states’ sovereignties.

Since then, everybody agrees about the link between multilateral relations and reciprocity. But what kind of reciprocity? And to what extent is the tendency towards a new multilateralism going to change the path of reciprocity? We already introduced this crucial theoretical distinction: “diffuse reciprocity” is not reciprocity, but something broader and deeper. This crucial concept, developing institutionalism in world politics, varies according to different schools of thoughts and R.O. Keohane has illustrated in an admirable way the nuances of the extensive multidisciplinary literature.

Let us take a step back. What is meant in IR literature by reciprocity? Reciprocity is an ambiguous term, both “a symbol in politics” and a “concept for scholars» used by different schools of thought. Lawyers look apodictic: reciprocity is a condition theoretically attached to every legal norm of international law (E. Zoller 1984, p. 15), which means that it is not at all opposed to state sovereignty. On the contrary, it was used for more than two centuries by treaty-making, both as far as trade and political relations are concerned. However, the question is more complex. There are several reciprocities. The one that is most linked to the rational choice theory and realistic school of thought argues that it is contingent and conditional: actors respond to cooperation with cooperation, to defection with defection, whereas political values play no role at all. According to Keohane this could also be defined as the lowest level of “cooperation among egoists”, compatible with international anarchy and balance of power thinking²⁵.

Furthermore, more critical approaches argue that superpowers or great powers often practice “aggressive reciprocity” as a strategy for opening foreign markets, notably markets of weaker partners: for example, the

²³ Regarding the practical example of the EU-CEEC relationship during the Nineties (K. E. Smith 2004, The Hague conference), we witnessed a mix between on the one hand a multilateral organization, (the EU), and on the other hand a bilateral relationship with individual CEEC as a way of imposing sanctions for violations of agreements.

²⁴ S. Hoffmann, *International systems and international law*, New York 1961

²⁵ R. O. Keohane, *Reciprocity in International Relations, in International Organizations*, 40.1, Winter 1986 and *After Hegemony*, Princeton University Press, 1984 and 2004.

MFN clause is conditionally applied. In the case of “specific reciprocity”, actors don’t need any mutual middle term and long term trust and the game theory works as a valid general scientific framework. However, a certain degree of equivalence is needed. In the case of leonine pacts, one-sided exploitation, imperial domination or unbalanced vassalage, in summary, in the event of lack of any equivalence, the term of reciprocity is totally unfit. In this respect, J. G. Ruggie is right in emphasizing the historical break between both the German and Japanese models before 1945 of relationship with vassals, partners and allies, on the one hand, and on the other, the principle of equivalence of reciprocal concessions and benefits, typical of the multilateral institutions established by the USA after Bretton Woods (IMF), and 1947 (GATT). Of course, the equivalence is only partial and the effective power relations affect the practice of mutual concessions²⁶.

In historical terms, specific reciprocity has contributed to international cooperation during the decades of both UK and US hegemonies. However, reciprocity has met problems both in bilateral and multilateral contexts, in trade and security negotiations. When the bilateral relationship between two superpowers is highly competitive (USA-USSR), even the concept of equivalence is a controversial one. An echoing of past conflicts mattered and did cause deadlocks.

Multilateral specific reciprocity might be even more difficult to achieve according to Keohane: where there is a large number of participants, the existence of public goods (indivisible by definition) gives rise to a temptation for “free riders not to pay for the good but to gain from its provision by others”²⁷, which is greater than for bilateral or small group negotiations (the risk of retaliation is lower).

b) “Diffuse reciprocity” is a more complex and theoretically innovative concept, linked to the literature on social exchange. According to Keohane, “diffuse reciprocity” is characterized by a less strict and rougher equivalence of benefits and more consistency with general principles, as, for example, the unconditional MFN clause.

According to Keohane, summarizing a large US literature, diffuse reciprocity is “an ongoing series of sequential actions which may continue indefinitely, never balancing, but continuing to entail mutual concessions, within the context of shared commitments and values”. In academic terms, it calls for a multidisciplinary approach, including not only economics but also political science, law, anthropology and sociology.

