

E-PAPER

Reader

# Multilateralism 2.0

In Search of New Partnerships for the German and European Foreign Policy

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# Preface

This reader provides some snapshots of the major topics we addressed at our 20th Annual Foreign Policy Conference, which took place on 30–31 January 2020 in Berlin. Our conference revolved around the new debate on multilateralism, and our aim was to upgrade this discussion, to make it greener and more global.

Multilateral affairs dominated last year's German foreign policy calendar, starting from Berlin's membership in the United Nations (UN) Security Council to the establishment of an «Alliance for Multilateralism» at the UN in September 2019. For many observers the Alliance for Multilateralism was a *déjà vu*, and reminded them of the first Security Strategy of the European Union (EU), issued in 2003, which was all about «effective multilateralism». In both instances, the rules-based order was under attack, and in both cases the attacks came from the great powers, first and foremost from the United States.

Thus, we had been here before. But it seems, we had not learned the lesson.

When the Trump Administration proclaimed its America First policy, we as a green foundation could not stand idle: America First was not just another neo-conservative attack against multilateral institutions and international norms; it was also a dangerous backlash against the global consensus on climate change and the preservation of biodiversity.

However, the environmental issue was not our only entry point into the multilateralism debate. We noticed that this debate suffered also from an excessive Western self-referentialism: in fact, the crisis of multilateralism was not just due to an irresponsible US leadership in the White House, but could also be ascribed to China's and Russia's nonchalance and cynicism with respect to international principles, rules and norms – be it in the field of security, trade or climate policy.

The same holds true for the defenders of a rules-based international system: Western analysts tended to limit their focus on the usual suspects, and hence to direct our attention to the EU and a number of like-minded Western democracies such as Canada and Japan. We thereby overlooked important contributions by Latin American, African and Asian states that have the same interest in preserving a functioning multilateral world order.

When designing our conference agenda, we sought to correct this North-South imbalance; and we tried to have a less gloomy approach, when assessing the role of the United States in the current crisis of multilateralism. True, the signs from the White House are all but constructive, but we could not overlook encouraging trends from US civil society and from progressive climate champions such as California, which were there at the same time.

Thus, the message we wanted to convey with our conference was a message of hope. We aimed to inject some optimism for a new transatlanticism based on green values and to highlight the existence of new partners in global governance outside the Western world.

This reader would not exist, if Betty Suh had not done all the work from contacting the authors to the editing of every single article to the compilation of the final manuscript. We owe her and our authors immense gratitude for a unique product in the market of ideas.

Berlin, March 2020

Giorgio Franceschini  
*Head of Security and Foreign Policy Division*  
*Heinrich Böll Foundation*

# PART I – FRAMING THE DEBATE

# Germany in Search of New Global Partners

## The Free and Open Order Under Threat

The international system in which Germany was embedded for decades, and which allowed it to be more free, more secure and more prosperous than ever before, has started to unravel. This system, which is called the «rule-based order», or the «liberal international order», or the «free and open order», is increasingly under attack by a revisionist Russia and a rising China, both authoritarian countries who want to change the international system to suit the needs of their ruling elites. At the same time, the U.S. is increasingly sceptical with regard to its support for this order: US-Americans have the impression that they do not get much in return for playing the role of a «global policeman», that the «Pax Americana» is too costly for them. That is why Trump's slogan «America First» reverberates so strongly with many of them. Meanwhile the EU, often considered the fourth power pole in the world after the US, China and Russia, remains unable to overcome the many divisions between its diverse member states and to turn into a united, forceful actor on the world stage.

What emerges on the horizon is a global future beyond the liberal, free and open international order; a global system largely based on the competition of a few global poles, turning everybody else into an object of great power calculations. A future in which the battle over zones of influence and control defines the international system, where military power is the most important currency, and where tensions and clashes lead to the closing of borders, the end of globalisation and of the multilateral win-win approaches to tackle joint global challenges. In short, confrontation instead of cooperation – the return of the jungle, in which only the most powerful beasts survive.

For almost all European countries, such a scenario is a nightmare. Germany is particularly dependent on the international free and open order, as its economic success story has been built on the security guarantees of the «Pax Americana»: the rules and institutions of global trade («Bretton Woods»), as well as a global physical infrastructure that allows sending goods and information around the globe at low cost and high speed. With regard to security, Germany is, unlike France or Britain, not able to provide for its own defence. Here the American engagement remains equally vital for Germany, especially as Europe is confronted with a Russia that is using military force in Ukraine and is again using its nuclear weapons arsenal as an instrument to intimidate Europeans.

In short, Germany has every reason to support the liberal, free and open order, built around the Western core, which still shapes the economic and political behaviour of countless actors around the globe – states, companies as well as individuals. In the past, the costs of this order for Germany were relatively low. Now they are rising: It becomes more difficult

to counter Russian and Chinese initiatives to undermine this order, and it becomes more difficult to convince America to play the role of an inclusive, responsible leader, acting not just on behalf of narrow, short-term American priorities but in the wider interest of the free and open order.

Yet the costs of raising Germany's international profile, to invest in a strategy of strengthening the free and open order and of adapting it to new challenges are low compared to the costs of a breakdown of this order. Additionally, Germany has more responsibility because it matters: it is not a small country, it is a player in the global top league – a central power in Europe, an influential global economic player, and a widely trusted member of leading «clubs» such as the G7 and the G20. Given its potential and its interests, Germany has every reason to increase its efforts to strengthen, stabilise and develop the free and open order.

There are many ways to do this. One is to keep Europe together in times of growing fragility; the EU is an important building block of the liberal order and its most advanced and successful example. A second path is to make sure that the U.S. is not permanently drifting towards narrow-minded nationalism, but remains engaged globally as a backer of the free and open order. A third way to strengthen the liberal order is to withstand Russian and Chinese pressure, to stand up for liberal values and especially the right of smaller countries such as Ukraine to shape their own destiny. A fourth path to pursue is to build global alliances with like-minded partners: other mid-sized and smaller powers who share Germany's concern about the fragility of the free and open liberal order, and are willing to increase their own investments in this order.

## The Alliance for Multilateralism

This last path is the idea behind the «Alliance for Multilateralism» launched by German foreign minister Heiko Maas together with his French counterpart Jean-Ives Le Drian on the side lines of the U.N. General Assembly in September 2019. Besides Germany and France, other co-hosts of the event were Chile, Mexico, Ghana, Singapore and Canada. While Britain had declined, a large number of European countries participated. There was considerable interest across Asia, especially India, as well as Australia, and some interest among Latin American and African countries.

What is this initiative about? It is driven, as Maas and Le Drian have explained in a joint op-ed, by the sense that the multilateral, liberal order is under threat: «Some players are increasingly engaging in power politics, thus undermining the idea of a rules-based order with a view to enforcing the law of the strong. At the same time, criticism of seemingly inefficient international cooperation is growing in many societies, also in some Western countries. [...] The rivalry among major powers and growing nationalism [has] resulted in an increasingly fragmented world order – in political, economic and social terms. [...] To

counter this trend, like-minded states must make common cause and double their efforts to promote multilateralism. France and Germany intend to lead the way.» The goal of the Alliance, they write, is «to stabilize the rule-based world order, to uphold its principles and to adapt it to new challenges where necessary.»

The Alliance has started with a number of projects in areas such as cyber security, climate change, freedom of press or autonomous weapon systems. It has defined itself as «a global network of like-minded states», not as an institution or club with a restricted membership base.

While the Alliance has had a promising start, there remain a number of questions regarding its further development:

1. **Terminology:** Alliance usually means an institutionalised format for cooperation, often in the area of security – is this the proper name for a loose network? And is multilateralism the proper term for the ambition to strengthen a specific order? Isn't multilateralism rather a method than a goal in itself (as there could well be a group of states who multilaterally endorse an authoritarian order)?
2. **Focus:** is it sufficient to focus on the «soft» dimension of the order – given the state goal «to stabilize the rule-based order»? Isn't the «hard» dimension – to deal with conflicts, with the security part of order – more important?
3. **Commitment of participants:** Can a rather loose network without clear structure really make a difference? Can it actually have an impact on global power politics?
4. **Membership:** is the Alliance about mid-sized powers only? Or is the U.S. an indispensable part of any effort to counter Chinese and Russian ideas of order?

## Deepening and Widening the Approach

In this new fragile international environment, Germany obviously needs to look beyond Europe and the U.S. The Alliance for Multilateralism is a building block for such an approach, especially if the network will be filled with more substantial content and if heads of governments fully embrace it. In any case, it points into the right direction: Germany needs to further reach out to like-minded global partners who are able and willing to invest more into a free and open, liberal international order.

This is the issue that the [20th Annual Foreign Policy Conference](#) of the Boell Foundation wanted to explore in more depth: Who are those like-minded partners, and which policy areas could and should cooperation be focusing on? What could new global partnerships contribute to specific challenges – such as combatting climate change, fair international trade and secure sea lanes – to keep the nervous system of a globalised world intact?



## Mind the Gap: Pitfalls of Multilateralism

From the perspective of a world beset by grave global challenges, effective multilateralism is the Holy Grail. As the sad end of UN Climate Change Conference COP 25 in Madrid demonstrated, the struggle to slow climate change cannot be taken forward if multilateral cooperation fails. Yet multilateralism is a double-edged sword: depending on how it is understood and how it is practiced, it can also degenerate into a substitute for effective action, or even subvert international order.

The first problem with «multilateralism» is what the term means. At its most elementary, multilateralism simply describes forms of diplomacy that involve more than two parties. A more demanding understanding of multilateralism defines it as a way in which diplomacy is conducted: to involve relevant parties in negotiations, and to continue talking until compromise is achieved. In this definition, multilateralism is about process. More exacting still is an understanding of multilateralism that focuses on the context and objective of diplomatic processes: the strengthening of an international order that is ruled by law, not by force. This definition of multilateralism assumes that international diplomacy will be guided by rules and norms as well as watched over by dedicated international institutions. Yet this definition begs the questions: What are the rules and norms that form the basis of international order? Are governments really prepared to follow them? What, in other words, is the substance around which the processes of multilateral diplomacy take place?

## Only a Substantive Understanding of Multilateralism Can Engender Sustainable Policies

There can be no doubt that the current U.S. administration's commitment to the rules and norms of today's international order is limited and selective; President Donald Trump, it seems, does not like rules and norms at all – except when they serve his own interests. Yet it is also somewhat odd to have China's President Xi Jinping pose (as he famously did at the World Economic Forum in Davos in February 2017) as the champion of a liberal international order; China's policies often systematically violate the spirit and even the letter of that order. The final, and in my view the only adequate, definition of multilateralism sets the term in the context of the huge demand for, and the inadequate supply of, global governance. This recognizes a) that the world has a lot to do to secure a good future for mankind, and b) that this can be achieved only through broad-based international cooperation and integration. There are simply too many relevant parties to any of the major global challenges – from climate change to arms control and pandemics – for any unilateral or bilateral efforts to succeed. Take global warming: even the two biggest emitters of carbon

dioxide, China and the United States, could not contain global warming below 2 degrees on their own, nor by working together bilaterally. (This is not to say that their cooperation would be irrelevant; on the contrary, if the United States and China were able to agree on a joint approach towards the problem of climate change, they could then bring others on board of their solution. This is what made the Paris Agreement on Climate Change at COP 21 possible in 2015). This understanding of multilateralism combines process with substance and ambition; implicitly, it also provides benchmarks to measure the results of multilateral diplomacy.

