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STATE AND
MULTILATERALISM:
PAST, PRESENT AND
FUTURE.*

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1. Multilateral cooperation beyond anarchy: state's self-interest and beyond

Multilateralism has been defined by a larger and a narrower way: according to Robert O. Keohane it is an « institutionalized collective action by an inclusively determined set of independent states »; it is also defined as « 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 the 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” (20th) because several states, notably the European states, were and are interested in increasing intergovernmental cooperation.

The research on multilateralism had to take into account the challenge of the realist and neo-realist theoretical questioning emphasizing competition among states, wars, protectionism and anarchy. How multilateral cooperation interacts with self-interest of states? Even if several realist approaches used to contend even dyadic cooperation, it would be wrong to underestimate what is alive in the more elaborated realist and rational choice based approaches.

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¹ R.O. Keohane, *After Hegemony*, Preface, Princeton univ. Press, (1984) 2004.

² J.G. Ruggie (ed) *Multilateralism matters*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1993

However, also the following double questioning by more sophisticated realist critics looks as largely over:

a. under certain conditions, the classical theory of the state of nature – as well in the 20th century the games theory-- set the rational self- interest of an autonomous state as a sufficient background for a contractual relationship with one or many other states: repeated game, side payments, negotiation in the short and middle run, may allow explaining bilateral cooperation to work. However, deepening multilateral arrangements and consolidating them on the long run, needs more and stronger preconditions, beyond selfish 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, shared perception regarding external threats, state extended cooperation not tied to specific short term gains but set on middle range and long range promises, states good will including acceptance of limiting and/or sharing national sovereignty.

b. well working multilateral arrangements put in question the classical 'security dilemma'. The way out of anarchy is based on the various concepts and practices of collective security, security with the other and not against the other, and the indivisibility of peace. That is not only the case of UN but also of security communities (K. Deutsch, 1957³) as the EU or the MERCOSUR. Even in case of alliance (NATO) the basic multilateral principle of 'all for one' plays a crucial role by making the difference with Empires and other hierarchical arrangements.

New and more complex challenges are emerging for multilateral governance at the early 21st century: they are fostering a realignment of the theoretical debate on a more sophisticated ground, where the realist tradition and rational choice approaches need updating to keep relevance.

2. Multilateralism from multipolarity to bipolarity

2.1. The early multilateralist experiment: from the 'European Concert' to the first wave of multilateral regimes and conferences

³ K.Deutsch and others., *Political Community in the North Atlantic Area*, Princeton University Press, 1957

History matters, even if continuity and discontinuity with the past achievements of multilateralism is at stake. In this section we will try to explore the historical roots of multilateralism in the civilization process of multipolar international relations, and this in order to better focus on what is really new within the current unprecedented multipolar world. The history of multilateralism offers examples of concrete progresses beyond anarchy, though the step of first bilateral arrangements and increasingly institutionalized multilateral setting of international relations. In some of its historical versions, the classical multipolar balance of power cannot be identified to Hobbesian anarchy: by contrary it was in 19th century Europe the very cradle of the first multilateral arrangements. Without shifting towards cosmopolitan models, we are taking stock of the basic distinction by H.Bull between Hobbesian and 'Lockian anarchy' influenced by Grotius: the post-Hobbesian one includes fundamental (or 'constitutional' like "*Pacta sunt servanda*") rules, coexistence rules (reciprocal respect of sovereignty, limitation of use of force, proportionality) and, thirdly, rules of multidimensional, intergovernmental collaboration for shared objectives⁴.

A multipolar world order, of whatever kind, can hardly be based on the mere opposition of radically conflicting state interests. It would be better defined as an international disorder. History shows several examples of multipolar balance of power framing some form of co-operation and convergence among states. In some cases multipolar orders included common objectives: welfare, stability and/or peace. The 19th century European Concert was a clear example of regulating interstate conflict by conference diplomacy. Already the Austrian architect of the Vienna order, Metternich, conceived the post-Napoleonian European Concert as oriented to stability (even if in his reactionary understanding, imposing domestic stability as well). Notwithstanding the perverted – and declining- logic of the 'Holy Alliance', the post-Vienna order allowed the first Rhine-navigation multilateral agreement of functionalist type to be achieved. How was the following series of multilateral arrangements created? The UK took over the leading sit after

⁴ See H.Bull, *The Anarchical Society*, Macmillan, 1977, and M. Telo', *International Relations. A European perspective*, Ashgate, London 2009, pp. 90-93.

the liberal wave of 1848. And, later on, during the *belle époque*, 1871-1914, the oscillating European multipolar balance of power, thanks to the various inputs by the leading diplomacies, notably of Bismarck's Germany, the Third Republic of France and the free trade oriented and imperial United Kingdom, did offer a constructive framework for the development of the first civilian multilateral arrangements. The participation of US and Japan was a clear indicator of the globalizing dimension of this initially European multipolar order in a context of accelerating economic globalization. However the rest of the world, the 'periphery' (Africa, China, for example) often paid the bill of the intra-Centre intergovernmental settlements.

This first phase of the history of Euro-centric global multilateral cooperation came to its breakdown with the two World Wars. The revived European multilateralism after 1945 was essentially based on US pressures (Marshall Plan and OECE) following the failure of the previous states system during the second "30 years crisis" (1914-1945). On the other hand, the current routine of multilateral relations, the set of intergovernmental regimes which 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 the American hegemonic stability. The deepening and broadening of the European regional multilateralism in a post-hegemonic context strengthens the need of such a *longue durée* approach.

The gradual process of civilization of state sovereignties, already started in the 15th and 16th centuries among the Italian small states, was Europeanized and definitely set by the Westphalian Treaty (1648) and continued over three centuries until the final breakdown of the European Concert. Even if the political principle which explains the roots of this "European states society" (F. Chabod⁵) became explicit and universal only with the Wilsonian (1919) and Rooseveltian (Bretton Woods conference, 1944) idea of American international multilateralism (Ruggie and Ikenberry

⁵ F.Chabod, *Storia dell'idea d'Europa* in Y Hersant *Europes* Paris 2000 e *Idea d'Europa e politica d'equilibrio*, Bologna 1995

2011⁶), already several centuries ago, in Europe, the balance of power was no longer an occasional alliance, but a project both theorized and consciously searched by states leaders as a principle of political action.

In which historical context was it born? It happened after the crisis of the *Res-publica Christiana* and the end of middle ages, in the secularized Europe, when religion started becoming a political instrument of independent national sovereigns. Modern diplomacy developed in the context of the mutual recognition of treaties, of borders, the new habit of choosing a third actor as referee and warrant of the bilateral treaty implementation; 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 potential evolution from such an early step of limiting international violence, of reciprocal recognition between states (beyond anarchy), the development of reciprocity law, and the highest step of international law developing towards a ‘community law’⁷.

The international literature agrees that for a well working ‘balance of power’ the main (around five) actors should be quite similar as their economic and military power is concerned. In the past a system of balance of power could exist thanks to a kind of hegemonic power. It is a matter of facts 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 as Russia, Germany and Italy. However, France and Germany, US and Italy played also , at least to some extent and on single issues, a leading role as well; whereas, Russia, Spain, Turkey and other countries declined from the centre to the semi-periphery. The historian F. Chabod underlies 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, symbol of the recognition of the states

⁶ J.Ruggie (ed), *Multilateralism matters*, New York, Columbia, 1993; J.Ikenberry,*The Liberal Leviathan*, Princeton univ. Press, 2011

⁷ St. Hoffmann (1961) International system and international law, in K.Knorr and S.Verba, *The International System*,Princeton univ.press, princeton, 1961.

common interests, as a kind of European *international distinctive identity*⁸. It was also the background for a kind of common rule for states behavior, a political norm of action including diplomacy and war (and *jus in bello*).

Combining unity and diversity was indeed the distinctive principle of this understanding of the European civilization. If compared with other continents, this civilized side of the European political identity is rooted on the common cultural background provided by both Renaissance and Enlightenment. It was opposed to the Middle Ages Europe and resulted in an order which was able of framing several unprecedented waves of economic globalization, from the 15th/16th to the 18th/19th and early 20th centuries. However, its dark side is well known to the international literature since the work of several historians as E. Hobsbawm (*The Age of Empires*, London 2000). European states expanded at global level by hierarchical rule setting, selective inclusion of non-Europeans (US and Japan) , and by their colonial and imperialist relations with the peripheries.

Realist thinkers (like H.Kissinger's) picture of the European Concert of the 19th century⁹ forgets the evidence of such a combination of internal stability with the destabilizing (in the long run) international hierarchy-setting at global level. However, in the 19th century, even if at a very low degree of institutionalization, "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"¹⁰. Secondly, this early cooperative multilateralist state's approach explains the first multilateral functional arrangements regarding civilian issues, what D.Mitrany calls concrete "common interest", for example the International Telegraph Union in 1865. The latter was the most relevant of a series of relevant multilateral arrangements¹¹. Mitrany is wrong in opposing functional

⁸ F.Chabod, *Idea d'Europa e politica d'equilibrio*, cit, p.13-14

⁹ H.Kissinger, Speech at the Bertelsmann Foundation Forum, 2006

¹⁰ R.O.Keohane, H. Haftendorn and C. A. Wallander, Conclusions, in *Imperfect Unions*, Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 325

¹¹ 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).

cooperation to intergovernmental regimes which are two sides of the same coin. To explain the first multilateral era we need the convergent approaches of intergovernmentalism, functionalism and hegemonic stability. According to a large literature, multilateral cooperation and the central role of the British Pound (the *Gold standard*) were for decades the main pillars of the “*Pax Britannica*”, the instruments of the British hegemonic stability¹², in the 19th century and, thanks to the illusory Washington treaty of 1922, again after WW1, until its final breakdown of August 1931¹³. According to others, the UK played as a *primus inter pares*, whereas, Germany, France, the emerging US and other powers played also a leading role within special issues area.

In comparative terms, it is salient to balance strengths and weaknesses of the UK role. It is relevant, by understanding the historical background of the current pluralist multilateral trade system, to realize that multilateralism was not the sole 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. However, by domino-effect, they helped the British pressures by fostering a general trend towards trade liberalization (W.Mattli, 1999). In spite of the conflict with German (and other’s powers) protectionism, the British liberal multilateralism was a way of stabilizing and adjusting the system of balance of power. It lasted for several decades even if it eventually proved unable of managing the emergence of Germany as a power within the international system.