Diffuse reciprocity is more constraining and entails obligations. Social scientists are better than rational choice economists at explaining why not only individuals but also states sometimes behave on the basis of what Albert Hirschman and others call “solidarity”, notably between richer and poorer individuals, regions, or states, or by voluntarily contributing to the public good. Mere positivist and utilitarian approaches are challenged, while, according to Keohane, the literature on social exchange, for example Barrington Moore, Alvin Gouldner and Charles Lindblom, might frame behaviours consistent with diffuse reciprocity and the obligations which are linked to it. The problem is whether, contrary to any Hobbesian approach, obligation and gratitude matter in international relations as much as within national and local societies.

According to this literature, exchange takes place not simultaneously but sequentially, in order to underpin a long term multilateral or bilateral partnership, including obligation: debts and credits increase reciprocal trust over time, where complete repayment is not only not needed but inhibited according to Gouldner.

²⁶ Robert Axelrod, *The Evolution of Cooperation*, New York, Basic, 1984, focussing on the application of game theory to cooperation.

²⁷ Keohane 1985 op cit p. 11-12

Mutual trust is inversely proportional to the degree of application of simultaneous reciprocity, which is on the contrary usual between enemies (exchange of prisoners and spies, cold war disarmament negotiations) or trade competitors. Sequential reciprocity provides partners with information about the others' habits and consistency with principles.

Sequential exchange may also mean, according to Caporaso²⁸, a reciprocity including various policy fields. For example, in 1990/91, Germany obtained the 'yes' of neighbouring France, Belgium, Netherlands, and later on Poland, to both German unity and sovereignty, by offering its beloved DM to Europe, through the new Maastricht Treaty. Issues linkage is a sensitive and controversial issue²⁹.

Institutionalization interacts with diffuse reciprocity. Regime building, as a first relevant step, includes arrangements not only regarding contents of mutual interest but also regarding the way of managing conflicts, rules and procedures, and general principles of conduct. Furthermore, multilateral regimes focussing on common goods (as the Kyoto Protocol) are only justified by a diffuse reciprocity approach.

7. Deepening regional multilateralism. The EU as a model of diffuse reciprocity?

The US academic literature offers a relevant background for reciprocity studies. However, the interplay with European studies is giving the new concept of diffuse reciprocity more substance, on the basis of the EU experience and comparative studies about regional cooperation. Both comparative regionalist studies and US theoretical literature are precious because they prove that the EU experience is not an isolated case but a part of a more general tendency towards a multilateral framework where diffuse reciprocity is less rare than in the past.

Consistently with the previous presentation, we would like to deepen a European point of view, emphasising, even more than Keohane that, between bilateral reciprocity on the one hand, and, on the other hand, weak global reciprocity, a third level of strong regional arrangements may allow a top level of diffuse reciprocity. A small group of states, for example of regional partners (not only the EU but also MERCOSUR and the ASEAN) could develop several relevant complementary tools allowing a more effective reciprocity through stronger institutions and less defection than a multilateral network at global scale. A smaller group makes a better multilateral monitoring of each other's behaviour at regional scale possible, by setting more compelling and multidimensional institutional arrangements, or by institutionalizing sequential exchanges.

In my interpretation, diffuse reciprocity is a broader and deeper form of reciprocity, entailing consequences for both domestic institutions and societies of participants.

E. Haas³⁰ has been a true pioneer in giving support to this argument, when providing the first bridge between international relations and regional integration studies and arguing that regional regimes and organizations are the best approximation to diffuse reciprocity. Indeed, diffuse reciprocity is particularly well illustrated by

²⁸ Op cit, in Ruggie, 1983.(Multilateralism matters)

²⁹ See for example : J.Nye and R.O.Keohane, power and interdependence, pp.30-32,, 122-24, , 252-54.

³⁰ E. Haas, *The Uniting of Europe: Political, Social and Economic Forces*, Stanford University Press, 1958.

the negotiation-machine represented by a regional entity such as the EU since its origins in the fifties, where multilateral reciprocity among member states has been upgraded from maintaining of sovereignty to pooling of sovereignty. Of course, since 1973, a widening Europe makes a working sequential exchange more difficult and complex. However, it would be wrong to argue that only the Jean Monnet kind of EC –with deep integration, community method, supranationality, and teleological ideology– has implemented diffuse reciprocity, whereas the EU 27 is returning to specific reciprocity and “caws market” practices. On the contrary, in spite of this challenge, new methods of regional governance, and of multilateral coordination (such as the OMC, and enhanced cooperation) are making diffuse reciprocity likely to become extended within new policy fields and realms.