When Washington, Beijing or Moscow, or even the European Union, today pose as good multilateralists, skepticism seems warranted. Of course, all diplomacy, including multilateral diplomacy, aims at pursuing «national interests», that is, the objectives that governments define for their countries. Multilateralism therefore is a tool with which parties pursue their own objectives. Yet only if the respective definitions of what constitutes the «national interest» include notions of a rules-based international order and ambitions to tackle transnational challenges effectively, if multilateralism becomes an end, not only a means, will national policies be sustainable. Such a demanding definition of multilateralism implies a commitment by countries to forego possible short-term advantages for the sake of protecting the rules, norms and effectiveness of the international order. Put bluntly, governments need to understand that in the longer run they have more to gain from following and thus helping to preserve the rules, than by defying them for the sake of some immediate benefit. At present, we observe a United States government whose commitment to substantive multilateralism in this sense is at best selective, a Russian regime that seems bent to undermine any substantive multilateralism that does not conform to its own ambitions, and a Chinese government that, although committed to a rules-based international order, wants to change the rules and control the outcomes. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that multilateralism today often degenerates into empty posturing, or even worse: a mimicry of effective action.

Yet even if governments were seriously committed to effective multilateralism in its most demanding form (and even Germany, which likes to portray itself as an exemplary multilateralist, in fact has a rather mixed record on this), multilateralism is far from being a panacea. On the contrary, it is a highly demanding form of international diplomacy, with lots of built-in pitfalls that need constant attention and persistent political efforts to avoid. Thus, multilateralism is unwieldy and cumbersome. Its agenda tends to become diffuse and overcrowded, all the parties involved have different priorities that they all want to see included in the outcome. It therefore becomes difficult to set priorities and avoid being side-tracked from the most important issues. Multilateral negotiations also take time, sometimes a lot of time; this intensifies the difficulty of setting (and meeting) deadlines that reflect objective constraints and the urgency of issues. The outcomes of multilateral diplomacy usually require implementation by national governments; this raises issues of monitoring and domestic application to deliver on national commitments.

## The Need for Leadership

In practice, this makes political leadership one of, if not the most important element of effective multilateralism. Leadership is needed to focus the agenda, to set deadlines, to rally coalitions around compromises yet push them into moving beyond the convenient lowest common denominator into ambitious undertakings. Leadership will also be required to set up mechanisms to monitor implementation and hold the parties accountable to their commitments – if necessary, through sanctions. As Washington's leadership in the international order dissipates, the enormous importance and range of its international leadership, notwithstanding its many shortcomings and serious deviations from global responsibilities, are becoming painfully apparent: no country has yet been able to step into the breach.

Leadership does not have to be confined to one country; there is no reason why leadership could not be exercised by a coalition of countries. Yet such a coalition can deliver effective multilateralism only if the parties involved base their policies on a shared – and demanding – understanding of multilateralism. At present, the «Alliance for Multilateralism» inspired by Berlin falls short of that. So far, it seems to focus on low-hanging fruits and on process. This may help to contain a further erosion of the present international order at the margins, but it does not address the need for substantive progress in global governance. To move in that direction, the Alliance would need a committed core group of countries, including some, though not necessarily all, member states of the European Union, as well as the European Commission and others, such as Canada, South Korea, Japan and Australia.

## PART II – LOOKING AROUND: COUNTRY PERSPECTIVES

# Of Engineers and Visionaries: Germany and France as Partners for Saving the Multilateral Order

«Multilateralism is under fire precisely when we need it most». Dozens of recent articles refer to Antonio Guterres' assessment in making their case for reinforcing global cooperation. This one is no exception. And quite clearly, the UN Secretary-General is right. Faced with unprecedented transnational challenges, international organizations are deadlocked (UN Security Council), taken hostage (World Trade Organization) or labelled «braindead» (NATO), while states pull out of global regimes on climate (Paris Agreement), migration (Global Compact) or human rights (UN Human Rights Council). At the same time, power politics are experiencing a neo-Westphalian revival. In this arduous international environment, «saving the rules-based multilateral order» has become the S.O.S. of the hour.

But what is needed for middle powers like Germany to save the multilateral order as we know it? There are at least two necessary, even if not sufficient, preconditions, which are closely interlinked: First, states need to formulate a response to power politics, first and foremost by defining the relations to the great powers and positioning themselves towards them. Second, they have to better deliver on solving the world's most pressing global challenges, not least in order to safeguard and revamp their citizens' trust in the global system.

## Berlin and Paris: Incrementalism Meets Disruption

Germany and France could be natural allies on both of these matters. In the Aachen Treaty, a bilateral agreement renewing the 1963 Élysée Treaty that was signed in January 2019, both countries emphasized their «firm commitment to an international order based on rules and multilateralism, with the United Nations at its heart». In line with this ambition, France joined the German initiative to create an Alliance for Multilateralism, and now acts as a co-sponsor of the project. The German population seems to support such joint undertakings: [According to a recent survey](#), more than half of the German public asserts that France is Germany's most important partner in international affairs. A striking 77 per cent furthermore believe their country should engage more intensively with its French partners.

Despite these positive signs, Franco-German relations are sailing some rough waters these days. Nerves are raw on both sides of the Rhine, it seems. Berlin is increasingly worked up with President Macron's [proclivity for disruption](#), while Paris [has lost patience](#) with the German attachment to the status quo. The different characters of Angela Merkel – a sober

and meticulous pragmatist – and Emmanuel Macron – a trained philosopher with a penchant for visionary but largely broad-brush ideas – do not help to ease the tensions.

But one should not mistake style for substance. The current flurry about *Franco-German relations being at a new low* overlooks that on the majority of foreign policy matters, Germany and France are still on the same page – at least when it comes to their analysis of the multilateral to-do list. The main source of disagreement lies in the fact that France appears more poised to engage in geopolitical thinking than its partners in Berlin, and thus formulates farther reaching responses. Germany, on the other hand, continues to rely on a cautious step-by-step approach – an obvious choice for a nation of engineers.

## Similar Analysis, Different Conclusion: Europe and the Great Powers

Berlin and Paris evidently share the analyses of Trumpist America, rising China and neo-imperial Russia, but they differ regarding the actions they derive from their assessments. Amid deteriorating transatlantic relations, both European partners drew the conclusion that Europeans will have to ramp up their independence in security and other areas. This was the essence of various speeches and public statements, whether they were held in *Bavarian beer tents* (Merkel) or *French universities* (Macron). The difference is, though, that President Macron went for the *ultima ratio* – calling the transatlantic alliance, on which European security is destined to rely on for decades, *«brain dead»*, thereby forcing his European and American allies to react and position themselves. Let us be honest: The subsequent German *proposal to create an «expert group»* to rejuvenate NATO would not have induced President Trump to *defend the value of the alliance*.

Similar patterns can be discerned in the relationship to China. Berlin and Paris have a largely congruent assessment of domestic trends in China (both are concerned about the increasingly authoritarian features of the Party State and its massive economic interventions) as well as the challenges that the ascent of the People's Republic poses to the international system. However, Germany, whose export-oriented economy is highly dependent on trade with China, has a hard time coming to an unequivocal political answer. In contrast, the French inference is clear: A rising dictatorship (and a looming Sino-American conflict) calls for a strong European counter-action. Because of this, Emmanuel Macron invited Angela Merkel and then President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker to his meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Paris in March 2019. While this move caused some diplomatic hick-ups – the French President had allegedly blindsided the Chancellor and the Commission chief by simply announcing their presence, rather than liaising beforehand and developing a joint strategy – it sent a strong European signal to the Chinese leadership, even though the Germans would have preferred a more cautious and systematic proceeding.

The French conclusion that a common front is needed towards China and that an axis Beijing–Moscow must be prevented at all costs also influences Macron's Russia strategy. Yet his overtures towards Vladimir Putin, reflected by an *invitation to the French President's summer residence in the Fort de Brégançon* ahead of the G7 summit in Biarritz and *calls for a «new European security architecture»* sound like a concession to Russian claims not only to transatlantic ears. Clearly, Germany sings a different tune in its relations to the Russian Federation, not least because of its geographic proximity and a different history of relations to the EU members in Central and Eastern Europe. But one should not overlook that the baseline for the relationship with Russia is the same in Berlin and Paris: Both partners emphasize critical engagement as reflected by the maintenance of EU sanctions, while at the same time keeping communication channels to Moscow open. A recent meeting between Macron, Merkel, Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in the so-called Normandy Format is also an expression of this shared agenda.

The message is clear: In all three cases, the German and French starting positions are not more than a stone's throw away from each other. Yet, France is determined not to sit back and wait for geopolitics to go by. Rather, Paris is actively addressing the great power postures that are currently *en vogue* on the global stage, whereas Berlin seems somewhat uneasy with strategic challenges that it finds itself confronted with.

## Adapting the Multilateral Order to a New Era

This divergence also characterizes French and German initiatives to deliver on global challenges, the second parameter that determines the success of the multilateral project. Both countries have come up with commendable initiatives that are intended to increase the output on global issues. On the one hand, German foreign minister Heiko Maas has initiated an Alliance for Multilateralism, a network of like-minded countries that attempts to *«stabilize the rules-based international order, uphold its principles and adapt it, where necessary»*. Together with France as a co-sponsor, the alliance has now singled out *six concrete initiatives* (on humanitarian action, cyber security, and freedom of information, among others) where it seeks to make a difference.

With similar objectives in mind, Emmanuel Macron has initiated the *Paris Peace Forum*, an annual platform for multi-stakeholder projects on global governance challenges. The two initiatives share a lot of common ground (acting as a convener for <multilateralists>, focus on concrete outcomes). But yet again, the different <dialects> of German and French responses to the multilateral decay resurfaced: While the creation of the Alliance for Multilateralism dragged on for over a year until the correct format was found, the Paris Peace Forum was launched with a big bang in November 2018 with the participation of more than 65 heads of state and government. More importantly, Germany seems to cherish the hope that the alliance could be a means to circumvent great power politics. Tellingly, the network has *so far failed to formulate a response* to rising geopolitical tensions. France,

on the other hand, continues to play the geopolitical chessboard *in addition* to its penchant for multi-stakeholder projects. It is clear for the French that promoting bottom-up solutions is only one instrument in the multilateral toolbox.

