

SUSTAINING GLOBALIZATION THROUGH FOREIGN POLICY ANALYSIS: A CHALLENGE FOR THE TRANSATLANTIC COMMUNITY

Sotiris Serbos

Lecturer in International Politics, Democritus University of Thrace

Enter US Understanding the Dynamics

From 2009 onwards, the new US administration acknowledged that the international community should not try to tackle new challenges with old mindsets. More importantly, global challenges are already shifting the centres of economic power and redirect the flow of political authority and influence. US policy-makers understand the importance of resisting the temptation to overcome the complexity of the modern world by simply dusting off and adopting old attitudes and modes of action. The issues raised in the context of globalization require new policies between the power centers of a multipolar world.

Since President Barack Obama knows how to quote scripture to maximum impact, a number of public statements helped towards this direction. In his famous Cairo speech to the Muslim world in June 2009 he stressed that "indeed we can recall the words of Thomas Jefferson, who said: I hope that our wisdom will grow with our power, and teach us that the less we use our power the greater it will be". It was in Cairo again where Obama, having abolished the confrontational and unilateral style of policymaking of the Bush Administration approach, elaborated on his policy of engagement. "Given our interdependence," he said, "any world order that elevates one nation or group of people over another will inevitably fail. So whatever we think of the past, we must not be prisoners of it. Our problems must be dealt with through partnership; progress must be shared." Obama's *National Security Strategy* states that "we must focus American engagement on strengthening international institutions and galvanizing the collective action that can serve common interests." Several other statements explain the President's rationale¹: "International institutions must more effectively represent the world of the 21st century, with a broader voice -and greater responsibilities- for emerging powers, and they must be modernized to more effectively generate result on issues of global interest. We will draw on diplomacy, development and international norms and institutions to help resolve disagreements, prevent conflict, and maintain peace, mitigating where possible the need for the use of force."

Obama's pragmatic foreign policy strategy unveils its impact on transatlantic relations. Europeans misunderstood the essence of his rhetoric when the US President was referring to the duties of Europe. The new administration believes that Europeans would be more willing to provide assistance to the US if Washington exercises through "smart" diplomacy a more collaborative, compromising and multilateral approach towards the other side of the Atlantic. By understanding the dynamics of globalization and interdependence and how

¹ The White House, *National Security Strategy*, 27 May 2010.

far they are responsible for shaping the evolution of the international system - where the limitations of US power politics have been acknowledged- Obama chooses the strategic significance of cooperative efforts with both allies and non-allies to combat transnational threats. Bruce Jones vividly illustrates this policy as an example of 'cooperative realism.'²

The transformed transatlantic partnership includes support from the Europeans for increased military presence regarding the crucial war in Afghanistan, structural economic adjustments to overcome the global economic crisis and the continuation of EU enlargement, with special reference and strong support for Turkey's EU accession, amongst others. In all of the above issues, European reactions continue to be described as rather discordant and half-hearted, with limited real progress. As a result of conflicting national interests and relevant narrow minded state-centric perspectives, initiatives at the EU level display lack of political commitment and series of intergovernmental competitive bargaining, resulting in collective decisions taken at the lowest common denominator.

Following the results of the November 2010 US midterm elections, Europeans should now more closely follow American domestic political realities (i.e. division of power between the President, Houses of Congress and Judiciary) and the consequences of Republicans' legislative leadership over the field of US foreign and security policy, with emphasis placed on the pressing US challenges in Asia. Concluding, on the edge of the second decade of the 21st century the US remains worried about Europe's political willingness, activism and operational capacity to share global burdens and security threats.³

Enter Europe a Bridge for Meeting the Challenge

A common global policy for Europe should by all means be developed, including an alignment of internal and external policies as never before. The price of making the most of the opportunities of globalization is that its responsibilities become imperatives, not options. As with individuals or corporate bodies, self-definition is achieved through action. Who you are is symbiotic with what you do. Since choices express values, the political choices that Europeans will now make will define Europe's future including its purpose and identity.

At present, the stakes are high in the EU and the risks are even higher, especially during a period where the sense of urgency can dominate mindsets and cloud judgments. The risk is that the urgent would drive out the important. Responding to the challenges of globalization is both a main reason for institutional reform and a core element of the Union's political agenda. There is a close link between, on the one hand, the EU's global role, its capacity to

² B. Jones, 'The Coming Clash? Europe and the US Multilateralism under Obama' in A. Vasconcelos and M. Zaborowski (eds), *The Obama Moment: European and American Perspectives*, EU Institute for Security Studies, Paris, 2009, p. 69.

³ Lesser Ian: *Regional Flashpoints and Trilateral Strategies: Reflections on the Debate*, *Policy Brief*, Washington: The German Marshall Fund of the United States, June 11 2010, p. 7.

deliver on concrete policies, and, on the other hand, its inner strength and ability to take swift decisions in areas that matter. Reforms and new starts are not an end in themselves. The way the EU adapts to the future will determine how much influence it can exert in the world. Today, European integration is no longer just about peace in Europe. It is also about enabling the European continent to assert itself in the era of globalization.

When it comes to policy-making, at the same time that the West's cohesion is doubtful, fluidity as a result of the current economic crisis both in Europe and the US brings forth elements of geopolitical uncertainty. The entry and the rising economic power of emerging state-actors in the global system, coupled with lots of newly established states during the last twenty years, shape a strategic environment with late zones of influence. A rather dangerous scenario would focus on a possible Sino-Russian cooperation to limit US dominance in Asia. China could become a steady client for Middle East oil, a reliable supplier of industrial products and a flexible political partner. An anti-American Russia in a course of approach with China and Iran would put on the map an unstable global setting. In this respect, an inevitable trade-off with emerging powers -i.e. the crucial Russian role as gas supplier for the Europeans- could produce a breach in the traditional transatlantic front, including internal divisions at the EU level and resulting in a clearly destabilized security environment. Anchoring Turkey in Europe would enhance EU's strategic weight, depending on the degree of compatibility when it comes to shared European and Turkish perceptions in the field of foreign and security policy.

The opening of a more united, coordinated and decisive western community towards non-western countries -with the EU occupying a central role in this endeavor- could consist the core for shaping the new geopolitical architecture. In this course action, the future role of developing countries will be significantly elevated by responsible participation as full-fledged partners in global undertakings. It is evident that Europe's strategic intervention incorporates the need for expanding the perimeter of the EU's sphere of institutionalization in foreign policy cooperation. What is more, regarding the Union's external relations, since for Europe multi-participatory governance consists an integral part of its DNA, the EU can successfully search for its destiny by pursuing constructive approaches with Russia, China and the Middle East. Through this process, the EU will enter critical agreements and transatlantic synergies for a wiser and more open global governance. Last but not least, taking into consideration current trends which require positive compromises via win-win strategic alliances, overcoming a traditional rationale namely the 'balance of power' approach, might prove more than useful in order to sustain the course of globalization's further deepening.