Is this paving the way to the unilateral export of the “EU model” abroad at a regional and global scale? We don’t think so. Various empirical examples are provided by Mercosur, Andean Community, ASEAN, ‘ASEAN plus 1’; ‘ASEAN plus 3’, including the Chang May initiative (and plus 6); ‘A.R.F’; ‘six-party talks about the Korean peninsula»; ‘Shanghai cooperation organization’, Asian Payment Network, SAARC ,among others, do show a large array of cases from sovereignty pooling to sovereignty enhancing regional entities.

The thesis of the uniqueness of the EU is well founded on concrete empirical evidence. Despite its limits to 1% of the EU states’ total GDP³¹, the EU budget brings evidence of diffuse reciprocity: it shows both internal redistribution between the richest and poorest among the 27 according to the principle of regional solidarity and convergence; and external solidarity with developing countries. The EU-ACP program is relatively speaking the most generous when compared with those of the US and Japan. How do we explain these facts without taking into account the values and ideas of Europeans explicitly incorporated within the institutional set established by the Treaties?

These standards of behaviour are not opposed to the self interest of states, but go beyond it. In the European experience, starting with the ECSC of 1952 and the EC of 1957, the process of deepening and widening the common market enhanced mutual mid-term and long-term trust among the growing number of participants. It also meant that it won its competition with the “specific reciprocity”- oriented EFTA, the European Free Trade Association which has been in decline for several years as a consequence.

What is interesting is that, out of any state building dynamics, the integration of their internal agendas did gradually take the member states and societies beyond traditional trade relations, to an increasingly deepening convergence as far as the national evolving social models and sustainable development are concerned. This factor is crucial in explaining the EU success story and the stability of the European construction. What is interesting is that countries such as the UK and the Scandinavian countries at first rejected any diffuse reciprocity at the European level, and later on opted in favour of the J. Monnet-founded EC, leaving EFTA to its inevitable decline. This proves that there is a possible evolution from specific to diffuse reciprocity, even if traces of the past merely utilitarian approach are still clearly visible.

Internal diffuse reciprocity is however comparatively stronger than the external version: comparing the EU Structural Funds (accounting for one third of the total community budget) and the ACP program brings evidence of this. On the contrary, the Scandinavian states’ tradition of solidarity at a global level (by far the first donors at global level) conflicts with their scepticism about solidarity at a regional level. Seen from Brussels, the Scandinavian Euro-scepticism looks like Wohlstand-egoismus, whereas when seen from Stockholm, the

³¹ Which however amounts in 2007 to more than 13000 Million Euros, 1% of the total GDP of the EU-27, out of 13000 Billion Euros, superior to that of the US.

Brussels approach seems to be fostering a European fortress. There is merit in both arguments. On the one hand, a new and deeper link between internal multilateralism and external multilateralism might strengthen diffuse reciprocity at the international level. On the other hand, contrary to idealistic approaches, analyzing the links between specific and diffuse reciprocity may help the behaviour of both Scandinavian states and the EU.

The external challenge of conflict-causing globalization fosters new dynamics. Several papers by the Commission and the Council, parallel to the evolving practice of external relations, do include the internal modernization agendas of the evolving social models and sustainable development (of both EU and the partners) within international multilateral and bilateral relations. What looks particularly interesting is the gradually emerging link between such an internal diffuse reciprocity and the deepening of external relations both at bilateral and multilateral levels. See for example the Commission Communication of June 2006 and the European Council resolution of 13 December 2007. The EU's self-interest is evident: to avoid a race to the bottom as far as social, fiscal and environmental standards are concerned.

However, there is an interest for partners as well, for example in acquiring knowledge of the best modernization performances, importing European technologies and stabilizing their access to the richest world market by enhancing socio-environmental standards. Finally, both sides share an interest in constructing global alliances to face up to the common global challenges of poverty and climate change.

We are fully aware that the emphasis by Haas, Keohane and ourselves on the regional dimension as the best framing for diffuse reciprocity might be inconsistent with the classification of the unconditional MFN clause (automatically extended to third parties) as diffuse reciprocity³². Why? Because in the free trade context not only is the EC/EU considered an exception as a customs union (Art. 24 GATT and WTO), but it is also proven that regional trade regimes provoke deviations as far as global trade is concerned. What lies behind the following apparent paradox? The main trading power and the regional regime with the highest record of diffuse reciprocity, is in conflict with unconditional free trade?, which is, on the other hand, considered by many, to be an excellent indicator of diffuse reciprocity. This paradox is challenging for interdisciplinary research because the main social/political science literature openly conflicts with the finding of mainstream free trade and IPE literature opposing regional to global liberalization and non-discrimination.