How, then, can the two countries up their game as a Franco-German <force for multilateralism>, both on addressing the geopolitical revival and on meeting global needs by delivering output? On geopolitics, it is Germany that needs to learn the language of power that France has spoken fluently for many years. But Paris also needs to better understand Germany's (lack of) strategic culture. One must not forget that Berlin's geopolitical awakening has only just begun. Concerning the multilateral output, the foundation stone has already been laid in the shape of the Alliance for Multilateralism. France and Germany should continue to push for concrete outcomes on global challenges like climate change, digitalization or artificial intelligence – inside the alliance, but also outside of it. Notably, the two countries will be able to address power politics *and* make concrete progress on global issues in 2020 at the heart of multilateral diplomacy: The two will once again sit in the United Nations Security Council together. Here, they will be able to build on the successful cooperation of 2019 that found an expression in <twin presidencies> in March and April.

But above all, amid the mutual annoyances that have characterized recent months, Berlin and Paris should refocus on the substance of their mutual relations, and not obsess with the different styles with which they pursue largely similar aims in saving multilateralism. In the end, both would do well to take a leaf out of the other's book. Because engineers without visions will run out of ideas rather soon, and visionaries without a sense for structural engineering run the risk of seeing their constructs collapse.



Rachel Rizzo

# The Building Blocks of a Progressive Transatlantic Vision

As the US presidential elections in November 2020 quickly approach, transatlanticists in the United States and Europe are trying to decipher what the next four years may bring for the US-European partnership. A second term for Donald Trump means that the difficulties that have plagued the relationship for the last three years will almost certainly continue. A Democrat entering office, on the other hand, could provide an opportunity for a clean slate. No matter who ultimately claims victory at the polls, one thing is certain: The US-European relationship needs a makeover; a progressive vision that places new priorities at the forefront of transatlantic cooperation; one that lays the foundation for the two sides to jointly tackle the most important issues of our time. But what exactly, would this vision look like?

First and foremost, a progressive vision means elevating the status of the US-European Union (EU) relationship. For decades, the foundation of the US-European partnership has been the NATO alliance, which has over-militarized transatlantic relations and prioritized a narrow vision of security and defense. The two sides often get sidetracked debating issues like European defense spending and how to counter Russia. While these issues are important, they are by no means the most important. There other aspects of today's geopolitical landscape that will prove to be more consequential in the years to come; issues that NATO does not exist to tackle, and which, instead, will require deeper and more meaningful cooperation between the US and the EU. At the top of the list are climate change, a rising China, and a recommitment to human rights.

## Urgency: Addressing Climate Change

The first and perhaps most pressing issue that the United States and Europe must jointly address is that of climate change. While there is a long history of transatlantic cooperation on this issue, the degree to which the United States government will view this as a priority going forward depends almost entirely on who enters office this November. The Trump administration has proven unwilling to face the urgency of the climate crisis and [on November 4, 2019, offered official notification](#) to the United Nations that the United States would withdraw from the Paris Agreement. Instead, the administration has sought to [revive the coal industry to fulfill pledges to voters](#) in coal mining states like West Virginia and Wyoming, mainly by rolling back Obama-era environmental protections. Further, Republicans have vilified the Green New Deal, a Resolution sponsored by Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Senator Ed Markey, which calls for a 10-year national mobilization to address climate change and economic inequality. Because of inaction on the federal level,

some of the United States› most meaningful progress in the area of climate change has been made at the state and local levels. This is a good sign, and could be a starting point for deeper US-EU cooperation. However, if a Democrat is elected in November, one of their first orders of business should be supporting the Green New Deal, rejoining the Paris Agreement, and reestablishing America's role as a global leader on the issue of climate change. As the second largest emitter of greenhouse gasses worldwide, a top-down US commitment to tackling this issue is critical.

Alternatively, the European Union has proven to be a leader in this arena. This could be due to the fact that *a whopping 93 percent of Europeans* view climate change as a serious problem, and 92 percent support making the EU climate neutral by 2050. It is hard to imagine those kinds of numbers in the United States. The EU is ›the first major economy to put in place a legally binding framework to deliver on its pledges under the Paris Agreement› with a *goal to reach climate neutrality by 2050*. The European Commission has also *presented the European Green Deal*, which (beyond the goals of climate neutrality) aims to: protect human life, animals and plants by cutting pollution; help companies become world leaders in clean products and technologies; and help ensure a just and inclusive transition.<sup>1</sup>

Despite differing approaches between the United States and Europe, there are areas where the two sides must continue to work together to make sufficient progress. First, the leaders from the European Union, both in national governments and in Brussels, should double down on their efforts to cooperate with the *US Climate Alliance, a bipartisan coalition of governors* from 25 U.S. states and territories committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions consistent with the goals of the Paris Agreement. More state-level programs like former California Governor Jerry Brown's climate partnership with EU leaders are urgently necessary, as is the need for the transatlantic partners to eliminate trade barriers on green goods and services. Finally, grant-making apparatuses within the EU and US governments (regardless of which party is in power) should place a priority on funding organizations that bring increased public awareness to the issue of climate change, and which coordinate directly with cities and industry to align climate goals and share best practices.

## Strategic Importance: A Rising China

Second, the Transatlantic partners must work together to address the geostrategic challenges posed by China's economic and technological ambitions. Although historically, the United States and Europe have tried to build a closer Transatlantic approach toward China, the two have been somewhat at odds; Europe views the US approach as overly aggressive and zero-sum, while the United States views Europe's approach as naive and ineffective. Luckily, Europe has recently made some important strides, including naming China as a ›systemic rival› in *a March 2019 EU-China Strategic Outlook paper*. But the inability of Europe to establish a cohesive continent-wide vision for how to deal with issues like 5G and the Belt and Road Initiative, combined with China's efforts to make economic

in-roads with some key European countries through the 17+1 format, has been problematic. Simultaneously, the United States and China have been locked in a bitter trade war since mid-2018, with the two sides imposing tit-for-tat tariffs on both American and Chinese goods. While the United States and China signed a comprehensive trade deal in January, some of the major issues remain unsolved and the issue is unlikely to be completely resolved any time soon.

It would be unrealistic and unwise for either side to completely ostracize China economically: The country is, after all, the *top trading partner for the EU* and accounted for 20% of EU imports in 2018. Similarly, China was the *United States' third largest export market in 2018*, with U.S. goods and services trade totaling an estimated \$737.1 billion in 2018. Still, there are steps that the US and Europe should take together to make sure they are presenting a united front against China's economic strategy. First, the EU and the United States could work toward more effectively utilizing and ultimately reforming the World Trade Organization (WTO). In January 2020, for example, the *United States, the EU, and Japan ramped up their pressure on China* <over its model of state-sponsored capitalism,> calling on the WTO to be tougher on government subsidies and offering a joint statement proposing <more stringent global rules to prevent Chinese companies relying on state support to gain advantage over foreign rivals.> Although this is only a small piece of a much larger geo-economic puzzle, it is a good first step toward addressing China's unfair trade practices and closing WTO loopholes that Beijing deftly exploits to create imbalances in the global market.

The United States and Europe should also work together to address Chinese investments and 5G technology. In terms of investments, Noah Barkin highlighted a few steps toward a joint approach in a *June 2019 article for the Atlantic*: first, in responding to <Belt and Road, the U.S. and Europe could work together to develop common transparency, environmental, and social standards for infrastructure projects, while pooling their financial resource.> Although this could be difficult given the lack of cohesiveness amongst European countries regarding how to deal with Chinese investments, it is important to try to find common ground. On the US side, this also means working to improve economic and diplomatic ties with European countries which have signed on to BRI projects, and which may view China as a viable economic alternative to the United States. In terms of 5G, top US officials such as Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, and Secretary of Defense Mark Esper, consistently warn European countries against allowing China's Huawei to build their 5G networks. Rightly so, but today, there is a lack of viable alternatives. This would be a good opportunity for leaders on both sides of the Atlantic, as well as business leaders from Nokia, Ericsson, and US firms to create a consortium and work toward a joint approach to the 5G challenge. Further, the two sides could create a set of <common rules for data privacy and *artificial intelligence*, alongside joint efforts to make telecommunications

infrastructure and supply chains bulletproof against Chinese espionage and sabotage.<sup>[1]</sup> Above all, it's important for Washington and Brussels to understand that working together to present a united front will create a far more effective long-term strategy in managing China's rise than either side could create on its own.

## Values: Reaffirming Transatlantic Commitments to Human Rights

Alongside interests, a progressive vision must also be based in values, principles, and norms. The United States and Europe must therefore reaffirm their commitment to the protection of human rights. China's mass detention of Xinjiang's Uighur population in so-called «re-education camps,» for example, would be a good opportunity for the United States and Europe to release a joint statement taking a stand against China's inhumane actions. While both sides are late to the game, a high-level document signed by U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, and the EU's High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, would send a strong message.

The Transatlantic partners should also take a human rights-based approach to the export of dual-use goods, specifically surveillance technology. *Dual-use* is defined as «goods, software and technology that can be used for both civilian and military applications.» U.S.-based companies such as Seagate Technology PLC, Western Digital Corp., Intel Corp. and Hewlett Packard Enterprise Co. develop and export technologies for legitimate civilian uses, but have also «provided components, financing and *know-how to China's multibillion-dollar surveillance industry.*» Similarly, *dual-use equipment from European-based tech companies* such as Finnish-German Nokia Siemens Networks, Germany-based FinFisher (commonly referred to as FinSpy), Italy-based Hacking Team, and many others has been used «for arresting, torturing, and even killing people... in Iran, in Egypt, in Bahrain, Ethiopia, Morocco, especially in the Arab Spring.» Other countries receiving Western dual-use technology include Uzbekistan, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey. One thing is clear: Europe and the United States must have strong policies in place to halt the export of surveillance technology to countries that have a proven track record of using it to violate human rights.

More broadly, however, the transatlantic partners should recommit to their support of free and open expression. This is urgent, especially as governments increasingly use new forms of technology to pursue illiberal governance structures, quell democratic movements, and

**1** Quote from: Barkin, Noah. «The U.S. Is Losing Europe in Its Battle With China.» *The Atlantic*, 4 June 2019, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2019/06/united-states-needs-europe-against-china/590887/>.

violate human rights. A good start would be creating an independent organization (something that resembles the National Endowment for Democracy) for Euro-Atlantic tech and internet freedom. This organization would support companies «*pursuing tech pluralism aligned with open society principles*» and would «push independent compliance with the EU's General Data Protection Regulation and Privacy Shield. It could also provide outside scrutiny on dual-use technology exports on both sides of the Atlantic. finally, this organization could bring together individuals from government, universities, NGOs, and the private sector to determine ways the transatlantic partners can address the growing issues of digital authoritarianism and techno-nationalism. At the end of the day, the freedom of expression and the freedom to access information are human rights issues. The United States and Europe should stand up for these rights worldwide.