Furthermore, several interpretations suggest a bottom-up emergence of multilateral cooperation in Europe at the mid of 19th century, thanks to the spilling-over of domestic codification of norms universally constraining, from national to international life, (Caffarena 2001 and Ch. Reus-Smit 1997). All in all, the international system between the 19th and early 20th century was quite heterogeneous and pluralistic, even if the British-led complex multipolar European states system, including multilateral regimes and fledging international organizations, came to its demise between the two World Wars.

It was an historical turning point. It is maybe true that the emerging global actors and namely the two superpowers are partly dependent by the

¹² Ch Kindleberger, *The twenty years crisis*

¹³ K.Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, 1944

European culture. However, what has to be taken for granted is that Europe was no longer the world's center which it used to be between the geographic discoveries of the 15th century and the mid 20th century. The main actors of classical multipolarism itself, namely the Great powers of the 19th century, were declining and Europe was decreasing as its relative weight within the international system, even if what still remains typical of Europe is still its capacity of complex bridge-making with whatever part of the world.

Distrust, mutual fears and will to preventive action were no able to stop the multilateral civilian regimes building as we have remarked above; however, both free trade and political multilateralism collapsed. The WW1 is an historical break with the classical politics of balance of power for three main reasons: as its geographic extension, its *longue durée*, and its forms of total mobilization of human and material resources, weapons and psychological commitment, by each participant nation.

J.M. Keynes and K.Polany, among others, have provided the public with a deep analysis of the structural, domestic and international reasons of the end of the historical change which was about to occur: end of the UK hegemony and of the hopes of to restoring the pre-war order after the Versailles Treaty."The End of "*laissez faire*" (1926) and "the Great transformation"(1941) remain as two cultural milestones of the European consciousness of the turning point in the global multilevel governance, which the crisis of 1929 made inevitable also in term of economic policy and role of the public authorities in the market economy. The chaotic years between the wars are considered by the great historian Carr as preparing the WW2.

However, despite the tragic stupidity of the "*esprit de revanche*", which dominated the "Versailles peace Treaty" of 1919 and the occupation of Ruhr in 1923 on the one hand, and the US isolationism (refusal of the treaty and the League of Nations by the Senate , defeat of W.Wilson) the Society of nations could perform not only as a marginal part of the old world, but also as the early announcement of the coming institutionalization of multilateral cooperation, beyond the limits of the defunct European concert. Even if still marked by a Eurocentric illusion (US and URSS were not member, even if for different reasons), the years between 1925 and 1930 have brought two relevant innovations:

- political revival of the international conferences: German membership and convergence of France and Britain about the Treaty of Locarno (1925), paving the way to the gradual elaboration of the concept of “collective security”, bringing in 1928 to the famous “Briand –Kellogg pact” (joined by 60 states), which banned, for the first time in the history, violence and war as tools of conflict resolution, and to a trend to disarmament as well.

- the multiple confidence building measures in the very centre of the old continent: starting with the dialogue between France and the German Republic of Weimar (represented by the liberal foreign Minister G. Stresemann), the retreat in 1930 of French occupation troops from Ruhr, the “Daws plan”, recovering the German debts, and last but not least the “Memorandum Briand” to the LoN for a “European Federation”(1930): it failed but this attempt to combine a European peace with a global peace, despite the debate about the differences between regional and global institutionalization made it first steps between the wars¹⁴.

Paradoxically, the best performances of institutionalizing multilateralism took place when the catastrophic events bringing to the worst war in the history of human kind were imminent. The “Munich conference” of 1938 among four powers (Chamberlain, Daladier, Hitler and Mussolini) and the following sacrifice of the Prague was the last tragic performance of the European tradition of combining balance of power with “multilateral” compromises.

2.2. The US-led multilateral era

The new epoch of US-led multilateralism did not start from ground zero. European multilateralism was not founded thanks to the new US hegemony after 1944/45 indeed. How to 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 searched by US, whereas bilateralism characterized the post WW2 relationships with Japan, Southern Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, Philippines etc?. The rebirth of economic and political

¹⁴ L.Einaudi.....

multilateralism in the destroyed post-WW2 Europe of 1944-47 happened already before the beginning of the Cold War (1947). On the one hand the universalistic values which inspired the Euro-American conference and Keynes-inspired Bretton Woods's conference of 1944 (founding the monetary system, the IMF, the World Bank) the birth of the UN and the San Francisco Charter of 1945, finally the GATT in 1947. In the same year, the "Marshall Plan" (fostering the creation of the 16 members Organization for European Economic Cooperation, OEEC) revived the European multilateral diplomatic culture, focusing on the new economic needs and the shared objectives of post-War reconstruction. On the other hand, the emergent bipolar threat and the consequent new power hierarchies, affected first the UN Security Council efficiency and subsequently, the European multilateral practices, notably as security is concerned (NATO), even if contrary to elsewhere in the bipolar world, the coming back of bilateralism was avoided,

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. In spite of the multilateralist discourse of Cordell Hull, the US was multilateral only in Europe, whereas its approach was bilateralist in Asia and regionalist in Latin America. The Bretton Woods conference essentially is a farseeing Euro-American enterprise based on the convergence between Keynesian ideas and the Roosevelt brain trust. Realist underline that European had a very little choice and this is largely true. Implementing and deepening multilateralism, according to the federal/functionalist view of the grounding fathers of the European unity, was consistent with both external pressures and internal demands coming from the civil society, that is with endogenous factors rooted in the modern European history, whatever in a complex relationship, of both continuity and discontinuity with the controversial and tragic 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, that is the Eurocentric identification between infra-European order and global order, became a dream of various national reactionary elites, desperately resisting the decolonization process, from India to Indonesia, from Indochina to Algeria, from Leopoldville to Suez .

Realists would argue that the new born Western and European multilateral institutions would have been inconceivable out of the bipolar nuclear confrontation, which, in Europe, meant a longstanding US leadership¹⁵. However, the strength of the European continental political culture made the balance between new global US-led order and regional multilateralism a controversial issue since 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) results out of two very diverging concepts of multilateral cooperation, both compatible with the US hegemony in the short and middle terms, even if only the second one included the dynamics of deepening integration and building supranational institutions. US tolerated the EC trade and agrarian protectionism, as well as the national Keynesian policies for decades because of both strategic (anti-URSS) reasons and its commitment to the internal social stability of the allies (as Ruggie and Ikenberry point out). The art 24 of the GATT charter (and , later on, WTO charter) looks as a soft compromising framework for a real challenge: the balance between regional and global market liberalization, the compromise which was possible for several decades in the context of what Ruggie defined as “embedded capitalism”¹⁶ This challenge, is coming back as an open issue at the early second decade of the new century: on the one hand, the mature and successful 27 members EC-EU shows that the model of deeper integration won the competition with model of the currently agonic EFTA (4 members states); on the other hand, the external and internal pressures for a diluted, EFTA-type, European multilateralism have been highly strengthened by globalization pressures.

In conclusion, in its narrow understanding, multilateralism can be seen as nothing more than an instrumental tool, successively subordinated to the European 19th century type multipolar balance of power and, then, to the bipolar confrontation after WW2. However, multilateralism is also expression of a long-term dynamics of civilization of the relations among states, as well as of increasing civilian, social and sequential exchanges. Within a bipolar context, multilateral *fora*, regimes and institutions fostered flexibility,

¹⁵ R.Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, CUP,1981

¹⁶ J.G.Ruggie,(ed) *Embedding Global markets*,, Burlington, Ashgate, 2008

cooperation and pluralism. Within a classical multipolar framework, multilateral cooperation frames intergovernmental, functional and transnational dynamics of complex interdependence and institutionalization of international life. All in all, multipolarism and multilateralism are distinct and potentially conflicting concepts: but we there is evidence that they are somehow linked in the global and particularly European modern history: both oppose unipolarism/unilateralism on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the hobbesian and fragmented kind of international anarchy.

The culture of multilateral cooperation is deeply rooted in Europe, where it had its historical cradle. It can be considered as a form of implementing the political principle of state cooperation, balancing the hard versions of the balance of power logic. These historical roots and internal legacy largely explains the currently asserted European interest for global multilateral cooperation, diplomatic conflict prevention and crisis management, commitment to post-war reconstruction, and of the European distinctive “tradition of making a political analysis of conflict, pragmatically looking for compromises” (Hettne 2005, p.286).

2.3 Strengths and limits of the first multilateral experiments

As a conclusion of the this first part of the paper and after the analysis of emergence and decline of the first epoch of multilateral cooperation it will be useful coming back to the questions addressed in the opening paragraph:

a) Neither functionalism nor intergovernmentalism look able to grasp the complex endogenous and exogenous factors supported multilateral cooperation both in civilian and political fields. Bottom-up demands, domestic aims and interests, international variables, pressures by several would-be or actual hegemonic powers and a certain idea of the European common culture underpinned the extraordinary flourishing multilateral cooperation more than one century after the Vienna conference. Setting the same rules for every participant was a general principle of differentiated application according to policy fields: the more the issue is political the less it worked. The degree of equality of participants decreases from the civilian conferences to the international trade, up to the hard stakes of political negotiations affecting

security issues, territorial possession and military hierarchies. The hegemonic stability was uneven in the sense that the primacy of the UK was not at all equally hegemonic in every conference and context: it was however relevant as provider the world with international common goods: monetary stability and Gold standard made for many decades a first wave of economic globalization possible, with the consequence of booming trade, with large advantages for all participants, even if relatively more for the UK. There is a radical anti-hierarchical dynamics in the free trade and MFC (Most favorite country) rule. J. Schumpeter is right in writing that international liberalization and multilateral cooperation was one of the driving forces of imperial logics and Empires dismantlement (Russia, Austro-Hungarian and German).

However, free trade ideologists are wrong in ignoring that the new principle of free trade and the commercial practices associated to it not only created new economic “*de facto*” hierarchies within Europe (better within the developed world, including also US and Japan) but also strengthened arrogant power relations between Europe and Japan on the one hand, and the rest of the world, making security issues harder to arrange. The economic crisis came from the US but the final clash exploded again within the European core. The “Munich conference” and the economic chaos of the ‘30s prove that the system, institutionalized by weak and ambiguous ways through the LoN, its internal organs and external networks, could no longer survive. The Kindleberger’s theory of the missing hegemonic power provides only a part of the explanation. Even the emphasis by Ruggie on the emerging brutal alternative between the “leonine pacts” set by Nazi Germany and the Japanese Empire within their expanding spheres of influence, and the emerging new multilateral era under the US hegemony looks hyper simplified.