Furthermore, in general, free trade studies focus on regional regimes and associations of states, such as mere preferential trade areas (PTAs)³³, custom unions, optimal currency areas; and they contrast them with global free trade and economic cooperation. Whatever our normative understanding, the question of trade diversions provoked by regional PTAs is a relevant one. While looking at globalization with a new realist approach, R. Gilpin shares some findings of the argument contrasting regions to globalization.

However, the idea of the existence of natural economic zones is shared by Braudel, Wallerstein, Hettne ('regionness'³⁴). When pursuing a functionalist research strategy (Bela Balassa³⁵, Haas, etc.), relevant scholars argue that, even as a "second best option", regional arrangements do foster multilateral globalization and universal free trade. Even the USA, after decades of opposition, conceded to regionalism, by establishing

³² R. O. Keohane, 1985 p.23-24.

³³ J. Fraenkel, *Regional Trading Blocs in the World Trade System*, Washington DC, 1997; J. Bhagwati, *In Defense of Globalization*, Oxford, 2004; A. Sapir, *The political economy of EC regionalism*, in "European economic Review", 1998, no 42, p. 712-732; W. Mattli, *The Logic of Regional Integration*, 1999

³⁴ B. Hettne, *Regionalism and World Order*, 2005, in L. Van Langenhove, M. Farrell, B. Hettne, (ed.), *Global Politics of Regionalism*, 2005

³⁵ Bela Balassa, *The Theory of Economic Integration*, Greenwood, London 1961

NAFTA in 1994 and looking (until 2008 unsuccessfully) at a Free Trade Area of the Americas, from Alaska to Patagonia. It is a matter of fact that enhanced infra-regional trade is a crucial indicator for successful regional groupings³⁶.

In conclusion, there are two main ways towards “diffused reciprocity”; the unconditional MFN clause and deepening regional cooperation. The first one “exposes its practitioners to the risk of exploitation” by free riders. The second one risks downgrading towards inward-looking protectionist paths. Both need strong global institutions to limit the dangers by top-down regulation. The second one needs to expand from Europe horizontally and bottom-up, towards other regional and global networks, and consequently to evolve towards a multilevel multilateral tool of governance. As a bridging literature we mentioned R. Keohane; we could also mention L. Summers and P. Krugman (1991), who argue that geographic proximity makes of infra-regional trade something natural, not necessarily that acts against global liberalization. Keohane also stresses the dialectical interplay between specific and diffuse reciprocity, sometimes applied in a combined way by states.

Last but not least, constructivist approaches suggest that the way states understand their own self interest changes according to the perception of the other’s behaviour. Common institutions are the best (even if not the only) framework for mutual information, obligation, trust-making and enhancing all preconditions of diffuse reciprocity. This has happened at the WTO level from the beginning and despite the problems of both the Uruguay and Doha rounds. However, this is more likely to happen at a regional level where values, history, feeling of identity, common aims and fears, make communication easier, as regional entities such as the EC/EU well show. The cognitive dimension and the communication at an institutional level interplays with the level of civil societies and individuals.

8. Legitimizing multilateral governance

The open controversy regarding the legitimacy of the multilateral network is composed of several elements. Firstly, there is the substantial legitimacy side, based on the system efficiency. The specific benefits for the ordinary citizens are a key indicator of legitimacy both at a regional (J. H. H. Weiler³⁷) and global scale. The current efficiency gap (of IMF, WTO, WB, FAO), the limits of the capacity of mastering the dark side of globalization, its imbalances and injustices, seriously affects the legitimacy of the multilateral system, notably according to the antiglobal movement and to the representatives of the third world countries.

Secondly, a well rooted school of thought pays very much attention to the legitimizing role of the epistemic community. Technocratic theories of power help by emphasizing the crucial role of knowledge by stabilizing every level of governance and enhancing the ability of organizations by providing citizens with public goods. Expertise matters, both at regional and global levels, due to enhancing the efficiency of multilateral performance, just as it used to matter during the history of nation-state building. This has been emphasized, for example, by “mixed government” theories, including “democracy”, “aristocracy” (technocracy) and “monarchy”, as constituent co-elements of the long-term stability of polities³⁸.