## Conclusion

Admittedly, the goals listed above are lofty, and yet at the same time, they only scratch the surface. For example, the transatlantic partners (both together, and on their own) also must seriously rethink what U.S. military posture looks like in Europe, address kleptocracy, corruption, and mass inequality, determine a long-term solution to mass migration, and more. This is no small feat. Even if a new US president takes Trump's place in the Oval Office this November, he or she will have their hands full simply trying to repair the damage done by this administration to the US-European relationship. At this point, it is unrealistic to think that the transatlantic relationship will simply «go back to normal,» as some like to say. Instead, the United States and Europe should realize that the relationship will look fundamentally different going forward, and that is a good thing. It gives the transatlantic partners a chance to recalibrate; to chart a new course and create a fresh vision that places today's biggest challenges at the center of the US-European relationship.

## Redirecting Multilateralism: Will India Seize the Opportunity?

The international order is in a precarious state. Key countries, like the United States, who have led campaigns to address global challenges appear uninterested in contributing or even participating. Divisions between the US and Europe on burden-sharing vis-à-vis global public goods are out in the open. Unfortunately, transatlantic divisions have been laid bare when the vacuum at the heart of global governance could be filled by competing, fundamentally different, notions of world order advanced by illiberal powers like Russia and China. Soon enough, conflicts spoiling global rule-making could shift from being purely political to ideological, making them intractable to address. Should an ideological battle consume global governance, we can foresee a bifurcated international order that rests on starkly different world views: Western powers on one side alongside partners like India and Japan who prefer an open and free international economic system with rules to resolve disputes, and revisionist powers like China and Russia whose power rests on spreading illiberal forms of political and economic governance. In such a scenario, the international order could require <swing states> like India to step-up and contribute more to help address policy challenges like protectionism, climate change and freedom of navigation in the global commons. Can India play this role?

While India's long term economic and security interests align with an international order that remains liberal, expecting New Delhi to assume a proactive role independent of contingent development exigencies could be a hard sell. Historically, India's multilateral positions have frustrated western interlocutors annoyed by what they perceive as Delhi's disinclination to help address challenges like climate change and nuclear proliferation. India has long been branded as a multilateral <naysayer> and <obstructionist>, unwilling to accept global commitments when necessary. Such claims, however, are overstated and not reflective of recent realities. The last three decades have seen India integrate and embed itself within the international order, a development largely a function of India's stellar economic rise. Interdependence has generated convergence but not necessarily compliance. Broadly, the nature of India's multilateral engagement has fundamentally shifted, reflecting India's economic ascent that has widened core interests. From the early 1990s, Indian negotiators have become strategic, looking to cut deals, making compromises when necessary and avoiding pledges that appear as constraints. Looking ahead, India should help address global challenges when doing so redounds to the benefit of India's economic transformation writ large and forswear commitments that constrain the latter. A strategic sense of multilateral engagement comes through when we consider India's policies in three areas – climate change, trade and maritime security.

# Climate Change-related Interests: From Inaction to Action

India's stances at climate negotiations have remained largely consistent. India has advanced a politics of equity that decisively influenced how global climate discussions allocate mitigation responsibilities anchored on incumbent levels of development. Developed countries, for India, held greater burdens in terms of reducing the impacts of climate change. Delhi relentlessly defended this notion until the 2000s when pressures accompanying India's economic growth compelled New Delhi to revise its foundational climate policy to accept certain obligations. The shift, however, was nominal; the new policy emphasis was to make India more flexible to carbon concessions given rising climate vulnerabilities to India's coastline, energy usage and economic bottom line. Growth has reoriented India's climate interests toward action, not inaction; these shifts have produced a new <climate identity> that allows India to shed its climate naysayer tag by internalizing and enacting climate obligations that generate co-benefits – both economic and climate. India's concessions at the Paris Agreement in 2015 indicate some continuity exemplified by a desire to accept obligations that are «nationally determined». At this year's United Nations General Assembly, Prime Minister Modi reaffirmed India's commitment to fulfil its nationally determined contributions (NDC). The Modi government has instituted robust energy efficiency policies that ensure India's emissions meet the Paris target of capping temperature increases to 1.5 degrees Celsius despite plans to build more coal plants. India's focus on renewable energy through its leadership of the International Solar Alliance (ISA) serves as an alternate pathway to deter harmful climate impacts. India's multilateral climate agenda springs out of targeted domestic climate initiatives. That said, India's climate differentiation tack persists; the strategy is still used to rebuff unequal climate pledges since development is the prism through which climate targets are accepted.

## India's Stance on Trade: Between Conditional Liberalization and Protectionism

Like climate, India's trade postures have liberalized since the late 1980s driven by rational considerations focused on securing market concessions where India has a competitive advantage like trade in services. Since the Uruguay round, Indian negotiators have relied on preferential and multilateral trade agreements to secure markets for Indian services exports, namely information technology and highly skilled professionals. India's open-minded attitude for trade is less evident when it comes to merchandise goods which continue to remain uncompetitive. These industries remain highly protected by New Delhi; not only do industries like manufacturing and agriculture receive sops from the government, Indian trade officials tussle to extract sufficient safeguards at trade negotiations that presumably give Indian firms time to become more competitive before market

protections ebb. India's recent decision to withdraw from the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership agreement (RCEP) is partly attributable to the inability to obtain sufficient safeguards against Chinese imports that would have flooded the Indian market had India signed RCEP. Protectionist instincts remain. The struggles of Indian manufacturing and agriculture and successes of the Indian software industry produce a trade policy that is both protectionist and free. India will bat for a freer multilateral trading system when market concessions generate net benefits for all domestic interest groups, a seemingly difficult outcome in the best of times. India will also resist trade agreements that expand the trade remit to cover issues like e-commerce, labor and environmental standards that require regulatory harmonization between countries. A key question going ahead will be how multilateral trade regimes like the WTO deal with countries like India that is an economic powerhouse but also a developing country that confronts massive challenges related to poverty and underdevelopment. Should advanced industrialized countries give necessary flexibilities and exemptions to India, despite its systemic impact and size, India will be inclined to reject calls for protectionism. Liberalization is conditional and phased for New Delhi.

## Comporting Visions and Joint Activities in the Indo-Pacific

India has also emerged as a key actor on the maritime security front. Factors driving India's interest and involvement across the Indian Ocean range from growing strategic competition among major powers, piracy, illegal fishing, humanitarian disasters and the need to keep sea lanes open for oil and commercial trade. New Delhi remains concerned about Chinese naval activity in the Indian ocean; India's <Indo-Pacific> vision comports with that of the EU and United States particularly regarding China. The Indian ocean had largely been devoid of strategic competition and conflict which allowed India to ignore the littoral; instead, a largely stable maritime environment enabled New Delhi to focus on continental security threats. Those days are over. Yet, despite a clear interest and desire in securing the Indian Ocean, mechanisms India has relied on, and invested in, have been bilateral not multilateral. We still lack a truly effective regional organization in the Indian Ocean. Coordination gaps between the Indian Ocean Rim Organization (IORA) and Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) have left participating countries unsure of how they can collectively mobilize against security threats. Both regional bodies have focused on enhancing cooperation when disasters and accidents occur while building regional maritime surveillance capacity. To fill the void, India has used bilateral and trilateral frameworks, particularly joint naval exercises, with countries like the United States, Australia, Singapore and France for strategic signaling. These exercises allow New Delhi to demonstrate her willingness to respond to China's naval forays and challenge Beijing's coercive ambitions across the Indian Ocean. India will likely rely on bilateral defense partnerships with powers like the US and France, that form one part of a larger military relationship, to



advance its core security interests instead of helping create a rules-based structure for maritime governance around the Indian ocean that could have an enduring impact.

## Multilateralism for Strategic and National Interests

India's multilateral approach is not obstructionist nor is it driven by a desire to impede multilateral efforts to address salient global challenges. In an era when global governance is characterized by gridlock and competing visions of international order, India will not automatically choose to uphold the liberal international system that has enabled its rise. What we should expect from India is a strategic multilateralism where domestic interests influence and drive whether and how it helps address issues like climate change, protectionism and maritime insecurity. But there is one silver lining – with sustained economic growth, India's interests and stakes within the international order will deepen which will leave New Delhi little choice but work with ideologically like-minded partners like the United States and the European Union to ensure the international order remains open and stable. But that outcome, I suspect, will be no less contentious or burdensome.

*Sithembile Mbete*

# South Africa's Successes in Forming Alliances for Multilateralism in the United Nations Security Council

## A Divided and Uncertain World Order

The rule-based multilateral order is facing its greatest threat since the Second World War, with the rise of chauvinistic nationalism across the world. Under President Donald Trump, the United States has all but abandoned its role as guarantor of the liberal international world order. The UK's vote to leave the EU (Brexit) and the growth of right wing populism across Europe is contributing to a decline in the currency of democracy and global human rights discourse. China is entrenching its position as the new superpower and Vladimir Putin's Russia has put great power rivalry back on the international agenda. In rising powers of the Global South, India and Brazil, right-wing nationalist governments have taken power with destructive policies on citizenship and the environment respectively.

In this fractious and uncertain context, Africa remains the site of multiple intractable violent conflicts increasingly fueled by climate change and the fight for resources. Yet, Africa is also a region that is strengthening its commitment to multilateralism through the African Continental Free Trade Agreement ratified in 2019 and efforts by the African Union (AU) at bringing peace to countries in conflict. As a continent made up of small and medium sized states, multilateral cooperation is the best way for African states to benefit from the global order. They do not have the power to act individually to achieve their interests so they need international organizations to combine with other states to achieve their goals. South Africa is no exception.

South Africa identifies itself as representing Africa and acting as a bridge-builder between the global North and South. Rules-based multilateralism and promotion of the rule of law are high on the list of priorities in South Africa's foreign policy. This is a legacy of the anti-apartheid struggle. It was through the initiative of small countries in the UN that the struggle against apartheid was able to become the greatest human rights campaign in human history. South Africa was first brought onto the General Assembly agenda by India in 1946 and from the 1960s it was newly independent African states, like Ghana and Nigeria, which maintained the anti-apartheid struggle in the United Nations (UN). South Africa's commitment to multilateralism is consistent with its broader commitment to democratize global governance and create a more just and equitable world order.

Given the current assault on the rules-based order, South Africa has entrenched its promotion of multilateralism through the various multilateral organizations in which it plays an

active part, including the African Union, G20, BRICS, India-Brazil-South Africa Dialogue Forum (IBSA) and the UN. Since January 2019, the country has held an elected seat in the UN Security Council (UNSC); its third time in this position. Its actions as part of the UNSC are the main focus of this paper. South Africa has used its tenure in the UNSC to promote multilateralism in three main areas. First, it has mobilized the elected ten members (E10) by encouraging regular meetings and cooperation on the intractable issues in the UNSC agenda. Second, it has pursued consensus in difficult issue areas; and third, it has pursued its agenda of increasing cooperation between the UN and regional organizations in terms of Chapter VIII of the UN Charter. These will be discussed below.