Multilateral agreements often concern single policy fields and adjust to the issues nature according to their political relevance; what matters is that nowhere “specific reciprocity” evolved towards “diffuse reciprocity”, including trust, plural policy fields and an expanded time for a complex negotiation. Even well working organization in post-sector or free trade didn’t spill over towards political trust. On the other hand, the very low development of issue-linkage and of trust is also provoked by the extremely low level of institutionalization.

b) In the long decades of the first multilateral wave, no gap looks emerging between the regional and global dimensions of multilateral cooperation. Not only for functional reasons the “Rein Commission” was regional whereas the Post Union universal. However, cosmopolitan pacifism and Europeanism developed parallel for several decades, notably thanks to the peace conferences promoted by Cobden and others. They started to diverge when the European idea and discourse were combined with the idea of importing the US model (United States of Europe) and, later on, as a reaction to the WW1 effects, which for the first time did show the clear signs of the European decline. However, multilateralism failed simultaneously both at global level (League of Nations) and regional level (Briand Memorandum) because of the incapacity of managing neither the issues aggravated by the Versailles Treaty, nor the first global economic crisis and its consequences-strengthening extreme nationalism, militarism and fascism.

c). On the issue of legitimacy of multilateral cooperation. During the 19th and 20th centuries, both trade liberalism and economic pacifism were able -even if to a limited extent- of channeling civil society aims and Smithian-Ricardian visions of unlimited economic progress, within the realm of power politics. For example, the R. Cobden’s pacifist club became the driving force of both a transnational movement (conferences for a United States of Europe, supported by V. Hugo and later on by E. Herriot) and of a large part of the UK international politics. However, not only Bismarck considered the Cobdenist “socialists and enemies of the Reich”, but “free trade cosmopolitanism” (lasting from mid 19th, after the Robert Peel’s anti-Corn Laws, until to WW1¹⁷) was negatively affected by British imperialism itself, and to a large extent (Mallet). Second example, Camillo Cavour shared with his competitor G.Mazzini a strong reference to the free trade ideology as a co-element of both Italian independence and shift of the European Concert internal balance to a more inclusive and liberal order. Legitimacy increased decade after decade, according to the domestic liberal reforms and liberalization of national public opinions (press freedom etc). However, the extremely low level of institutionalization of the conference-system corresponded with limited

¹⁷ A.Howe, O Brien –Clesse eds, cit pp.86-105.

dialogue of states with nongovernmental actors with the exception of relevant economic lobbies.

The main weakness proved to be low-institutionalization. Economic liberalization and political multilateral innovation were not yet institutionalized modes of global governance. At the end of the 19th, with the German move to *Weltpolitik*, the WW1, and the US post-war defection, the potential bridge between public opinion and multilateral cooperation became weaker and economic/political nationalism stronger, while the expansive and innovative multilateral ideas suggested by Keynes by his “the Economic consequences of peace”(1919)¹⁸, with the short exception of the years between 1925 and 1930, were marginalized in the context of a zero-sum-model applied to international economics until to 1944/45. The decline of transnational pacifism/Europeanism and the evolving feeling of national belonging, from liberation trend and self-determination demands, to international aggressively and intolerant nationalism played as domestic factor against multilateral cooperation.

Only the multilateral conference of Bretton Woods, with the victory of both Keynesian ideas and of the US Cobden's - notably Cordell Hull, S.Wells and R.Harrod revived the conditions for a new epoch of multilateral governance. Finally, the authority of the League of Nations was rejected in the thirties not only by Germany and Italy but also by extra-European powers, including the Stalinist USSR and militarist Japan, with the effect of accelerating the decline of its legitimacy and efficiency.

Whatever heterogeneous and pluralistic the international system could have been between the 19th and early 20th century, the multipolar European states system the UK role and the first international organization for political cooperation (League of Nations) within it came to their common demise at the very same epoch, that is in the 1930s.

It was an historical turning point. It is maybe true that the emerging global actors and namely the two superpowers are partly dependent by the European culture. However, what has to be taken for granted is that Europe

¹⁸ And others like B. Russels, J.A.Hobson

was no longer the world's center. The main actors of classical multipolarism itself, namely the Great powers of the 19th century, were declining and Europe was decreasing as its relative weight within the international system. After forty years of Cold War (1947-1985) and five decades marked by the bipolar nuclear confrontation between URSS and USA, the new multipolarity is not only inclusive of non European powers but is also shifting - as its balance is concerned- out of the "old continent".

3. The 21st century and the uncertainties of the heterogeneous multipolar world

Many historians are working on the hypothesis that the European and, later on, the US hegemony within the international system were only parentheses in a *longue durée* perspective of global history. The coming back of China and India as global powers, jointly with the emergence of Latin America and South Africa are definitely breaking with the image of globalization as westernization. On the one hand, 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, towards the Pacific. Markets for goods and services and growing Asian pro-capita income pose a range of opportunities to the European exchange system as well as to the EU's intensive network of partnerships and arrangements. Asian technology powered economy and its buyout of some ICT is up-ending the supply chain and value creation. The Asian demographic trends are (with the relevant exception of China) complementary to the European one and may increasingly provide educated labour force. Contrary to the first three rounds of globalization (ancient times; European Empires; and US-hegemony), West and East do share the consciousness of common global challenges: financial architecture, climate change, poverty, peace.

What is radically new compared with previous global multipolar system (the Westphalian system, eventually expanded to US, Japan as well as to China, India, Latin America and Africa as peripheries) is that in the 21st century Europe is no longer the political/economic/cultural centre of the planet and, moreover, risks to become marginal in a world where the

Europeans will account for 7% of the world population by 2050 (including Russia and the entire Eastern Europe) and China will be the largest economy.

On the other hand the Eurocentric and Western centric multilateralism are over. This shift is more relevant than often considered. It also affects the political thought. As relevant example let's quote G. W.F.Hegel and his "Lessons on philosophy of History" (published after his death in 1832) where the most relevant German philosopher writes: "The universal history moves from East toward West, because Europe is really the end of the history, whereas Asia is her beginning". It is not difficult finding out the pluralistic roots of this great Eurocentric idea in a large array of streams of political thought from ancient Greece (Xenophon and Plutarcus, to Machiavel and Montesquieu, Voltaire and Kant): the idea of Europe, as a place of freedom and individual liberties versus collectivist and despotic Asia. We are already in presence of alternative models of capitalism within the same global market economy and the regional dimension increasingly matters as a parallel tendency to globalization.

What about the impact of the dramatic change which is occurring in the realm of economic interdependence and redistribution of economic and political power, demography, social development, on the world-structure of the 21st century? What is remarkable after the declining unipolar momentum of the '90s ("liberal" peace) and of the years following 2001 ("liberal war" according to A.Gamble) is that all the great powers declare their commitment to multilateralist discourse. This normative reference to the UN Charter matters¹⁹ and the increasing participation to multilateral arrangements, regimes and organizations is an extraordinary innovation compared with the low-institutionalized conference-system of the European Concert.

However, the practice of big global actors varies according to national/regional political and diplomatic culture²⁰. Let's start by evaluating the nature of the East Asian challenge. The global economic crisis started in 2008 risks not only accelerated a long term process mentioned above, but

¹⁹ According to the UN Charter, multilateralism implies "establishing conditions under which justice and respect of the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained".

²⁰ See the series of the "Mercury papers", among them "Diplomatic Strategies of Major Powers.Competing Patterns of International Relations?The Cases of the USA,China and the EU", by N.Klein,W.Reiners,Chen Zhimin,J.Jumbo,I Slosarcik, February 2010 and "The Evolving Doctrine of Multilateralism in the 21st Century", by E.Lazarou,G.Edwards,C.Hill and J.Smith,February 2010

fostered traditional and new conflicts within this economically decisive region. Asia is still characterized by both inter-state and domestic uncertainties. On the one hand, the international context is the most unstable in the world, because of both local and major unsettled controversies (Iran, Afghanistan, Iraq, Kashmir, Korean peninsula, China- Japan relations). As domestic uncertainties are concerned, no doubt that with the controversial exception of Japan and to some extent Southern Korea, East Asia is still characterized by diffused domestic troubles and potential instability of authoritarian and centralized political system (China, Vietnam, Northern Korea, Myanmar) and young democracies (for example, Indonesia). These factors suggest prudence and unpredictability regarding the political future.

Second, the extraordinary Asian economic and trade development occurs in a situation where the competition of two national currencies (Yen and Yuan) for regional leadership is still open and will be not at all easy to be settled in the coming decade in spite of the extraordinary Chinese dynamism on the one hand, and, on the other, the promising Chang May initiative of 2000-2009. However, what is new is that both bilateral cooperation and regional multilateralism are growing up. ASEAN is keeping the driving sit, by its capacity of including, by several circles, all the countries of the region(ASEAN plus 1, including China, ASEAN plus 3, including China, Japan and South Korea, ASEAN plus 6, further adding India, Australia and New Zealand) and the external relevant powers as well, though the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). Secondly, China's regional commitment is already consolidated and impressive as both its scope and variety: beyond ASEAN the various relationships with ASEAN, China is leading the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and the 'Six party's talks' regarding the Korean peninsula. Nobody expected such a development twenty years ago²¹.

However, the nature of this regional cooperation around peacefully emerging China is not yet clear enough: historians mention as a reference the old tributary system around China, during the pre-colonial times. Pessimist underline the absence of political multilateralism, whereas optimist emphasize

²¹ 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.

the multiple potential of increasing economic and functional interdependence as well as the domestic impact of multilateral rule-making and implementing. Many fundamental questions are open to an updated research agenda. Which is the role China is about to play (leader, regional hegemon, or, rather, of a feared great and threatening neighbour) within these new regional frameworks? Is it of hierarchical type or of multilateral and cooperative nature?²²

Notwithstanding those uncertainties, is it realistic enough to observe the consolidation of the engagement of several East-Asian states, including China, within a multitier, multidimensional, multiactor, multilateral framework. The very question for comparative research is: to what extent will the enhanced multilateral network bring some relevant change towards a gradual and free self limitation of the traditionally absolute understanding of national sovereignty. Will the high servants and diplomats representing the participating countries develop a kind of learning process, not only limiting transaction costs, but also sharing information, developing mutual trust within institutionalized organizations at regional and global levels (including WTO, UN, Olympic International Committee, World Health organization etc)?