³⁶ For example, while the Andean community and ECOWAS account for less than 20% of infra-regional trade, EU data are impressive: in 2003, 66.7% of the trade of the 25 member states is internal EU trade. See the Garnet Database and indicators of regional integration: www.garnet.com

³⁷ J. H. H. Weiler, *The European Constitution*, 2003

³⁸ M. Telo in, *Pertinence et limites des thèses fédéralistes dans l'analyse de la construction européenne. Une constitution mixte?* N. Levrat, *Le fédéralisme et l'Europe*, Genève 2010,

Thirdly, the “input legitimacy” side, that is legitimacy by participation, is linked to the question of international democracy. It presents two main poles. On the one hand, a first approach is based on the realist theory that democracy has not very much to do with international relations, and will always be limited at the level of local and national government. According to this minimalist model, what matters is the extent and consolidation of domestic democratization. The firm distinction between democracy within the state and democracy without the states is asserted. Regarding the smaller context of the EC/EU, according to Andrew Moravcsick³⁹, the democratic deficit is a myth, because each member is a democratic state. Democratic states provide the Council and the European Council with indirect but solid input legitimacy through democratic support by citizens. The same could be even more valid at global multilateral level, where any similarity with a national democracy is out of question. However, it is highly significant that A. Moravcsick recently joined R. O. Keohane in addressing the question of an increased legitimacy of the multilateral network⁴⁰.

On the other hand, according to an extensive and pluralist school of thought, domestic democracy is a necessary but insufficient precondition for international democracy. No Chinese wall exists between inside and outside the state. Not only must international life be democratized in order to break one of the main external limits to domestic democracy (power politics, according to N. Bobbio⁴¹), but the latter would be undermined if the world system is maintained at the level of quasi-anarchy and global governance as a mere technocratic business.

Moreover, what was inconceivable some centuries or even some decades ago is on the agenda of the 21st Century. Democratic aims and ideals increasingly support transnational citizens’ demands for participation in the supranational decision-making process⁴², and the cosmopolitan book written by E. Kant a few years after the French revolution is more appropriate than ever⁴³. A various and pluralist movement of global public opinion emerged during the last decade opposing multilateral organizations and democracy. It is becoming practically impossible and theoretically obsolete to imagine providing the regional and global institutions with more regulating power without enhancing standards of democratic legitimacy and accountability. According to N. Bobbio, the concept of international democracy is not only based on the democratization of the units composing the global system, but also two more criteria: the democratization of the relationship among states and of the system itself.

The mainstream of this cosmopolitan school of thought has been for many years attracted by the utopia of a global democratic state based on regional federal states, starting with the model of the EU. The domestic analogy brings some of the authors to the perspective of the UN as a world government of globalization, eroding and transcending national sovereignties. Protection of human rights is conceived as leverage to humanitarian intervention and limits to national sovereignty. The UN system in its current state merits several criticisms: however, its democratization is linked by this school of thought with the powers of the Assembly, conceived as a kind of global parliament in the making⁴⁴. The end of the veto right of a few great powers within a reformed Security Council organised according to rotating criteria is also required to enhance legitimacy through representation. Some students envisage a pyramidal construction: under this arrangement, regional federal states may give birth to a new regionalized UN system and Security Council⁴⁵.

³⁹ A. A. Moravcsick, The Myth of Europe's 'Democratic Deficit', *Intereconomics: Journal of European Economic Policy* (November-December 2008).

⁴⁰ A. Moravcsick, R. Keohane, S. Macedo, Democracy-Enhancing Multilateralism in “*International Organization*”, 63, Winter 2009, ps.1-31.

⁴¹ N. Bobbio, *Il futuro della democrazia*, Torino, Einaudi, 1989

⁴² S. Tarrow, *The New Transnational Activism*, Cambridge University Press, 2005

⁴³ E. Kant, *Treaty on perpetual peace*, 1797 and J. Habermas, *Kants Idee des ewigen Friedens aus dem historischen Abstand von 200 Jahren*, Frankfurt am main, Suhrkamp, 1996; regarding the concept of a cosmopolitan democracy see also D. Held, *Democracy and the Global Order*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1995.