## Mobilizing Cooperation among E10 Members

The shifts in global power dynamics are starkly illustrated by the increasing difficulty in passing consensus resolutions in the UNSC. In 2019, three resolutions have failed because of vetoes. Of the 52 resolutions passed, eight have received fewer than 15 votes. This is in sharp contrast to 2009 where only 3 non-consensus resolutions were passed. For 20 years after the end of the Cold War there was a shift towards consensus decision-making in the Council. Consensus decisions gave the Security Council the appearance of legitimacy because the individual five permanent members cooperated with the majority instead of using their structural power to enforce their particular perspective or interests.

The increased use of the veto and failure to get consensus decisions reflects the return of great power rivalry and division in the Council. Divisions among great powers in the UNSC threaten the ability to resolve any issues on the agenda but they present an opportunity to the elected members to influence decision-making through cooperation.

In November 2018, South Africa co-hosted a workshop with Sweden for the incoming, current and outgoing elected ten members of the UNSC in Pretoria (E10 – Incumbent E10 members in 2018 were Bolivia, Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, the Netherlands, Peru, Poland and Sweden. The incoming members were Belgium, the Dominican Republic, Germany, Indonesia and South Africa). Participants at the workshop, including Germany, discussed opportunities and challenges for E10 cooperation and the role elected members could play in an increasingly divided UNSC. Such cooperation has continued with South Africa regularly coordinating with other E10 members both in New York and Pretoria. This E10 diplomacy has yielded some successes including the consensus passage of Resolution 2493 on Women, Peace and Security.

By engaging in regular cooperation South Africa seeks to build new alliances to maintain and strengthen the rules-based order by circumventing the power politics of the P5 where possible. Germany is one of the countries that South Africa engages with regularly to find areas of cooperation in the UNSC. The agenda on Women, Peace and Security is one of the main areas of cooperation between Germany and South Africa. South Africa advocated for resolution 2467 on conflict-related sexual violence, which was adopted during the German

presidency of the UNSC in April 2019. Germany, in turn, strongly supported Resolution 2493, which was passed during South Africa's presidency of the UNSC in October 2019.

## Pursuing Consensus in Difficult Issue-Areas

The process of negotiations on Resolution 2493, illustrates the second aspect of South Africa's promotion of multilateralism, which is pursuing consensus on difficult issues.

Resolution 2493 was passed on 29 October during the UNSC's annual debate on women, peace and security (WPS). South Africa drafted the resolution and led the long, difficult negotiations to get the resolution passed. The resolution's aim was to focus on the «full implementation» of the WPS agenda including protection of women's sexual and reproductive health rights and women human rights defenders in conflict. The United States opposed the wording on «full» implementation of the WPS agenda because of its implicit reference to sexual and reproductive health. China and Russia opposed explicit language on protecting women human rights defenders in the resolution. Many civil society observers were wary that any resolution passed would be so diluted as to risk rolling back the progress made so far on the WPS agenda. However, South Africa managed to navigate the fractious political environment in the Council for the resolution to pass unanimously. The resolution presents progress in committing UN members to women's participation in all stages of peace processes and in creating safe and enabling environments for civil society organizations that protect and promote human rights to carry out their work independently.

The strongly worded statements of member states in the debate following the vote on the resolution highlighted the divisions within the Council. P5 members were especially critical of each other's opposing positions. Importantly, the debate also included statements and interventions by women from countries in conflict, which is part of South Africa's efforts to strengthen multilateralism by including civil society in UNSC deliberations. Despite the bruising negotiations on Resolution 2493, the successful passage of the resolution contributed to rebuilding consensus in the Council on the WPS agenda and demonstrates that it is possible to cooperate on contentious issues within the Council.

## Increasing Cooperation between the UN and Regional Organizations

The third way that South Africa is promoting multilateralism is through its focus on greater cooperation between the UN and AU in terms of chapter VIII of the UN Charter. Chapter VIII of the UN Charter offers provision for regional arrangements in the maintenance of international peace and security in line with the principles and purposes of the UN.

Article 53 allows enforcement action to be taken by regional arrangements with authorization by the Security Council (UN Charter). This has been a key focus area for the country in all its terms in the UNSC. In 2008, South Africa succeeded in institutionalizing annual meetings between the UNSC and the African Union Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) that alternate between New York and Addis Ababa. Given that the majority of country-specific issues on the UNSC agenda are in Africa, the continent's leaders aim for the UNSC to include the AUPSC in its decision-making, provide logistical and material support for peace missions and allow Africans to take leadership on African peace and security issues. When the AU was formed in 2002, the AUPSC was established as a collective security and early-warning body to manage responses to conflict in Africa.

South Africa has sought to formalize the relationship between the UNSC and the AUPSC to prevent contestation over mandates and authority. The 13th Annual Joint Consultative Meeting between the members of the UNSC and AUPSC and the 4th Informal Seminar between the two Councils took place from 21-23 October 2019. South Africa also co-led (with the United States) a visit to Juba, South Sudan, to engage with the parties in conflict there on the formation of a transitional government in terms of the peace process. South Africa's active support of cooperation between the UN and the AU serves to strengthen the rules-based order by institutionalizing multilateral decision making through regular meetings and development of rules of engagement.

## Forming Alliances for Multilateralism

While multilateralism is under threat, the preceding discussion of South Africa's actions in the UNSC demonstrates that deliberate effort to practice multilateral ways of engagement can succeed to achieve consensus in major issues on the global agenda. Forming alliances with like-minded states, taking the risk to pursue consensus on contentious issues, involving civil society and engaging regional organizations are all tactics that South Africa has used to promote rules-based multilateralism. South Africa has a great opportunity to continue this work in 2020 when it will hold the chair of the AU, while still serving in the UNSC. It will also hold the position of President of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN), which is mandated to advance Africa's shared priorities on climate change. It can use these positions to further form partnerships with like-minded states to strengthen multilateralism and promote stability in world order.

Germany will also hold a regional leadership position in 2020 as EU Council President from July to December. This presents a great opportunity for cooperation with South Africa on major issues in global governance. Chief among these is climate change, whose devastating effects are already being felt in extreme weather events across the world, like the wildfires ravaging Australia. South Africa itself is experiencing an increasing frequency of heat-waves, bush fires and droughts. Germany and South Africa could work together to strengthen multilateral mechanisms of climate governance to achieve the goals of the Paris

Agreement. The development and funding of climate change mitigation and adaptation measures for African countries is an area in which the two countries could cooperate in their respective leadership positions. Both Germany and South Africa have stated their commitment to assisting developing countries to adapt and respond to climate change as well as to develop their economies in a sustainable way.

South Africa's approach of bringing together both like-minded and opposing states in dialogue about contentious issues on the international agenda is difficult but it has yielded some success in the UNSC. This approach could be adapted to address some of the major issues on the agenda in 2020 including taking decisive action on climate change in light of crises such as the wild fires in Australia, calming tensions in the Middle East and mitigating the effects of rising inequality and economic stress on populations across the world.

# PART III – ZOOMING IN: POLICY ISSUES

# Reforming the World Trade Organization

The World Trade Organization (WTO), which had already suffered some serious losses in credibility due to the persistent deadlocks of the Doha Development Agenda, has received an even worse battering in recent years. President Trump has described it as «the single worst deal ever made» and has threatened to withdraw from the organization. Its rules have been bypassed as trade wars have escalated. Even its Dispute Settlement Mechanism (DSM) – often regarded as the organization's pride and joy – has been paralysed. Is there any reason to hope for a successful reform and rescue of this still youthful organization,<sup>[1]</sup> and the values of a rules-based trade multilateralism that underpin it?

## Identifying the Problems

First, and the most important point to note, is that many of the problems facing the WTO run deep, and pre-date the arrival of the Trump administration on the scene.<sup>[2]</sup> Recall for instance, the Doha Development Agenda (DDA), which was launched in 2001 amidst much hope and was scheduled for completion in 2005; in reality, the negotiations have been dogged by deadlock, with the first major breakdown having already occurred in 2003 at the Cancun Ministerial. Recall further that although it is fashionable to blame Trump for the crisis of multilateralism, the turn away from multilateralism and towards regionalism actually began under the Obama administration. Recall even further that although the DSM faces a new low (thanks to the refusal of the Trump administration to appoint/ reappoint members of the Appellate Body), the practice of blocking judges is not new *per se*. Pressures on the Appellate Body go back to the second George W. Bush administration, while the first actual block occurred under the Obama administration.<sup>[3]</sup> Trump and his administration have poured petrol on the fire, but that fire was already lit some time ago. So it is wishful thinking to assume that if Trump loses in the election, the problems of the WTO will vanish away.

Second, the problems facing trade multilateralism are several, and affect all three pillars of the WTO: negotiation, dispute settlement, and transparency. The negotiation function of the WTO has been deadlocked for years now; the round now survives in an ignoble mode,

**1** 1 January 2020 marks the 25th anniversary of the WTO.

**2** I made this point also in Amrita Narlikar. «A Trade War on the Poor: How a collapse of the WTO would hurt the worst-off.» *Foreign Affairs*, 5 March 2018.

**3** James Bacchus. «Might unmakes Right: The American Assault on the Rule of Law in World Trade.» *CIGI Paper No. 173*, May 2018.



neither living nor dead. The DSM – sometimes even regarded as an alternative route to reaching agreements through jurisprudence, when the negotiations themselves were flailing in the early years of the DDA<sup>[4]</sup> – is also in serious crisis. With the US having blocked all new appointments and reappointments, only one judge remains in the Appellate Body since 10 December. This means that countries could deliberately refer cases to panels, knowing that there is no appeals process via the Appellate Body, and thereby let disputes lie unresolved in limbo. The third function of the WTO – transparency – operates via the Trade Policy Review Mechanism (TPRM). This function is perhaps the least damaged of the three. But it also has its fair share of problems that include non-notification by members, controversies on the reach of the reviews and monitoring reports, and polarisation within the membership on how these issues should be dealt with. This dysfunction in all three pillars of the WTO is serious enough a problem in its own right, but acquires even greater importance in a context of raging trade wars outside. As report after report shows, trade is declining – and while the decline affects different countries and groups within them in different ways, there is no question that the pie of global prosperity is getting smaller.

## The Reform Debate

The danger that the WTO faces is serious. But we have reason for some optimism, thanks to a rich repertoire of reform proposals that are coming from different sides and address all three functions of the organization. This vibrancy of the reform debate is already a positive development, and stands out in contrast to the soporific dullness that had been induced by the Doha stalemates in the organization and among its membership for many years.