Several statement and practice of China, including the Party congress resolution of 2007, mention the transition “from multipolarism to multilateralism as a strategic option of China” and relevant scholars underline the relevance of this turning point²³. The research should deepen this crucial subjective and discursive variable as complementary to the assessment of the cooperation practices. Only to the extent that the answer is at least partially positive to these questions, could the EU kind of multilateral culture be relevant within that challenging region. By contrary, in case of the emergence of a new imperial logic, or in case of coming back of the classical balance of power logic, the EU and its approach to multilateral cooperation will necessarily become even more marginal than now. Several theoreticians of the alternative models of capitalism (Western, Singapore, China, Vietnam...) pretend that the

²² See the article by Bhawan Ruangsilp, ‘Regional Bloc’ in *South East Asian History: a brief Overview*, in the “Asia Pacific Journal of EU studies”, n 2, Winter 2007

²³ ²³ See the chapter by Chen Zhimin, “International Responsibility, Multilateralism and China’s Foreign Policy” in this volume. and Peng Qing, “On China’s multilateral foreign policy viewed from report of the work of government :1986-2005” in *Foreign Affairs Review*, 2005

Asian century will not include multilateral dialogue with Europe as an essential feature, precisely because of the multipolar character of the emerging world. Second caveat: several high representatives of China and India argue that « Multilateralism needs multipolarism », according to the two historical lessons of both the anti-colonial movement of developing countries after 1945 in name of the principle of equal sovereignty of states and against the assertive relevance of the recent wave of US-led unipolarism in destabilizing multilateral organizations and dividing regional entities, limiting national sovereignties by force (2001-2007).

Consequently, Latin America and Africa are also relevant, but it is particularly the evolving East Asian power shift which is raising the general question about the kind of multipolar world which is about to emerge. By “multipolarity” we may understand two different things: either the trivial 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 the war. Several comments mention as a comparable system the already mentioned old European Westphalian order of 5-6 great similar powers (changing as its composition is concerned), which stabilized Europe, though challenges and wars, between 1648 and 1914. Is, *mutatis mutandis*, such “back to the future” scenario likely to occur at global level?

Despite the relevance of power-politics in Central Asia, East Asia, South Asia and North-east Asia, there is not evidence of such oversimplified answer to the question of the distinctive nature of the emerging multipolar order. Firstly, national great powers do not entirely share the traditional multipolar, power politics agenda. On the one hand, common challenges are consciously part of the international agenda, from the management of the economic and financial crisis to the fight for limiting the climate change. On the other hand, the emerging multipolar world is highly asymmetrical multipolar world, where classical balance of power logic doesn't work because of the diverse and changing nature of each participating power (India, China, Japan, Iran, Russia, USA).

Among the main elements of discontinuity with the first type of multipolar balance of power, we stress the following ones:

a) The evolving global leadership. The G 20 is remembering to some extent the plural hegemony (with the UK as *primus inter pares*) between 1846 and 1931. The US has the economic, political and military capacities to lead, it often asserts its will to still lead a new multilateral world; however, this leadership cannot be comparable with the previous multi-decades lasting hegemony²⁴: the literature about the US declining role is much more solid than any attempt to draw the picture of a US Empire or an US new hegemony. It is quite excluded that the decline of a hegemonic power will be followed by the emergence of a challenger as a replacing hegemonic state.

Secondly, a global co-leadership is emerging where the US, China and EU, Japan, Brazil, India and other powers and regional entities show a reciprocal convenience for enhancing bilateral and multilateral cooperation. Contrary to the dark forecast of J.Mearsheimer about the coming back of the spectres of the pre-bipolar history²⁵ and later on of "Foreign affairs", 2009, who compared the emergence of China in the 20th/21st centuries with the tragic story of the emergence of Germany and Japan in the 19/20th centuries within the previous multipolar system, the multilateral network looks yet able to cope with the challenge of peacefully managing the new role of rising powers, notably of China. At least the scenario of a cooperating China, designed by the Chen's chapter looks as supported by substantial evidence. More than ever in the past, the defeat of unilateralism provides the world with an extraordinary window of opportunity for an equal partnership between America, Europe and Asia. Beyond the limits of the Western and North base, deregulation focussing, Group of 7, the more inclusive and regulation-oriented Group of 20 looks as the best framework for ensuring leadership within the existing multilateral network.

It is very relevant that every relevant member of the society of states declares its commitment to multilateral cooperation. However this collective leadership is much more internally differentiated than the previous one: different values, cultures, normative concepts of sovereignty and legitimacy divide the EU, the US and the emergent powers.

²⁴ See A. Gamble's chapter of this book. See also A.Gamble and D.Lane, (eds), *The European Union and World Politics*, Palgrave, 2010.

²⁵ J.Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 2001

b) The legacy of the US primacy. A post-hegemonic world doesn't mean that power-hierarchies suddenly disappeared. There is and will remain for several decades a structural and increasing gap between the Military and Nuclear power of EU/India/China on the one hand, and, the one of US. The Chinese, Japanese and Indian defence budgets are still significantly limited if compared not only with the US, but also with the ones of France and UK. It is a matter of facts that there is and will remain for the coming decades a structural gap between the Military and Nuclear power of EU/India/China on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the US. Second, the Chinese, Japanese and Indian defence budgets are still significantly limited if compared not only with the US, but also with the ones of France and UK.

Look at the SIPRI Report regarding the top military spenders in 2008 (SIPRI Report 2009. The spending figures are in current US dollars):

Rank	Country	(\$ b.)	Share (%)
1	USA	607	41.5
2	China		[5.8]
			4.5
3	France		4.5
			[4.0]
4	UK		3.2
			3.2
5	Russia		2.8
			2.6
6	Germany	46.8	2.1
7	Japan	46.3	
8	Italy	40.6	
9	Saudi Arabia	38.2	
10	India	30.0	
	World	total	
	1464		

The 10 biggest spenders in 2009 are the same as in 2007, although some rankings have changed. In particular, in 2008 China was for the first time the world's second highest military spender. The question of transparency regarding the China defense budget has been addressed by

many states. Some variations are possible according to the 'Purchasing power'.

The asymmetrical primacy of USA (the US are spending in 2007 for their military budget more than the following 10 powers and seven or eight times more than China)and the evident heterogeneity of the six major non-European powers (USA, Russia, India, China, Japan, UE, Brazil) suggest a first conclusion. After looking at the SIPRI report, the initial question regarding the quality of multipolarism has a first answer: nothing similar to the classical balance of power of the pre-1914 Euro-global order. The realistic alternative may be a kind of enlarged 'Society of great powers' (for example, by a narrow widening the G8 or the UNSC) as a leading club for instrumental multilateral cooperation, limiting unilateralism, G2 logics, free riders practices and hard logic of hierarchical power .With right is the current international economic crisis defined by many as the coming back of "political decision", both at domestic and global levels. Does it mean the coming back of a narrow understanding of multilateralism, as creation of a new global directorate, enhancing national sovereignty of the great powers?

Several facts suggest prudence by this conclusion:

- Institutions and regimes matter: nobody can seriously underestimate the continuing influence of the multilateral and multilevel network and of complex interdependence, where incentives to participation are based on reduction of transaction costs, cost-benefits calculation, etc;

- the nature of global challenges is favouring multilateral cooperation for common goods, beyond a narrow understating of reciprocity: climate change, financial instability, poverty of the « Bottom Billion », terrorism...(with their huge respective implications for comprehensive security) , military power is not the best means to address such threats.

- the linkage between internal and external dimension of policies and policy cooperation is increasingly evident, suggesting a deeper analysis of international cooperation, beyond mere rational choice and closer to the "social exchange" model

4. A new multilateralism?

The theoretical framework for a new epoch of multilateralist studies can only be provided by combining area studies (notably European studies, Asia-pacific studies and so on) with international relations studies. The regional dimension and the regional political cultures matter in explaining variations in multilateral practices. This new theoretical framework will provoke cross-fertilization between originally different approaches. For example: European studies have to overcome inward looking approaches of the past and Eurocentric understandings of cathartic reconciliation between previous enemies (France and Germany) only through the « community method » of supranationality. On the other hand, International relations studies should overcome trivial marginalization of the EU experience as totally irrelevant for other continents and the global scale and in general open to a learning process from comparative regionalist studies, including Asia-Pacific studies, Latino-American studies and so on. Provided these conditions, a new multilateralist research agenda may be heuristically fruitful, an important extension of international regimes research, furthermore an alternative agenda in global governance studies. In theoretician terms the traditional logic of national sovereignty could be addressed by various inputs and post-ideological approaches;

According to what has been said before two features are already characterizing new multilateralism:

A) As argued above the world is making the experience of a post hegemonic primacy of the US. An excellent literature is underlining how alive the liberal values at global level are²⁶. However, contrary to the pleas in favour of continuity, the US no longer has the internal and external capacities and the will to lead a new multilateral world; however this leadership cannot be comparable with the previous hegemony. Secondly it has to be implemented as a co-leadership where USA and EU show to the emergent power that there is a reciprocal convenience for cooperation. Given the globally positive record of increasing international autonomy after 1989 and after 2001, the EU is and can further be a still credible leader in global change, development policy, and trade regulation. More than ever in the past, the defeat of unipolarism and

²⁶ J.Ikenberry, *The Liberal Leviathan*, Princeton 2011, much deeper than the analysis provided by the journalist F. Zacharia, *The post-American, World*, penguin Books, London, 2009.

unilateralism provide the world with an extraordinary window of opportunity for an equal partnership between America, Europe and Asia

B) 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 is about of monitoring the trend of regional entities from mere state-centric regimes to intergovernmental and transnational entities. A growing relevance of the regional dimension will be confronted with two challenges : it is true that a relevant economic and free trade oriented literature accuses regionalism of bringing « preferentialism » and the risk of shifting towards a fragmented « spaghetti bowl ».But, a multidisciplinary literature, from U.Beck, to H.Summers, since years already, sees regionalism as a way towards universalism and cosmopolitanism.

On the other hand, the implications of these two discontinuities with the two previous forms of multilateralism are controversial. According to a first school of thought post-hegemonic and multilevel regionalism can only evolve towards fragmentation and various paths of contingent, single issue, instrumental, functional cooperation. According to a second school of thought, the European regional experience, and in general the spreading –up of multidimensional regional cooperation in every continent (not limited to regional preferential trade area) will be able of successfully coping with both nationalism and preferentialism (as a reaction to WTO- DDA blockade) and gradually underpinning a more efficient and more legitimate multilateral governance.