⁴⁴ J. Habermas, *Die Postnationale Konstellation*, Frankfurt am main, Suhrkamp, 1998.

⁴⁵ Jan Wouters, *The UN and the EU: partners in multilateralism*, “EU diplomacy papers”, 4, 2007; Th Lane, *Regionalism as a condition for a new internationa-*

The problem is that the analogy with national democratic standards could be misleading and raise expectations too high: the democratic sphere, the method of appointing and scrutinizing officials, the degree and form of participation, power limitations, etc. are qualitatively different at the national or supranational levels. The same word –democratic legitimacy– covers two distinct realms with two necessarily distinct sets of rules, procedures, public spheres, etc.

A lesser but more realistic indicator of international democratization can come from enhancing the capacity of multilateralism to support and strengthen democracy. A third school of thought rejects any opposition between multilateralism and democracy while recognizing a certain negative impact of global and regional elitist institutions on domestic democracy. It stresses three elements. First, according to D. Held and his school⁴⁶, multilateralism might be complementary to the insufficiencies of national democracies, by addressing the regulation of private organizations, lobbying, companies, free riders, acting at on transnational scale. In this case, however, the main issue at stake is not the democratization of multilateral institutions but their enhanced efficiency, using the power resource of pooling national sovereignties together, as a means of reducing the deficit and limits of domestic democracies. Secondly, a commitment to multilateral cooperation may amend any national feeling of superiority, internal limits of crypto-ethnocentrism, “parochialism”, and arrogance of national democracy, as shown by Keohane and Moravcsick. We add a third element: a softly constraining impact of multilateral cooperation on participant states; for example, in the case of transition countries, where democracy and the rule of law are still fragile or marginal, multilateral cooperation strengthens the role of the branch of civil society, networks and of civil servants respecting international standards, multilateral rules and procedures on an equal basis, and this cannot but put a brake on and weaken nationalism, arbitrary behaviours, authoritarianism, the shadow economy etc. We can define this third impact as sovereignty-civilizing. By pooling external sovereignties within a multilateral network, regime, organization, a state is committed to change, to some extent, the exercise of internal sovereignty, according to internationally more acceptable standards and binding criteria.

Through all these routes to enhanced democracy, the EU plays the role of an advanced workshop. Notwithstanding its increasingly clear limits as a federal blueprint of a global state, the EU institutional establishment is openly suggesting that democracy is on the agenda beyond the nation state. It is already widely recognized as the most advanced step, or at least as a relevant laboratory of supranational input legitimacy: the democratically elected European Parliament ensures representative democracy while the dialogue between social partners and the myriad of social and economic and cultural networking provide more than a minimal degree of social legitimacy. The elements of participatory democracy (the petition right, and the new right of law-proposal provided there are a certain number of transnational citizen signatures) will increase through the current treaty revision.

What is very relevant is that comparative research, including that organized by Garnet⁴⁷, shows very well that the EU is not an isolated case study: the more the politicization of regional cooperation progresses in the world, the more democratic accountability and legitimacy emerge as a logical complementary objective. Regional parliaments are in progress both in Latin America and Africa. Interregional parliamentary dialogue, established by the European Parliament, is charged with controlling and strengthening interregional partnerships. A certain degree of at least consultative interaction between regional entities and the UN system is occurring. EU supports both democratic consolidation at a domestic level and democratic control of interstate cooperation both at regional and global levels.

lism, “The Federal Trust”, February 2008

⁴⁶ D. Held, A. McCrew (eds.) *Governing Globalization*, Polity Press, London, 2002

⁴⁷ Network of excellence focussing on “EU and Global governance” funded by the 6th Framework Programme of the EU Commission between 2005 and 2010.

Europe is not at all isolated in claiming for a democratization of the world polity. Beside the parliamentary forms of participation, networks of civil society groups matter as far as the decision-making process and the transnational relations are concerned. Network-based bottom-up multilateral cooperation is maturing: knowledge networks are broadening and deepening scientific and academic cooperation global policy networks, executive networks, inter-parliamentary dialogues, and public policy networks are increasing the circulation of best practices and ensuring a transnational and intergovernmental learning process. Transnational advocacy networks are setting down the roots of global multilateral politics deep within civil societies of the North and South. Finally the role of migration flows (200 million in 2008) and of the diasporas in Europe, Asia, and the Americas is crucial in overcoming a traditional, diplomatic, elitist, technocratic version of multilateral cooperation.