Amidst the reform proposals that are already on the table, curious alignments are emerging. For example, a closer look at the [substance of the critique offered by the US](#) as well as its [detailed proposals presented in Geneva](#) point to more constructive engagement with the WTO than Trump's angry tweets suggest. In advancing its reform agenda, the US has insisted on a sharpened differentiation within the group of countries that self-identify as developing countries to prevent misuse of Special and Differential Treatment (SDT); a reform of the Dispute Settlement Mechanism, and especially the «approach» of the Appellate Body including issues of «overreach»; new rules to address the unfair advantage accruing to countries due to the abuse of current rules on subsidies, definitions of state-owned enterprises and so forth; and improvements of the transparency function that would require better incentives to ensure compliance of notification obligations. And although the US has been particularly robust in its critique and insistent with its demands, it is certainly not alone in highlighting these problems. [The European Union](#), Canada, and others have come up with comprehensive proposals, which seek to address many of the issues that the

**4** Markus Gehring. «Litigating the way out of deadlock.» In: *Deadlocks in Multilateral Negotiations: Causes and Solutions*, Amrita Narlikar (ed.), 2018, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

US has also been raising; the US, EU, and Japan have also presented joint papers that illustrate their shared position on several of these subjects.<sup>[5]</sup> Taken together, these diverse proposals offer ways to strengthen the WTO – not weaken it – and guard against an exploitation of loopholes in the system. Amidst all the problems that the organisation is encountering, the shared concerns and joint/ overlapping proposals offer some fertile ground for an agenda of sustainable reform.

The differences among the members are just as important as the overlaps in some positions. Not all the disagreements can be easily reconciled, at least not in the short-run. But this makes the politics of reform all the more interesting. On the issue of the Appellate Body, although all members seem to agree on the principle of reform, there is a major division between the US and the rest. The US insists that the fundamental issue of the «approach» of the Appellate Body must be addressed first, whereas multiple *other players* have been hard at work trying to find interim solutions. Although this standoff is probably unlikely to get resolved under the current Trump administration, the situation may look different post US elections in 2020. This is why even stopgap measures, such as *the EU-Canada-led initiative for a parallel process under Article 25* of the Dispute Settlement Understanding, may be useful to keep the system running. On SDT, the fault-lines are drawn *across a group of developing countries* versus the US (backed by the EU, and other developed as well as some developing countries). Here, through a mix of technical solutions (that introduce some nuance and flexibility into the system, while tightening it against abuse) and political effort (particularly through a «de-hyphenation» of China and India – an example where through a crude categorisation of «ChIndia» as one, EU, US and others have helped build an avoidable alliance against themselves), compromise may be possible.<sup>[6]</sup>

## Gaps in the Current Debate

The richness of the discussion notwithstanding, there are two gaps that are serious enough to render even the most convincing proposals ineffective.

The first problem relates to the lack of wider narrative on the value of trade multilateralism (and why people should care about this), that is missing from the reform debate. I cannot emphasise the costs of this missing narrative enough because there are large groups of people who believe that the gains of globalisation have passed them by. These include Mr

**5** Communication from Canada: JOB/GC/201, JOB/GC/211; Joint statement on trilateral meeting of the trade ministers of the US, Japan, and the European Union on 31 May 2018 & 25 September 2018.

**6** I thank Samir Saran for encouraging me to think about the unintended adverse consequences of the «hyphenation» of China and India.

Trump's supporters, as well as those on the extreme Right and Left in Europe – and indeed even the moderate Right and Left representing different ideologies around the centre. The job losses that these groups face, the personal adversities that they suffer, indeed the growing inequalities that they see in their societies, are often a result of several factors: weak welfare mechanisms and technological change, for instance. But trade is an easier scapegoat, and one that is readily used also by politicians – and it is easier to blame one's trade partners for the inadequacies of one's own economy. Even if the members of the WTO and the Secretariat were to come up with a perfect technocratic solution to some of the problems, their efforts would be to no avail if they fail to explain to affected electorates why and how these solutions will help improve their lives.

Take, for example, the case of the Trade Monitoring reports, which the WTO has been mandated to do since 2009. These are helpful, objective, solid pieces of work. The reports have been showing that since mid-October 2017, early protectionist rhetoric has turned into actual trade restrictions. Even though trade tensions have been limited to major trading partners, forecasts for the global economy are discouraging. But this is still information at a very general level. And the fact that trade is declining might even be wrongly interpreted by people as a positive development – especially those people who believe a counter-narrative that scapegoats trade for the job losses and economic hardships that they personally endure. A persuasive narrative must address the so-what question – e.g. what the figures mean for people.<sup>[7]</sup> Were the reports to have a clear and accessible narrative running through them, they would not only get picked up more by relevant stakeholders but also create positive feedback loops back into the negotiation and implementation processes. Such stakeholders naturally include business groups, but also other groups from civil society, trade unions, and members of the public at large.

The second problem is even more fundamental, and relates to a changing context of geoeconomics or economic statecraft.<sup>[8]</sup> There is some attention within the current reform debate on China's state-owned enterprises, technology transfer requirements etc., but it seems to miss a bigger point: The WTO belongs to the same cluster of institutions – including the EU – that were built in the post-war years on the assumption that increasing trade liberalization and integration would automatically lead to peace. The WTO was not built for a world where we would see a *weaponization of economic gains* – the use of the benefits accruing from trade liberalization to acquire a strategic advantage in security matters. If trade liberalization *could* potentially be used by possible systemic rivals to gain a security edge over us, then we need to be having a bigger and serious conversation about a new set

**7** On how to build sustainable and winning narratives, see: Amrita Narlikar. *Poverty Narratives and Power Paradoxes in International Trade Negotiations and beyond*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, May 2020.

**8** For pioneering work in this area, see: Farrell, Henry and Abraham Newman. «Weaponized Interdependence: How Global Economic Networks Shape Global Coercion.» *International Security*, vol. 44, no. 1, 2019, pp. 42–79.

of rules. This new set of rules would cordon off not only certain measures (such as certain subsidies) but also certain areas from trade liberalization – particularly those areas where there are direct security implications (such as digital technology). In these areas, the raising of protectionist barriers would be allowed. This could, for example, result in some decoupling from China (limiting trade and/or cooperation). Decoupling, or economic disengagement, would generate some economic costs, no doubt. But these economic costs could be balanced by security gains.

A group of like-minded countries – for instance via the Alliance for Multilateralism (as advanced by the German Foreign Minister, Heiko Maas) – could take a lead in addressing the concern that many countries share. But to do this effectively, the alliance would have to develop more of an ideational spine. It would need to identify the first-order values that members could collectively stand for (e.g. pluralism, liberalism, rule of law), and relate these to trade issues – for instance on the matter of state-owned enterprises. This will not be an easy task, not least because Europe itself is deeply divided on these issues, as shown by the 17+1 initiative (involving cooperation China plus Central and Eastern European countries on the Belt and Road Initiative). But it is a necessary one.

Failure to address this issue head on could have devastating consequences for the WTO: if we fail to identify a limited set of areas where protectionism is allowed and legitimised, we will likely end up with a scenario of a complete securitization of trade – where countries are able to put up trade barriers on just about everything, all under the pretext of security. If this does happen, we would see a much bigger disruption of global value chains – in contrast to limited losses caused by a controlled decoupling that the WTO could help regulate (if it acts in a timely way). Under this breakdown scenario, we would all lose out – and the poorest and the weakest would likely suffer the most.

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*Deborah Sanders*

# Cooperation Between European Small Navies in the Black Sea: Potential for Alternative Naval Operations

Since the illegal annexation of the Crimea by the Russian Federation in 2014, the Black Sea has become an increasingly contested, confrontational and challenging maritime domain. Not only does Russia now share a de-facto maritime border with NATO in the Black Sea, there is also growing concern that Russia is seeking to transform the Black Sea, along with the Sea of Azov, into virtual internal waterways, where it can have unfettered and unchallenged maritime control.

To address Russia's attempts to exert its power in the Black Sea, NATO member states have significantly increased their naval presence operations; what are termed by the US <Freedom of Navigation Operations> (FONOPS). FONOPS consist of naval operations designed to support freedom of the seas where there has been an attempt to unlawfully restrict the freedoms of navigation and overflight and other lawful uses of the sea (<Annual Freedom of Navigation Report, Fiscal Year 2018>, US Department of Defense, Report to Congress, 31 December 2018). FONOPS are therefore a particular and very specific form of maritime presence operations. In the first six months of 2019 six US warships conducted maritime operations in the Black Sea demonstrating what Vice Admiral Lisa Franchetti, the US 6th Fleet Commander, described as the *US's <dedication to freedom of navigation and our commitment to NATO allies and partners in the Black Sea>*. During 2019 NATO's Standing Naval Forces also conducted *three patrols in the Black Sea*, spending 20 days in July visiting Bulgaria, Ukraine and participating in exercises Breeze and Sea Breeze. Unlike FONOPS these more general maritime presence operations conducted by NATO member states are less explicitly about freedom of navigation, although this an important element of these operations, and more about reassuring allies and capacity building.

In theory, FONOPS and the more generic maritime presence operations in the Black Sea might be regarded as relatively benign operations. In practice, NATO and, in particular, US FONOPS have a range of unintended negative consequences in that they can create a security dilemma: these operations are perceived by Russia as threatening Moscow's interests; Russia then responds by further increasing its aggressive rhetoric, posturing and action; this further exacerbates insecurity in an already tense region. The problem is that FONOPS by their very nature are focused and adversarial. The aim is to send a message to a particular state. Given the requirement to reassure NATO members and partners, this paper examines whether there are alternatives to FONOPS in the Black Sea.

In order to address this question, this paper is divided into three parts. The first part examines how Russia's actions since the annexation have led to a significantly increase in NATO FONOPS in the region. The second part looks briefly at the current NATO FONOPS responses and the counter security dynamic. The third part discusses a number of possible alternatives to NATO-led FONOPS in the Black Sea.

## Russia's Actions in the Black Sea

The first and most important reason for the expansion of NATO FONOPS in the Black Sea has been the significant *increase in Russia's military superiority* and its subsequent ability and *determination to project maritime power* in the region. Additionally, there has also been a significant increase in conflict at sea.<sup>[1]</sup> In *November 2018, the attack and seizure* by the Russian coast guard, of three Ukrainian naval ships and 24 sailors (recently released) heading from Odessa to the port of Mariupol demonstrated Russia's willingness to use its maritime power to ensure its control of the Sea of Azov.

## NATO Responses

In light of increased tensions, and to reassure NATO allies and partners, NATO members have increased the number of FONOPS in the Black Sea.<sup>[2]</sup>

There are, however, limits to NATO's FONOPS in the Black Sea. Despite calls by the former President of Ukraine, Petro Poroshenko, for a NATO naval presence in the Sea of Azov, NATO has not extended its FONOPS into this enclosed sea. The Sea of Azov is an inland, semi-enclosed sea and is governed by an agreement signed between Russia and Ukraine in 2003 in which it is designated an internal waterway, and forbids any foreign warship from entering without the consent of both states. As such the straits and the body of water it leads to are controlled by both Russia and Ukraine; any NATO FONOPs would lack legitimacy and perhaps, more importantly, be seen as highly provocative by Moscow. For NATO members there are also both practical and strategic costs of operations: There have been a number of well documented and *increasingly aggressive Russian intercepts* of NATO ships and aircraft operating in international waters or airspace over the Black Sea engaged in presence operations. These incidents significantly increase the chances of an unintended military escalation. This problem can be compounded because FONOPS can often be viewed as a relatively low-level and benign mode of naval power, a belief that can lead to

**1** «Ukraine weekly views reason for Russia's Azov Sea blockade.» *Fokus Kiev*, 3 August 2018, as reported on BBC Monitoring online.