The debate on this sensitive issue is open and highly controversial both as trade and the political realm are concerned. It is very well known that, on the one hand, the liberal economic thought – starting with Bhagwati- is strongly supporting, since decades, the first approach. However, condemning by a hard normative criticism the very fact of enhanced and multidimensional regional cooperation risks to evacuate the true normative question: how to multilateralize existing regional cooperation? How to provide the global multilateral network with regional roots, strengthening its efficiency and legitimacy?

Political cosmopolitanism, on the other hand, argues that such pessimistic assessments of regional cooperation are far from being confirmed by the EU experience and Kantian projection towards universalism (U. Beck, D. Held). According to this point of view, regionalism could also bring to a new universalism, based on the respect of other's traditions and as well as on shared values, by a kind of 'processual cosmopolitanism'²⁷.

Regionalism is affecting global governance by a second channel: by fostering inter-regional relations, that is cooperation between two regional entities or areas belonging to two different continents. Multidimensional, region-supporting, inter-regionalism could be seen as a distinctive feature (international identity-marker) of the EU's contribution to global governance (ASEM, Barcelona process, ACP, Rio de Janeiro process...), whereas unidimensional (mere FTAs) or narrow kind of interregionalism is spread up by every great power (in the case of the EU it entails an open process of dialogue and cooperation, open to many actors, multidimensional in the sense that, beyond trade liberalization, even political dialogue matters as well as cultural and economic cooperation. As the EU discourse is concerned, equal partnership is fostered, based on the respect and mutual benefit; driven not only by high level meetings (heads of state or government, ministers and senior officials) but also by working groups level meetings, expert networks and activities on a wide range of political, economic and cultural subjects. Interregional agreements also focus on people-to-people contacts between Europe and the partner continent. Finally a controversial topic is the relationship of the EU with individual countries.

Whereas the first decade after 1989 was characterized by this neo-multilateral trend within an optimistic atmosphere of liberal peace, in the decade started in 2001 the securitization of the international agenda was parallel to a coming back of bilateralism and contingent or instrumental multilateralism. To what extent is bilateralism conflicting with multilateral regionalism and interregionalism? Let's take the example of the EU, which, despite the opposition of its institutions (Commission, Council, Parliament) to the liberal war (Iraq) is not at all a "postmodern island" but a - to some extent

²⁷ J.M.Ferry, *La voie kantienne*, Paris, CERF, 2006 et F. Cheneval, *La Cité des peuples*, CERF 2007.

innovating- component of the changing Westphalian world. The EU followed to a large extent the trend set by US, China and other big players. There are two forms of EU bilateralism: first the trade Partnership agreements, including preferential agreements with ACP members, proposed by the Commission (a certain degree of coercion has been addressed by the literature) after the quasi-failure of the Doha Round in 2006/7²⁸. How do the various negotiating levels interact? Will the bilateral web be complementary or distorting to multilateral rules?

Secondly, what is emerging is the primacy of EU's « Strategic partnerships » with main powers, according to the classical idea that only great powers matter. The latter are an obvious consequence of the rise of the EU as political actor: USA, Japan, Russia, and Canada and, more recently, with China (2003), India (2004), and Brazil (2007). As their founding texts are concerned they do still entail support to regional cooperation and multilateral cooperation. However, both kind of bilateralism look as undermining some crucial elements of the EU regional identity and are provoking controversies.

That's why the scenario of a contingent, spaghetti-bowl-styled multilateral web is again in the centre of the research agenda. All in all, no doubts that the main research findings expect more regionalism and interregionalism in the 21st century than in the 20th, even if scientific research has stressed that alternative ways exist in Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Americas, towards regional cooperation. What is needed is monitoring whether they are growing up as potential relevant pillars of a more efficient global multilevel governance or the competing strategies of singles states (G4) and regional entities will have a troubling impact on the still controversial reform of the global institutions (the UN, WTO, IMF), towards enhanced legitimacy and efficiency.

5. The debate about the “K group”.

By mentioning the J. Bhagwati criticism of regional cooperation and the cosmopolitan studies about regionalism, we have addressed a theoretical

²⁸ K.Heydon and S.Woolcock, *The Rise of Bilateralism*, Tokyo, United nations Press, 2009

problem which constitutes a perennial of the multilateral research agenda: it is the relationship between small grouping of states and universal multilateral organizations. To what extent and how does the number of club members matter as the efficiency of multilateral cooperation is concerned?

J.Caporaso²⁹ provides a brilliant synthesis of what he defines “the logic of the k group”: the smaller the k group the easier it is to cooperate, 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 to pull off cooperation”. We already pointed several critical assessment of the normative point of view arguing that: “less universal as less multilateral”. However, this approach is worthy introducing the relevant topic of the advantages of smaller multilateral clubs. First of all, from a rational choice point of view: within a smaller group, institutionalization may provide the opportunity of “*conditional co-operation*” (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. The question whether “transaction costs” grow up by larger groups or are they reduced within multilateral institutions is general highly controversial between realists and institutionalists. By transaction costs, we understand the following canonic definition³⁰: 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. By rational choice approach, reducing transaction costs is relevant for explaining multilateralism. From the point of view of costs-benefits 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 rise transaction costs and implementation problems.

Second, from a social sciences point of view: a smaller and deeper group allows stepping from specific *reciprocity to diffused reciprocity*. This point is crucial and we will come back on it. The upgrading to diffuse reciprocity, including the dimensions of time, of issue linkage and trust

²⁹ J.Caporaso, i Ruggie 1983, cit.

³⁰ Douglas C. North, 1984

demands to methodologically step ahead, beyond classical rational choice, towards a more complex set of independent variables including: social relations, cultural and political dialogue, inclusion of more actors belonging to the civil society, mutual perception among actors of the bargaining process. What matters by a repeated *game*, is the lengthening of the *time frame*, with the consequence of the gradual construction of mutual trust and reputation.

Many authors underline the positive impact of the *iteration* of the increasingly complex cooperation game, and, according to Michael Taylor³¹, the number of club members' matters and strongly play in favor of successful small size cooperation because larger groups increase the costs of monitoring, narrow reciprocity and downgrade mutual perception.

All in all, on the one hand, regime theory and game theory may explain multilateral co-operation amongst states, as able 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. On the other hand, that could be in conflict with diffuse reciprocity and long-term collaboration amongst states (which requires unconditional co-operation according to Liza Martin, in Ruggie 1983)³².

The concept of "diffuse reciprocity" deserves a further deepening.

6. "Specific reciprocity" and "diffuse reciprocity"?

The pioneering book published by Stanley Hoffmann already in 1961³³ emphasises the distinction between "right of the international structure", and "right of community" and classifies the right of reciprocity between them. Since reciprocity only overcomes the bottom level of legalization of the international structure, the right of reciprocity does not address the level of common challenges of the human kind, necessarily entailing a pooling and limiting of states sovereignties.

³¹ M. Taylor, *The possibility of cooperation*, CUP.1987

³² Regarding the practical example of the EU-CEEC relationship during the Nineties (K.E.Smith 2004, The Hague conference), we witnessed a mix between a multilateral organization, on the one hand (the EU) and its bilateral relationship with individual CEEC, on the other hand, as a way of imposing sanctions for violations of agreements

³³ S.Hoffmann, *International systems and international law*, New York 1961

Fifty years later, everybody agrees about the link between multilateral relations and reciprocity. What kind of reciprocity? And to what extent the multiple tendencies towards a new multilateral cooperation are going to change the paths of reciprocity? We already introduced this crucial theoretical distinction: “diffuse reciprocity” is not a narrow reciprocity, but something broader and deeper. This concept, crucial by developing institutionalism in international life, varies according to different school of thoughts.

Let’s make a step back. What the most recent IR literature means by reciprocity? Reciprocity is an ambiguous term both “a symbol in politics” and a “concept for scholars» used by different approaches. Lawyers look apodictic: reciprocity is a condition theoretically attached to every legal norm of international law (E. Zoller 1984, p.15), which means that is not at all opposed to state sovereignty. It is a matter of fact that it was used for more than two centuries by treaty-making, both as trade and political relations are concerned. However, the question is more complex. There are more kinds of reciprocities than the lawyers are ready to admit. The scholars who are most linked to the rational choice theory and realistic school of thought argue that it is always contingent and conditional: actors respond to single issue cooperation with single issue cooperation, to defection with defection, whereas political values, institutions and norms play no role at all. According to Keohane, this kind of reciprocity could also be defined as the lowest level of “cooperation among egoists”, compatible with international anarchy and balance of power thinking³⁴.

Furthermore, 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 Most Favourite Nation clause is conditionally applied. In the case of “specific reciprocity», negotiating actors don’t need any mutual middle term and long term trust and the game theory works as a valid general scientific framework.

However, when speaking of multilateral cooperation, by definition, a certain degree of equivalence is needed. In case of leonine pacts, one-sided exploitation, imperial domination or unbalanced vassalage, in one word, in

³⁴ R. O. Keohane, *Reciprocity in International Relations*, in *International Organizations*, 40,1, Winter 1986 and *After Hegemony*, Princeton University Press, 1984 and 2004.

case of lack of any equivalence, the term of reciprocity is unfit at all. Even instrumental multilateralism is alternative to Empire, imperialisms, colonialism, power hierarchies. Under this respect, J.G.Ruggie is right in emphasizing the historical break between both the German and Japanese models of regional “cooperation” before 1945 (that is: 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 set by the USA as a “Liberal Leviathan” (Ikenberry 2011) after Bretton Woods (IMF, WB), and 1947 (GATT). Of course, the equivalence is only partial and formal because, often, in practice, the effective power relations among nations affect the practice of mutual concessions³⁵.

Bilateral and multilateral pacific reciprocity have historically contributed to international cooperation during the decades of both UK and US global hegemonies. However, reciprocity met problems both in bilateral and multilateral contexts, by trade and security negotiations. When the bilateral relationship between two superpowers was highly competitive (USA-USSR), even the concept of equivalence was a controversial one. Echoing of past conflicts mattered and did bring to deadlocks. However, within the western world multilateral specific reciprocity continued working.