Richard Higgott has listed the deliverables of such a network: agenda –and standard– setting; improving modes of coordination and policy implementation; exchanging of resources and pooling of authorities; providing public goods and mutual knowledge and venues for policy entrepreneurship and innovation; offering a vehicle for consensus building; and reducing the participatory gap.

All in all, new and better multilateral governance for the 21st Century could hardly avoid the challenge of more articulated, pluralist, multi-actor, democratic legitimacy and accountability. Of course the model and standards of a national state democracy are clearly not applicable on a regional or global scale: however, to a certain extent, various forms and levels of input legitimacy will matter more than in the past given the growing expectations of an increasingly informed public opinion. Let us try to build up a common language of international society, towards enhanced convergence; communication, dialogue and semantics matter.

9. Conclusion

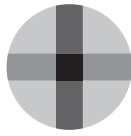
A new multilateral scenario is not at all excluded by the current evolution of international relations, provided that the following conditions are implemented by international and regional institutions:

- there is a weakening of Westphalian tendencies towards unipolarism, bipolarism and a multipolar balance of power, while the states can be seen as a political resource for multilateral cooperation;
- multilaterally, there is a counteracting of the trend towards bilateral and regional fragmentation at different levels; - a new multilateralism needs the complementarities between regional and global dimensions of multilevel multilateral cooperation to be enhanced;
- multilateral commitments are provided with more efficiency and consistent implementation: efficiency also means enhanced coordination among multilateral institutions dealing with the same issue, and monitoring systems for follow-up;
- legitimacy means not only efficiency, but also more transparency and democratic accountability, both at a national and supranational level. Legitimacy is a central challenge for the 21st Century: on the one hand, multilateral cooperation might strengthen national democracy; on the other hand, it can be influenced and politicized by the pressures of civil society, and NGOs, networks and the private sector must be part of a new era of multilateral, pluralist, multi-actor cooperation providing public opinion with a critical role stimulating efficiency and consistency with the asserted values.

All in all, multilateralism could be upgraded step-by-step from an historical instrument of a Westphalian order (whether unipolar, bipolar or multipolar) towards a political system of global governance, according to the following definition: “*New Multilateralism is a form of multilevel collective transnational action and cooperation amongst states and civil societies, regarding global governance and world politics. It implies generalized principles of conduct and diffuse reciprocity, and includes several degrees and types of institutionalization, from arrangements and regimes to established organizations*” The institutionalization process is increasing legitimacy and efficiency”.

Deepening and strengthening more binding and legitimate multilateral institutions, regimes and arrangements, entrusted with addressing the common challenges of humankind (and not merely as an instrument of a power or of an alliance or of a regional power set against other powers or alliances or threats⁴⁸) is the most powerful and farsighted political idea, born in the 20th Century at a regional level and which will eventually be on the global agenda of the 21st Century.

⁴⁸ Such as Art. 5 of the NATO treaty or the solidarity clause of the Lisbon Treaty.



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Resumen: Este documento de trabajo tiene por objeto ofrecer un análisis de los antecedentes históricos y teóricos, además del debate teórico existente, sobre el concepto de multilateralismo, así como presentar un examen de las perspectivas relativas a un nuevo multilateralismo para el siglo XXI. Este documento cubre, de una parte, las muchas lagunas del legado multilateral de las pasadas seis décadas y, de otra parte, los nuevos retos de la cooperación regional y global en el emergente, asimétrico y heterogéneo mundo multipolar.

Palabras clave: multilateralismo, mundo multipolar, instrumentalismo, déficit de legitimidad, laguna de eficiencia, el papel de las ideas y los orígenes culturales nacionales.

Abstract: This paper aims to provide with both a theoretical and historical background regarding the concept of, and theoretical debate about, multilateralism and an analysis of perspectives concerning a new multilateralism for the 21st Century. It will cover, on the one hand, the many gaps of the multilateral legacy of the past six decades and, on the other, the new challenges of regional and global cooperation within an emergent, asymmetric, heterogeneous and multipolar world.

Keywords: Multilateralism, multipolar world, instrumentalism, legitimacy deficit, efficiency gap, role of ideas and national cultural backgrounds.

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