**2** «House Resolution 116.» 116th Congress, 1st Session of the House of Representatives, 8 February 2019.

insufficient consideration of possible second and third-order effects, and under-developed strategies to cope with unforeseen consequences. At the same time, the benefits of FONOPS are difficult to quantify in objective terms, since such outcomes as <reassurance> and <deterrence> are inherently difficult to measure. Thus, as well as generating operational security concerns, NATO FONOPS also create unintended negative security implications and exacerbate an already strained relationship with the Russian Federation.

## Potential Alternative Naval Operations in the Black Sea?

Given these security challenges, what is the future of FONOPS in the Black Sea? One approach adopted by NATO has been to shift operational environments – from the sea to the air. NATO's Air Policing South mission is a recognition of the importance of safeguarding the integrity of NATO airspace over the Black Sea.<sup>[3]</sup> The setting up of NATO's enhanced Air Policing in Romania demonstrates alliance solidarity and joint force, sends a clear deterrent message without the practical security costs and risks involved in maritime based FONOPS.

While FONOPS have traditionally been led by blue water or medium sized navies, a more innovative approach might be to include smaller navies in maritime presence operations. The inclusion of smaller navies or even a maritime presence operation made up of and led by smaller European navies would continue to provide the tangible benefits of having ships at sea but could go some way to mitigate the escalation-prone dynamic currently in operation in the Black Sea. While the use of smaller navies would still send a political message of support to NATO members and allies in the Black Sea, it could reduce the risk of escalation as smaller European states navies are ultimately seen as less threatening than the US Navy in particular. Examples might include Belgium, Greece, Spain and Portugal.

The use of smaller European navies, particularly those who are not NATO members, could also help in creating a less threatening environment. For instance, a maritime presence operation led by, the Irish Naval Service (INS) would have all of the benefits and a lot fewer risks.<sup>[4]</sup> The use of what might be seen as more neutral European state navies would demonstrate European commitment to this theatre with less risk of antagonizing the Russian Federation. Other non-NATO navies could be used in this role including perhaps Finland, and Malta. The Maltese Maritime Squadron would, however, need considerable support to operate in the Black Sea as they have very limited maritime capabilities.

**3** George Allison. «Italian Air Force conducts first NATO intercept in Romania.» *UK Defence Journal*, 16 June 2019.

**4** McCabe, Robert, Deborah Sanders and Ian Speller (eds.). *Europe, Small Navies and Maritime Security*. Routledge, 2019.

The adoption of <local solutions to local problems>, could be another alternative approach to NATO FONOPS in the Black Sea. This strategy would encourage the Black Sea littoral states to work more closely together in the maritime domain through the reactivation of the two key maritime security operations that have traditionally played an important role in confidence building prior to the Russian annexation in 2014. Turkey should be encouraged to take the lead in reactivating Operation Black Sea Harmony, a Turkish led regional maritime security operation undertaken by Black Sea littoral states, set up to address terrorism and asymmetric threats in the Black Sea, and so perform the equivalent of maritime presence operations. Romania and Bulgaria could be encouraged to reactivate BLACKSEAFOR as a vehicle for increasing NATO members' maritime cooperation with the two NATO partners in the Black Sea.

An additional alternative to FONOPS would be for European states to further increase their support for the development of maritime capabilities of the Black Sea littoral states. Support for the Ukrainian navy could be a complementary means of allowing the development of <local solutions to local problems> in the Sea of Azov. NATO members have consistently demonstrated their support for the rebuilding of the Ukrainian navy. In December 2018, the US state department announced its support for the development of Ukraine's naval capabilities with \$10 million in foreign military financing. The United Kingdom (UK) has also [\*pledged to support and mentor the Ukrainian Navy\*](#) and has deployed training teams from the Royal Navy, Royal Marines and Army.

A more innovative approach might be to think about the Black Sea maritime environment in a much wider and more inclusive sense. For instance, European support for the development of a deep-water port in Anaklia in Georgia. This could prove particularly important as Russia is also building its own [\*deep-water port in the Kerch Strait\*](#). Investment and support for this stalled project would encourage trade in the Black Sea and ultimately reduce Russian dominance. In addition, the EU and key member states could speed up the development of the blue economy of the Black Sea states as a means of reducing tension in the long term. A strategy focused on encouraging trade, addressing common environmental issues and promoting tourism in the region would encourage the multilateral use of the sea in non-adversarial ways.

A final alternative approach to FONOPS would be to build a European maritime alliance for multilateralism in the Black Sea. The UK, France and Germany, three key European states with important interests in the Black Sea, should work closely together to take the lead in this area. This could involve maritime presence operations by their combined navies, support for smaller navies and regional maritime security initiatives discussed above as well taking the lead in supporting the multilateral use of the sea in less adversarial ways. France and Germany in particular can play an important role in promoting a more peaceful region alongside the UK as both are signatures of the 2015 Minsk Agreement aimed at resolving the conflict in the east of Ukraine.



This paper has argued that there are a number of possible alternatives to FONOPS in the Black Sea which could go some way to alleviating practical and strategic security costs. While all of these solutions have their advantages and disadvantages, there is no real effective alternative to <boots on the ground> – maritime presence ultimately requires ships in theatre. Air operations and maritime capacity building of the Ukrainian and other NATO littoral members states navies are necessary, but not sufficient. Nonetheless, there could be an opportunity and impetus for the development of a new and more innovative approach to NATO FONOPS in the near future for a number of reasons. First, the US is likely to focus increasingly on domestic issues with the forthcoming impeachment proceedings against President Trump and the Presidential elections in 2020. This more domestic focus could shift Washington's attention away from the Black Sea – creating the space perhaps for a fresh and more innovative look at developing more inclusive, and what might be seen as less threatening, European maritime presence operations. Second, there is a high degree of <Ukraine fatigue> in many western capitals, although this has eased slightly with the election of President Zelensky earlier this year. Kyiv has struggled to address endemic corruption and engage in systematic economic and political reform. And lastly, there are also divisions within Europe as to how, and to what extent, NATO and the EU should engage with the Russian Federation. This debate has been particularly evident in ongoing debates amongst European states as to whether or not sanctions against Russia should be lifted.

*Susanne Dröge*

# Germany's Partners in International Climate Policy Governance

2020 will be yet another year of decisive steps for the implementation of the Paris Agreement. Climate policy governance at the international level builds upon the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its treaties. At the heart of the Paris Agreement (2015) is a revolving process of regular pledges on climate actions and finance by individual countries on the one hand, and reviews of climate protection targets and financial transfers every five years, on the other hand.

2020 is the first year where these processes are launched, but the prospects are bleak. The 25th Conference of the Parties (COP25), convened in Madrid in December 2019, illustrated the cleavages between particular groups of countries more clearly than before. The COP25, hosted by Chile, was meant to deliver on technical details (regulating international emissions trading) and to prepare for the first refreshment of the nationally determined contributions (NDCs) due in 2020. It delivered on neither of the two.

## The Climate Regime Depends on the Power of Leaders

The Paris Agreement was the result of a combined leadership effort across the board. The US-led diplomatic outreach brought in key countries such as China and India, supported a hesitant Japan, and offered US domestic ambitions and bilateral cooperation, for example on tackling air pollution in China. In the UNFCCC negotiations, China and India had dominated for many years a debate on fairness, and insisted on being part of the G77 developing countries group. Thus, despite their growing contribution to global warming, they refused to bring down their emissions pathways.

The European Union contributed to the Paris deal over several years by intensive cooperation with least developed countries and small island development states (SIDS). A key moment was the end of the COP18 2012 in Durban where more than 100 G77 developing countries stood behind the EU in demanding from India and China to agree on a new quality of international commitment to climate action. France, as the host of the COP21 in Paris 2015, applied its full scope of diplomatic skills to get hesitant countries to agree. Brazil was an important player too, acting as a leading regional climate diplomacy power of the Americas, together with Mexico.

These days are over. US President Donald Trump withdrew from the Paris Agreement in 2017, which will apply from November 2020. In 2017 China joined forces with the EU, Mexico and Canada to keep up the commitments and to lower the risk that the US

withdrawal could bring about for multilateral climate action. However, mainly due to the enormous diplomatic resources that the US power politics have been generally sucking out of the international system since then, China did not follow up. India, never a pro-active player in this field, fell silent. The Brazilian government, too, has turned its back on ambitious climate policy under Jair Bolsonaro. The EU remains, together with Mexico, Canada and the vulnerable countries, to breathe new life into the implementation agenda of global climate governance.

Three years into the tidal change, the search for committed climate partners has become more pressing and urgent than ever before. On the backdrop of US power politics, the EU has achieved only very little progress. The latest defeat could be witnessed at COP25 negotiations in Madrid, where the US, Saudi Arabia, Australia and Brazil did not agree to apply strict and transparent rules for international emissions trading. An [alliance of 31 countries](#), the «Unconventional Group» of ambitious countries, led by Costa Rica, set up the so-called St Jose Principles for reliable and strict regulations. In this group, Germany and France as well as 17 other European countries cooperate with six small island states, five Latin American countries and New Zealand. This kind of issue-driven coalition is very common in international climate governance.

## Germany in a Unique Position

Germany, as the initiator of the [Alliance for Multilateralism](#) that supports the United Nations system – up to date, however, without any explicit climate-related initiative – is in the unique position to further develop issue-specific formations. It should certainly not do this alone. Yet, 2020 holds ready a number of critical events. One of the key diplomatic tasks is to keep up the narrative of international climate cooperation, which is needed to back the survival of the Paris Agreement's core – while the big powers US and China are expected to continue their nationalist agendas, bilateral trade disputes, and security power games.

### Key Challenges for Germany's Climate Partnerships

Working with as many countries as possible on climate policy issues fosters the multilateral idea and makes the engagement for climate action credible. In the short and medium term this helps to enhance the political leverage to push for implementation of the Paris Agreement through using the power of large numbers. The UN system gives each country a voice and a vote, the guarantee for legitimacy. At the same time, it is weakened by the lack of majority decision making – as UNFCCC talks illustrate on a regular basis.

Things get more complicated when cooperation needs common interests in particular policy fields that relate to climate change. To name a few: investing in renewable energy supply, deal with climate impacts and risks, build capacities in good climate governance,

cooperation within critical institutions (Green Climate Fund, World Bank), investment in low-carbon infrastructure. This entails the need for a well-managed portfolio of common initiatives, regular exchanges on climate policy priorities, agenda setting for major meetings, diplomatic resources to prepare for decision making and implementation of agreed measures, and a division of tasks with equally ambitious partner countries in bringing forward the key ideas of climate governance.