Compared with bilateral reciprocity, multilateral specific reciprocity might be more difficult to achieve: the larger number of participants, the existence of public goods (indivisible by definition) make the temptation of “free riders not to pay for the good but to gain from its provision by others”³⁶ bigger than by bilateral or small group negotiations (the risk of retaliation is lower).

“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 less strict and rough equivalence of benefits and more consistency with general principles, as, for example, unconditional MFN clause. Diffuse reciprocity is “an ongoing series of sequential actions which may continue indefinitely, never balancing, but

³⁵ Robert Axelrod, *The Evolution of Cooperation*, New York, Basic, 1984, focusing on the application of game theory to cooperation.

³⁶ Keohane 1985 cit p 11-12

continuing to entail mutual concessions, within the context of shared commitments and values". In scientific terms, it calls for a series of explaining variables and for a multidisciplinary approach, including not only economics but also, political sciences, law, anthropology and sociology.

Furthermore, diffuse reciprocity is more constraining and entails obligations. Social scientist are better than rational choice economists in 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 anarchical approach of Hobbesian kind (see above), norms, obligations and gratitude matter in international relations as within national and local societies.

Last but not least, 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. Mutual trust is inversely proportional to the degree of application of simultaneous reciprocity, which is by contrary usual between enemies (exchange of prisoners and spies, cold ware disarmament negotiations) or trade competitors. Sequential reciprocity provides the partners of information about the other's habits and consistency with principles.

Sequential exchange may also mean, according to Caporaso³⁷, a reciprocity including various policy fields. A large literature deepens the interplay between diffuse reciprocity and issue linkages, which is crucial in international life, notably by the 'external relations of the European Union. For example, in 1990/91: Germany obtained the yes of neighbouring France, Belgium, Netherlands and later on Poland to both German unity and

³⁷ Cit, in Ruggie(ed), *Multilateralism Matters*, cit 1983.

sovereignty, by offering its beloved monetary sovereignty (Deutsche Mark) to the new born European Union, by signing the so called Maastricht Treaty. Issues linkage is a sensitive and controversial topic for comparative and theoretical research³⁸.

Institutionalization variously and intensively interacts with diffuse reciprocity. Regimes building, is only a first relevant step: it includes arrangement not only on single issues, contents of mutual interest, but also on the way of managing conflicts, rules and procedures, and general principles of conduct. Multilateral regimes and institutions start by setting procedures for specific reciprocity. Furthermore, multilateral arrangement, organizations and regimes focusing on common goods (as the Kyoto Protocol and the negotiation about climate change from Copenhagen, 2009 to Cancun 2010 and Durban 2011) are only justified by a kind of diffuse reciprocity approach, including not only environment but economics, trade, fight against poverty and development as well. This can successfully happen both at universal level and at level of small groups of states.

7. The EU as a model of diffuse reciprocity?

The US literature offers a relevant background for studies about reciprocity. However, the interplay with area studies and in particular European studies could provide the concept of diffuse reciprocity with more substance, on the basis of the European various experience and the comparative studies about regional cooperation elsewhere in the globalized world. Both comparative regionalist studies and the US theoretical literature offer a precious background, notably because they prove that the European experience is not at all a completely isolated case study but a part of a more

³⁸ See for example :

general tendency towards a multilevel multilateral world where diffuse reciprocity is less rare than in the past.

Consistently with the previous presentation, we would like to deepen in this paragraph a European-focussing point of view, emphasising, even beyond the US literature quoted above, that, between the level of the efficient bilateral reciprocity on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the weak and inefficient global reciprocity, the third level of regional regimes is often framing the top level of diffuse reciprocity. A small group of states, for example of regional partners (not only the EU but also the MERCOSUR and the ASEAN), are already developing several relevant complementary tools allowing a more effective reciprocity through stronger institutions, enhanced transnational and social relations at level of civil society, and, at the end, less defection than a multilateral network at global scale. A smaller group provides a better working multilateral monitoring of each other's behaviour at regional scale possible, by setting more compelling and multidimensional institutional arrangements, and by institutionalizing sequential exchanges and issue linkages.

One of the main thesis of this paragraph is that, by talking of the European experience, research should underline its pluralism and variations: on the one hand, the deepest and most institutionalized kind of integration, entailing experiences of diffuses reciprocity (the EC/EU, founded by the Paris treaty 1950 and the Rome treaties of 1957, by 6 member states), and, on the other hand, the softest path to regional cooperation, institutionalize at minimum level and characterized by the most limited understanding of specific reciprocity (EFTA, founded in 1960, with UK leadership). Two opposed and competing paths on the same territory. The second one, one-dimensional – free trade- and highly consistent with global liberal economic thought; whereas the second one, heterodox and multidimensional. Does the long process of their competition entail relevance for non-EU regionalism?

Diffuse reciprocity is a broader and deeper form of reciprocity, entailing consequences for both domestic institutions and societies. E. Haas³⁹ has been a true pioneer in underpinning this argument, when providing the first bridge between international relations and regional integration studies and

³⁹ E. Haas, *The Uniting of Europe: Political, Social and Economic Forces*, Standford University press, 1958.

supporting regional regimes and organizations as the best approximation to diffuse reciprocity. Indeed, diffuse reciprocity is particularly well illustrated by the negotiation-machine which a regional entity as the EC/EU - since its origins in the fifties - is, where multilateral reciprocity among member states has been upgraded from sovereignty-maintaining to sovereignty-pooling thanks to the famous functionalist integration dynamics. Of course, since the enlargement of 1973, the widening Europe makes this sequential exchange more difficult and complex to work.

However, it would be arrogant and definitely wrong, to argue that only the Jean Monnet–styled EC, with its deep integration, community method, supra-nationality, and teleological ideology, was able of implementing diffuse reciprocity, whereas, the widened EU 27 is coming back to specific reciprocity and “caws market” practices. By contrary, in spite of the challenge of an expanding, quasi continental, Union, new methods of regional governance, and of multilateral coordination (as the “Open method of coordination” and “Enhanced cooperation”⁴⁰) are making diffuse reciprocity likely to progress within many internal policy fields and realms, and in the new international context.

Is this analysis paving the way to the Euro centring view, dreaming about the unilateral export of the “EU model” abroad at regional and global scale? We don’t think so. Various empirical examples provided by Mercosur, Andean Community, ASEAN, « ASEAN plus 1 »; « ASEAN plus 3 » (and plus 6); « Shanghai cooperation organization », Asian Bank of payment , SAARC , SADC, among other regional groupings , do show a large array of cases where sovereignty enhancing through narrow reciprocity is not the only

⁴⁰ For the Open method of coordination, look at M.Telo’, The open method of coordination, in M.J.Rodrigues (ed) *The Knowledge Economy*, Elgar, London, 2003. It is an informal mode of governance, inclusive of all member states, started in 1997 (EES) and in 2000 (Lisbon strategy) : it entails a monitoring of the implementation process and possibly also recommendation to the states who don’t comply to the EU guidelines and the (consistently approved) national plans. The Commission plays a proactive role and the process is open to the contribution of social partners. The OMC is criticised for being too soft as the constraining power is concerned; however, is is of dayly use by several hundreds national and EU civil servants. The Lisbon Treaty of 2009 implicetely support the OMC in industrial , social,, research and social policy.

The “Enhanced cooperation” or closer cooperation is by contrary an hard legal provision of the EU Treaty since The Treaty of Amsterdam (1997) and allows a certain number of states (1/3 of MS) to go ahead by deepening their integration on a specific issue in spite of the missing participation of the others, provided that it occurs in the framework of the objectives of the Treaty.

objective of regional policy making. To what extent is diffuse reciprocity making progress abroad?

The alternative thesis asserting the uniqueness of the EU is well founded on concrete empirical evidence. Despite its legal limits to no more than 1, 27% of the EU states total GDP⁴¹ (which makes relevant difference with federal states), 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 cohesion; and external solidarity with developing countries. The EU-ACP program is the relatively the most generous if compared with ones of US and Japan. How to explain these facts without taking into account values and ideas of Europeans explicitly incorporated within the institutional set established by the Treaties? The unique European history of tragedies, wars and reconciliation explains these distinctive features.

However, Europe is also a part of the Westphalian system. The innovating standards of behaviour mentioned above are not opposed to 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 middle term and long term trust among a growing number of participants. It allowed also winning the competition with the "specific reciprocity"- oriented EFTA whose narrow understanding of reciprocity may to some extent explain its agony of the last decades.

What is interesting is that, even if out of a US-styled state-building dynamics, the integration of their internal market agendas did gradually bring the member states and societies beyond the traditional trade relations, to an increasingly deepening convergence, as the national evolving social models and, most recently, sustainable development are concerned. That factor is crucial in explaining the EU success story and the stability of the European construction despite internal and external failures and problems. What is interesting is that countries as the UK and the Scandinavian countries firstly rejected any diffuse reciprocity at European level, while, later on, they applied

⁴¹ However, it makes in 2007 more than 13.000 Million Euro, 1% of a total GDP of the EU-27, of 13.000 Billion Euro, superior to the one of the US.

for joining the EC (funded on the principles of community methods, supra-nationality, economic integration, constructivism-styled 'political ends', etc: in one word: diffuse reciprocity), by leaving the narrow-reciprocity-centred EFTA to its inevitable decline. That proves that there is a possible evolution, even from rational choice point of view, from specific to diffuse reciprocity. That is extremely relevant, as its extra-European implications for other continents are concerned. Of course relevant traces of the merely utilitarian approach are still clearly visible.

Internal diffuse reciprocity is however comparatively stronger than the external one: comparing the EU Structural Funds (accounting for one third of the total community budget) and the ACP program brings evidence about it. By contrary, the Scandinavian states tradition of solidarity at global level (by far the first donors at global level) conflicts with their scepticism about solidarity at regional level. Seen from Brussels the Scandinavian euro scepticism looks as *Wohlstand-Egoismus*, whereas seen from Stockholm, the Brussels approach seems as fostering a European fortress. Both arguments entail something right. On the one hand, a more balanced link between internal and external multilateralism might deepen diffuse reciprocity at international level. On the other hand, contrary to idealistic approaches, analyzing the links and differences between specific and diffuse reciprocity may help by analysing and evaluating both Scandinavian states and the EU external solidarity policies. The European mechanism set in 2011 for the Euro-zone is also an interesting case study, bridging between the EU level (ECB and member states) and the global one (IMF).

The external challenge of the conflicting globalization fosters new dynamics. Several papers by the Commission and the Council, parallel to the evolving practice of the 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 December 13th 2007. The EU self-interest is evident: avoid a

race to the bottom as the social, fiscal and environmental standards are concerned.

However, there is an interest of the 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 side share interest in constructing global alliances for facing the common global challenges of poverty and climate change.

We are fully aware that the emphasis by Haas, Keohane and our self, on the regional dimension as the best framing diffuse reciprocity might be inconsistent with the evaluation of the unconditional MFN clause (automatically extended to third parties) as diffuse reciprocity⁴². Why? Because in the free trade context not only the EC/EU is considered an exception as a customs union (art 24 GATT and WTO), but is also proved that regional trade regimes provoke deviations as global trade is concerned. What 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 is concerned, which is considered as an excellent indicator of diffuse reciprocity. This paradox is challenging for interdisciplinary research because the main social/political sciences literature is openly conflicting with the finding of mainstream free trade and IPE literature opposing regional to global liberalization and nondiscrimination.

More in general, free trade studies focus on regional regimes and associations of states, as mere Preferential Trade Areas⁴³, custom unions, optimal currency areas and oppose them with global free trade and economic cooperation. Whatever our normative understanding, the question of trade diversions provoked by regional PTAreas is a relevant one. While looking at globalization with a new realist approach, R. Gilpin shares some findings of the argument opposing regions to globalization.

⁴² R.O.Keohane, 1985 p.23-24.

⁴³ J.Fraenkel, *Regional Trading Blocs in the World Trade System*, Washington DC, 1997; J. Bhagwati, *In Defence of Globalization*, Oxford, 2004; A.Sapir, *The political economy of EC regionalism*, in "European economic Review", 1998,n 42, pp. 712-732; W. Mattli, *The Logic of Regional Integration*,1999

However, the idea of the existence of natural economic zones is shared by relevant scholars as Braudel (three food cultures, rice, mais and wheat), Wallerstein (many centers and maybe peripheries), Hettne ('regioness" as a long term issue⁴⁴). Along a functionalist research strategy (Bela Belassa⁴⁵, E.Haas...), relevant scholars argue that, sometimes 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 setting 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 facts that enhanced infra-regional trade is a crucial indicator for successful regional groupings⁴⁶ .

In conclusion, there are two main possible ways towards "diffused reciprocity": the unconditional and global MFN clause on the one hand, and, on the other, deepening regional cooperation framed by universal values. The first one "exposes its practitioners to the risk of exploitation" by free riders. The second one risks downgrading towards inward looking protectionist fortresses defending economic and political security against other regions (R.Gilpin). Both face the challenge of nationalism and need strong global institutions to limit the mentioned dangers by framing regulation. The second one needs expanding from Europe horizontally and bottom-up, towards other regional and global networks, and consequently evolving towards a multilevel multilateral tool of governance. As a bridging scholar 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 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 how states understand their own self interest changes according to the perception of the other's behavior. Common institutions are the best (even if not the only

⁴⁴ B.Hettne, *Regionalism and World Order*, 2005, in L.Van Langenhove, M.Farrell, B.Hettne, (ed) , *Global Politics of Regionalism*,2005

⁴⁵ Bela Balassa, *The Theory of Economic Integration*, Greenwood, London 1961

⁴⁶ For example, while the Andean community and ECOWAS account for less than 10% and 20% infra-regional trade, EU data are impressive: in 2003, 66,7% of the trade of the 25 member states is internal EU trade. See Garnet Data base and indicators of regional integration: www.garnet.com

one) framework for mutual information, obligation, trust-making and enhancing, all preconditions of diffuse reciprocity. This may happen at WTO level as well since the beginning and despite of the problems of both the Uruguay and Doha rounds. However, this is more likely to happen at regional level where values, history, identity feeling, common aims and fears, make communication easier, as regional entities as the EC/EU well shows. The cognitive dimension and the communication at institutions level interplay with the level of civil societies and individuals.

Furthermore, the interplay between transnational multilateralism and domestic politics deserves more attention than in the past. International research underlines the potential link between regional multilateralism, rule-based cooperation, rule of law and democratic transition within authoritarian regimes. Does an enhancing degree of implementation of multilateral rules and procedures imply a gradual socialization process of elites belonging to authoritarian regimes which may foster openness and respect of rule of law at domestic level? Fourthly: what about the regional commitments, notably of the “ASEAN Charter” of 2007 (which announces in its Preamble, art 1 - “Purposes”-, and art 2,-”Principles”- “adherence to multilateral rules”, a greater respect of democracy and human rights in the region⁴⁷)? They look as combined with practical pressures of interdependent neighbours towards Myanmar after the uprising of winter 2008. . Will it help, at least more than other kind of international pressures (by US, UN, EU) on a democratic transition in Myanmar, Laos, and Vietnam? Fifth, how strong still are the traditional principle of non-interference and the practice of sovereignty (re-asserted by the “ASEAN Charter”) as protection of national regime (including dictatorship) against any external pressure? Conflicting principles will frame the coming evolution of this region, while multilateral cooperation will be a key factor of change, including domestic change.

⁴⁷ Art 1.7: “To strengthen democracy, enhance good governance and the rule of law and to promote and protect human rights and fundame,ntale freedoms with due regard to the rights and responsibilities of the Member States of ASEAN”. Art 2.2.h ,j and 1: “ adherence to the rule of law, good governance, the principles of democracy and constitutional government”., “respect for fundamental freedoms, the promotion and protection of human rights and the promotion of social justice”; upholding the UN Charter and international law, including international humanitarian law, subscribed by ASEAN Member States”.

Last but not least, what about the theoretical implications of the current distinctive kind of regional/global multilateral institutionalization in East-Asia? Rational choice and trade rationale are not always satisfying in explaining these complex phenomena⁴⁸. Is the international literature right in deepening a new concept of «institutionalization” of international and transnational life at several levels? What we are witnessing in East-Asia is, to some extent, an innovating process, beyond the traditional alternative between two paths of regional cooperation: the EU-styled hyper-institutionalized way and the totally informal way⁴⁹.

8. The multiple challenge of legitimizing multilateral governance

The open controversy regarding the legitimacy of the multilateral network is composed of several elements: firstly, the substantial legitimacy side, based on the system efficiency, the outcomes. The concrete benefits for the ordinary citizens are a key legitimacy-indicator both at regional (F.W.Scharpf, J.H.H.Weiler⁵⁰) and global scale. The current decision and implementation gap (of IMF, WTO, WB, FAO), the limits of the capacity of mastering the dark side of the globalization, notably, its financial and economic unbalances, seriously affects the legitimacy of the multilateral system, not only and mainly according to the anti-global (or alter-global) movement, and to the representatives of the third world countries, but to the large majority of citizens of the centre and peripheries countries.

Secondly, a plural school of thought pays very much attention to the legitimizing role of the epistemic community. Technocratic theories of power underpin the crucial role of knowledge by stabilizing the credibility of every level of governance and enhancing the ability of organizations by providing citizens with public goods adjusted to the long term needs (for example, climate change) and emergencies (food shortages, natural disasters, epidemic diseases..). Expertise matters, both at regional and global levels, by enhancing efficiency of multilateral performances, so as it used to matter

⁴⁸ See the book's chapter by V.Schmidt.

⁴⁹ See the chapters by R. Higgott in M. Telo' (ed) *EU and new regionalism*, Ashgate 2007

⁵⁰ F.W.Scharpf, *The Problem Solving Capacity of Multilevel Governance*, EUI Florence, 1999 and J.H.H.Weiler, and others (eds) *Intergration in an expanding EU*, Blackwell, Oxford 2003

during the various and long stories of nation-state building; this has been emphasised, for example, by “mixed government” theories, including “democracy”, “aristocracy” (technocracy) and “monarchy”, as constituent co-elements of long term stability of polities⁵¹. What is new is that the nation-state no longer is the sole efficient and fit bridging institution between science and policy making, between epistemic communities and decision makers.

Thirdly, the world is increasingly aware that the troubles and deficits of the existing multilateral global and regional governance cannot be addressed only by states and technocrats. Beyond Seattle 2000, many national public opinions converged in calling for participation both in economic and political supra-state decision making. Is it the birth of what the “New York Times” in 2003 defined ‘the second world power’, that is the world’s public opinion? What is interesting for the research community and making the academic debate between approaches and schools more alive is that the debate about democracy and global governance is back on the agenda of the global public sphere in the making. That is why the “input legitimacy” side, which is the legitimacy by citizens’ participation (and not only the output legitimacy side) is re-launching, on a new and more promising basis, the perennial question of international democracy.

According to the tradition, this controversy 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 ever be limited at the level of local and national government. According to his minimalist model, what matters is the extent and consolidation of domestic democratization. The best we can expect is a fourth wave of democratization (Arab world?) after the one following 1789 and the French revolution, 1945, and 1989. 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 Moravcsick⁵², the democratic deficit is a myth, because each member already is a democratic state and a supranational democracy cannot exist. Democratic states provide the Council and the European Council with indirect

⁵¹ M.Telo’, Pertinence et limites des thèses fédéralistes. Vers une constitution mixte ? in N.Levrat and F.Esposito (eds) *Europe: de l’intégration à la fédération*, Université de Genève, 2010, pp. 163-76.

⁵² A.Moravcsick, The Myth of Europe's 'Democratic Deficit', « *Intereconomics: Journal of European Economic Policy* » (November-December 2008).

but solid input legitimacy as democratic support by citizens and the democratic institutions between the states and citizens (like the regional parliaments, notably the European Parliament) don't matter very much in this theoretical context

The same narrow principle of legitimacy could be even more valid at global multilateral level, where any analogy 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 network or, at least, of limiting the domestic de-legitimizing impact of supranational governance⁵³.

On the other hand, according to a large 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, both top-down and bottom-up. Not only the international life must be more peaceful and democratic in order to break one of the main external limits to domestic democracy (that is the inter-state power politics, according to N. Bobbio⁵⁴), but, the latter would be undermined in case of maintaining the world system at level of quasi-anarchy or implementing the first steps of global governance as a mere technocratic business.

Moreover, it looks to many scholars that what was inconceivable some centuries or even some decades ago is at the agenda of the 21st century: democratic aims and ideals increasingly support transnational citizens 'demands for participation in the supranational decision making process⁵⁵, and the cosmopolitan *Traité* written by E. Kant few years after the French revolution is more actual than ever by linking domestic constitutionalism and international life⁵⁶. According to N.Bobbio, the concept of international democracy is not only based on the democratization of the units composing

⁵³ A.Moravcsick, R.Keohane, S.Macedo, Democracy-Enhancing Multilateralism in "*International Organization*", 63, winter 2009, pp.1-31.

⁵⁴ .N.Bobbio, *Il futuro della democrazia*, Torino, Einaudi, 1989

⁵⁵ S.Tarrow, *The New Transnational Activism*, Cambridge Univ. Press, 2005

⁵⁶ E. Kant, *Treaty on perpetual peace*, 1797 and J.Habermas, *Kant's 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.

the global system, but also of 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 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 indeed. The UN system as it currently is deserves several criticisms: however, its democratization is identified by this school of thought with the powers of the Assembly, conceived as a kind of global parliament in the making⁵⁷. The end of the veto right of few great powers within a reformed Security Council organised according to rotating criteria is also required to enhance legitimacy through representation. Some students design a pyramidal construction: accordingly, regional federal states may give birth to a new regionalized UN system and Security Council⁵⁸.

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

A lower but more realistic indicator of international democratization can come by enhancing the ability of multilateralism to support and strengthen democracy. A third school of thought rejects the opposition between multilateralism and democracy while recognizing some negative impact of the global and regional elitist institutions on domestic democracy. It draws the

⁵⁷ J.Habermas, *Die Postnationale Konstellation*, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp,1998.

⁵⁸ Jan Wouters, *The UN and the EU: partners in multilateralism*, "EU diplomacy papers", 4, 2007; Th. Lane, *Regionalism as a Condition for a New Internationalism*, "The Federal Trust", February 2008. More innovative, Marchetti, R. (2011) *Models of Global Democracy: In Defence of Cosmo-Federalism*, in Daniele Archibugi, Mathias Koenig-Archibugi and Raffaele Marchetti (eds.), *Global Democracy: Normative and Empirical Perspectives*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

attention on three elements. First, according to D. Held and his school⁵⁹, multilateralism might be complementary to the insufficiencies of national democracies, by addressing the regulation of private organizations, lobbying, companies, free riders, acting at transnational scale. In this case, however, the main issue at stake is not the democratization of Multilateral institutions but their enhanced efficiency by taking stock of the power resource of pooling national sovereignties together, as a means of reducing the deficit and limits of domestic democracies. Secondly, commitment to multilateral cooperation may amend, national feeling of superiority, internal limits of crypto-ethnocentrism, “parochialism of view”, and arrogance of national democracy is shown by Keohane and Moravscick. We add a third element: a softly constraining impact of multilateral cooperation on participant states: for example, in case of transition-countries, where democracy and 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: this cannot but brake and weaken nationalism, arbitrary behaviours, authoritarianism, 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.

By all these ways to enhanced international democracy, the EU plays the recognized role as an advanced workshop. Notwithstanding its increasingly clear limits as a federal and regional blueprint of a global state, the EU institutional set 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

⁵⁹ D.Held,A.McCrew (eds) *Governing Globalization*, Polity press, London, 2002

petition right, and the new right of law-proposal provided a certain number of transnational citizen signatures) will increase through the current treaty revision. Provided that the EU leaders stop by asserting the EU as a great power in the making, this understated but solid background looks as providing the debate among scholars about global governance with new demands, higher expectations and further challenges as the balance between efficiency and democracy is concerned..

What is very relevant is that ongoing comparative research, including the one organized by Garnet, green and other international networks⁶⁰, well shows 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 emerges as a logic complementary objective. Regional parliaments are in progress both in Latin America and Africa. International and interregional parliamentary dialogue, set by the European parliament, is charged of controlling and strengthening interregional partnerships⁶¹. A certain degree of - at least consultative- interaction between regional entities and the UN system is occurring and the regional entities, as the EU, in spite of the September 2010 misunderstanding, got recognized in April 2011 for the first time, the right to intervene at UN Assembly level. Furthermore, in spite of obstacles and shortcomings, the year 2011 witnessed democratic movements and consolidation at domestic level (some Arab countries, Indonesia, Turkey). It is very well known that the EU actively supports both democratic consolidation and democratic control of interstate cooperation at regional and global levels.

Europe is not at all isolated in claiming for a democratization of world polity. Beside the parliamentary forms of participation, networks of civil society groups matter as the decision making process and the transnational relations are concerned. They are becoming crucial by ensuring a better implementation rate. A network based and bottom-up multilateral cooperation is growing up : knowledge networks are broadening and deepening scientific and academic cooperation global policy networks, executive networks, inter-

⁶⁰ Network of excellence focusing on “EU and Global governance” funded by the 6th Framework program EU Commission between 2005 and 2010 .

⁶¹ See A.Malamud and S.Stavridis, Parliaments and parliamentarians as international actors, in *Asghate Rresearch Companion*, Ashgate 2011.

parliamentary dialogues, and public policy networks are increasing the circulation of best performances and ensuring transnational and intergovernmental learning process; transnational advocacy networks are making the roots of a global multilateral politics deeper within civil societies of the North and South; finally the role of migration flows (200 Millions in 2008) and of the diasporas in Europe, Asia, Americas is crucial in overcoming a traditional, diplomatic, elitist, technocratic version of multilateral cooperation.

Richard Higgott has listed in his chapter the achieved and expected outcomes of such a networking: agenda- and standard- setting; improving modes of coordination and policy implementation; exchanging of resources and pooling of authorities; providing public goods, mutual knowledge and venues for policy entrepreneurship and innovation; offering vehicles for consensus building; and ...reducing the participatory gap.

All in all, it is true that power politics could limit multilateralism to contingent, instrumental and specific reciprocity focussing tool of the stronger. However, the trend to better global governance is also a part of the ongoing complex game. What we argue is that new and better multilateral governance for the 21st century could hardly miss the challenge of a more articulated, pluralist, multiactor, democratic legitimacy and accountability. Of course the model and standards of a national state democracy are clearly not at all applicable as such at regional or global scale: however, to a certain extent, various forms and levels of input legitimacy have to matter more than in the past given the growing expectations of an increasingly informed public opinion. Beyond technocratic understandings of global governance, this is the main legacy of the first twenty years after the end of the Cold War. By building up a common language of the international society (communication, dialogue and semantics), toward enhanced convergence, accountability and democracy, will matter more than in the past.

4. Conclusions

The theoretical framework for our contribution to a new epoch of multilateralist studies is clearly provided by combining area studies, notably European integration studies with International relations studies. European

studies have to overcome inward looking approaches of the past and Eurocentric understandings of the way to reconciliation between previous enemies through the « community method » of supranational institutions building; on the other hand, International relations studies should overcome trivial underestimation of the EU experience as totally irrelevant for other continents and the global scale and be more open to learn from comparative regionalist studies. Provided these conditions, the comparison between the first (old Westphalian system), and the second (current) multipolarity brings some inputs. Only in the 21st century may “multilateralist research” be heuristically so fruitful and open to alternative scenarios, an important extension of international regimes research program, an alternative agenda in global governance studies beyond the limits of the hegemonic stability studies of the second half of the 20th century. The two extremes: an evolving instrumental and contingent multilateral cooperation, or a gradual change (not abolition) of the logic of sovereignty though diffuse reciprocity, and, the first step towards a bottom-up universalism based on regional multilateralism;

Because of these various and opposite tendencies, a new multilateral research agenda is needed, fostered also by the current evolution of international relations. The following conditions may underpin the virtuous scenario of a more legitimate and delivering multilevel, multiactor, multilateral cooperation:

- concrete and variously styled steps towards institutionalization of the international life, balancing the existing Westphalian tendencies towards unipolarism, bipolarism and a hard multipolar balance of power, while the states can be seen as a political resource for multilateral cooperation, underpinned by interests and ideas;
- improvements of the efficiency of cooperation relevant enough to be able of countering the multiple trends toward local/nationalist fragmentation and bilateralism - flexibility : new multilateralism needs on the one hand to adjust to different policy areas (even if the classical distinction between high and low politics looks as largely over), and, on the other hand, an enhanced complementarities between the regional and global dimensions of the multilateral cooperation network;

- organizations reform : the challenge of improving the representation of emerging nations within global organizations implies sensitive shifts of power, a retreat by European states and, in parallel, a better “multilaterability” of the regional entities (EU firstly, reforming both their internal charters and the charter of the International organizations);
- efficiency also means enhanced coordination among multilateral institutions dealing with the same issue,
- regular monitoring systems of the follow up, proactive role of the civil society and transnational networks both before and after the multilateral agreement;
- enhancing legitimacy means not only efficiency, but also more transparency and democratic accountability, both at national and supranational level. Legitimacy is a central challenge for the 21st century: on the one hand, multilateral cooperation might strengthen and consolidate national democracy and democratic transitions; on the other hand, it can be influenced and politicized by the pressures of civil society, and NGOs, networks, private sector, should be part of a new era of multilateral, pluralist, multi-actor cooperation providing the public opinion with a critical role stimulating efficiency and consistency with the asserted values;
- strengthening and broadening an enhanced and varying institutionalization of the international life is crucial. In scientific terms, institutionalization is the main independent variable collecting discourse, interests and ideas. Of course, alternative models and different degrees of institutionalization are emerging in Asia, Africa and LA, far from Eurocentric visions, like the obsolete Belassa’s model or like the EU self promotion as a postmodern and normative entity. Effective multilateralism does not mean exporting the EU “community model”, and the European understanding of binding multilateral cooperation. For two reasons: firstly, it is clear that the EU model as such will never be replicated elsewhere. Secondly, very often relevant results could be achieved without explicitly binding Treaties: emulation, ideas, role of NGOs by implementation monitoring may matter more than explicit hard law provision. The coming multilateralism could only prevail if free of hegemonic power but also without assertive models.

All in all, multilateralism is in troubles and in transition: it could be downgraded to instrumental tool of power politics; it could also upgrade step by step from a mere historical feature of Westphalian orders (whatever 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 co-operation 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 legitimate and binding multilateral institutions, regimes and arrangements, in charge of addressing the common challenges of the human kind (and not merely as an instrument of a power or of an alliance or of a regional power against other powers or alliances or threats⁶²) is the most powerful and farseeing political idea, born in the 20th century at regional level and eventually on the centre of the global agenda of the 21st.

⁶² As the art 5 of the NATO treaty or the solidarity clause of the Lisbon treaty(art 3 TEU, art 42.7 TEU and art 222 TFEU)