Moreover, Germany and the EU, when engaging in most of the mid-sized partner countries, confront a situation where the big players undermine their agendas. The US for example exports coal and gas and promotes fossil fuels as a solution to energy poverty in Africa, Asia and Latin America. China supports such investment via its Belt and Road Initiative – which meanwhile reaches out to Eastern Europe. The Australian government invests in coal mining for world markets, regardless of the potential links to droughts and bushfires.

The US withdrawal brought about a more intense involvement of sub-national and non-state actors. The «*We are still in*» – initiative for example announced to follow up on the US-Paris pledge of 2015. The group consists of US states and municipalities, and private businesses. Similarly, the Brazilian parliament and civil society actors are helping to connect the international agenda with that of national communities. The international outcry about the Amazon fires in 2019 was a good example of how international attention can leave an impression on leaders.

## Taking the EU Center Stage

Germany will hold the EU Council presidency in the second half of 2020. This will be the time by which the new European Commission will have hoisted a new set of sails for EU climate action, the *Green Deal*. With a view to EU-led international climate governance progress, two countries will need full attention. First, Poland needs to be on board to agree in the European Council on the new EU-wide climate targets for 2030 and 2050, as both targets constitute new pledges for the Paris Agreement, due by end of 2020. A Green Deal package will have to include early offers to Eastern European member countries as they are very reluctant to agree to more climate ambitions. Second, the UK will be the key European country in 2020 for international negotiations, even if the Brexit seems to come in the way. As the physical host of the *COP26* (co-hosted with Italy, held in Glasgow), the UK will want to demonstrate that international climate diplomacy delivers on the Paris Agreement. The UK will need Germany, not only because Germany holds the EU presidency, but also because of Germany's long-standing expertise in contributing to international climate deals.

## Important, But Difficult: G20 and UN Security Council

The key actors to reduce emissions quickly are the twenty biggest economies (G20). They are responsible for around 80 per cent of global emissions, mostly because of their high

consumption and production of fossil fuels. However, the US, Russia, China, Saudi Arabia, Australia, Japan, and Argentina are no longer engaged in climate policy, or never really have been in a pro-active manner. The German government, during its G20 presidency in 2017, singled out the US in the G20 final declaration in an effort to address the US retreat from the Paris deal. Argentina (2018) and Japan (2019) did not follow up. For the time being, a return to this course can neither be expected when Saudi Arabia holds the presidency in 2020. Their announcement of «*Managing Emissions for Sustainable Development*» as part of the G20 agenda is vague; repeated blockages of key COP decisions under the UNFCCC show that Saudi Arabia is not backing an ambitious international agenda.

Nevertheless, Germany will have to work with these G20 partners. This refers in particular to the use of diplomatic resources to confront the heads of state with the pressing climate issue and with an outspoken request to return to the multilaterally agreed agenda.

Moreover, Germany has a non-permanent seat in the UN Security Council in 2019-2020 and is likely to connect this with the alliance for multilateralism, when holding an open debate on climate impacts and related security risks in July 2020. That month, Germany will hold the presidency of the Council. The open debate will highlight well-known effects from increasing global warming, and the severe disruptions of human security in regions with fragile statehood. The role of climate change as a risks multiplier has been recognized during the last years. Yet, the Security Council members do not all agree that this should be a matter to deal with from a security perspective. The SIDS are vulnerable because they are facing sea level rise on top of extreme weather events. Some African countries, for instance those in the Chad Lake region, are confronted with long-standing conflicts among ethnic groups, and a decades long decline in resources due to the shrinking lake. Terrorist groups have taken advantage these constellations. Some Asian countries suffer from increasing levels of melting water from the Himalaya glaciers, and from flooding from the oceans, taking away more and more land from the densely populated regions. Regular Security Council debates help these countries by raising awareness in times of increasing national interest among the big players.

However, the US, Russia and China – all are permanent members of the Security Council – are not willing to devote many resources to the topic. Germany will have to identify particular impacts from climate change to get them on board, for example handling risks from natural disasters that will affect them, too.

## Partners for Setting the 2020 Climate Policy Agenda

Germany can rely on a number of partner countries who have proven that they can build broad alliances. France and the UK are critical, as are the Scandinavian countries, Spain, Austria, the Netherlands and Belgium. Costa Rica and New Zealand stick out as alliance partners, both have proven that they can mobilize other countries to cooperate. New

Zealand will start in February a new trade initiative ([ACCTS](#)) that puts climate protection at its core. Singapore alike is an active player in the South East Asian region. The SIDS, represented for instance by the Marshall Islands, have been Germany's partners for years. Regarding the African continent, the search for partners is more complex, due to the dynamic trends comprising civil unrest, Chinese economic engagement, migratory pressures. For many years, Egypt has been speaking on behalf of the African Group in climate and environmental forums, South Africa remains a key player on the continent, Ghana has become more engaged recently. The cooperation with Canada and Mexico should become more fruitful. Last but not least, climate governance is only one side of the medal, the other is the implementation of climate policies. Thus, non-state actors and the key financial and economic institutions have an increasing role to play in building a case against the power politics that so strongly tug at the multilateral climate order.

# Climate Change and Environment Politics in Times of Transition

We are experiencing times of transition with the emergence of disruptive changes in the world we know. The era of Anthropocene – a concept still being constructed – bases on the geological understanding of the courses of life on the planet, transformed through human action. The assumption that human action is at the center of changes in the atmosphere and in the environment is increasingly accepted and raises awareness for the profound interconnection between Man and Nature. In the Anthropocene, everything is interconnected.<sup>[1]</sup> A better understanding of these interconnections provides the basis for constructing suitable narratives and dimensions to politics and society that address consequences for the natural environment. This understanding renders alliances on the international as well as (sub-)national level very important.

## Present and Growing Interconnectedness Require New Answers

Despite the lack of political or scientific consensus regarding the occurrence (or not) of a new geological/planetary Era, political discussions on the so-called global issues have gained new contours due to the challenges stemming from and encountered by our human population. The implementation of the Paris Agreement and shared responsibilities are more urgent than ever; since its establishment in 1992, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has rotated around multilateral negotiations, with much difficulty to formulate and assure commitments. Action by political constituencies and thematic clusters, such as on transnational challenges of migration, health, demography, biodiversity and shortage of (water) resources, have helped to incorporate contents that are broader and more challenging. Including these global topics contributes to the understanding of interconnectedness as well as the construction of holistic narratives in international dialogue.

The global governance system is no longer capable of providing the means and instruments necessary to facilitate the convergence of common interests. It is unable to construct a mission-oriented vision of the future, agreed upon globally and, still, capable of mobilizing effective action on the ground in the immediate-term. Both are urgent tasks for the current global governance system. The current multilateral system that attempts to address topics

**1** Kelly, Duncan. *Politics and the Anthropocene*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019.

such as climate change, international trade, international financial flows and global security is based on rules from a past century; though still legitimate and relevant, these rules need to align with the globalized, interdependent and interconnected system we presently live in. Societies and governments are already losing confidence in multilateral institutions once established due to their ineffectiveness and lack of adaptability.

The interconnectedness of transnational issues and the complexity of subsequent negotiations are further complicated through domestic bottlenecks: when dealing with the need for certain change and adaptation specific contours within each society are assumed and commonly oriented by economic (financial/commercial) motives. A progressive and transformative agenda to address social, environmental and technological inequalities as well as new ideas and access to routes of global transformation are often not in the focus. Additionally, change in individual and societal life as well as governing processes are complicated through processes defined by polarization of political positions, by the negation of science, by the weakening and erosion of multilateral norms and institutions. Progressive demands for democratization of processes to find and implement solutions as well as the necessity of dealing with the future neither as a work of fiction nor as a linear continuation of the present further challenges.

The changes in global order have setback previous achievements – such as progressive dialogue and movement on sustainability, gender and human rights, fair trade, human security and poverty eradication – that were oriented by the common international interest, even if not yet well defined, and positively impacted the multilateral system. The outcomes of contemporary changes are uncertain, but still highlight the necessity of advancements in economic security and in the reduction of social and ecologic inequalities, in order to reestablish trust in global institutions. In a world that is increasingly interconnected and interdependent, a new political and transformative relationship with nature is imperative if we wish to advance as global societies.

In the new political times of the Anthropocene or in the times of transition, what new stories can be told, that look towards the future and not are limited by solutions of the (recent) past, that include well-managed political and institutional arrangements or a better understanding of the deep and mutual connection between man and the natural environment?

## In Times of Transition: The Need to Include Sub-national Actors

Living in transition determines new political urgencies in relation to the future. However, it also means understanding the interactions between climate change, people and Nature. Facing global problems that already impact the current ways of life, the political structures



that represent rights and duties (individual and collective), besides the exercise of governing, suggests a demand for new arrangements and mechanisms, that not only respond to urgency, but address necessities of the present with longer-term visions.

These circumstances, taken as a whole, necessitate raising ambitions beyond already recognized and consolidated standards. The Paris Agreement and parameters adopted to design NDCs are consolidated tools by the international community to tackle climate change; they do not present thresholds of ambitions, however. In order to deal with the future, we should go beyond the established, connect political actors, create broad networks for agency and develop new consensuses in a diverse and multipolar international reality. The context of climate change is continuously changing; subsequent action to tackle the challenges need to adapt respectively.

Alliances can be sought on the basis of common interests; considering higher ambitions, however, partnerships do not necessarily involve only those who think or act in a converging manner. Rather, it is essential to build political spaces or networks dimensioned in the «realm of the improbable», to attempt «alliance of the unlikely». For example, actors from the energy sector, agriculture, infrastructure, trade and financial institutions need to be included as well, in dialogue, partnerships and commitments. They hold not only responsibilities, but also the keys to implementing change and preparing for the future. Broader involvement and participation will help to come up with pragmatic and innovative solutions, to establish new routes, political frameworks and new economic engagement to result in the low carbon transformation we need.

Furthermore, there are countries that are strategically important in the achievement of solutions and should not be excluded or marginalized because of extremist or «denialist» political positions defended by their governments. Brazil currently provides an example to this regard: The civil societies of such countries must be engaged and mobilized; for this, the international community needs to address these «new», sub-national players and create a multitude of spaces for dialogue and participation.

## For an Action-oriented Agenda: The Need to Involve Economic Constituencies

In terms of the science-based policy agenda to face climate change, it is urgent to reach a common understanding of an action-oriented agenda not only for the first implementation phase of the Paris Agreement, but also for the climate change emergency, for innovative strategies and institutional arrangements in the climate change global governance system. To raise national agency on climate policy actions and to prompt transformative changes, it seems important to evaluate the global climate change governance system and to take into consideration the new political and institutional requirements for acting (in the

aforementioned necessity for adaptation). It is essential to firmly engage the sectoral economic constituencies in charge of the decision-making processes responsible for cutting or not cutting greenhouse gases emissions by 2020, 2025 and 2030. The «behind the scenes players» that are responsible for the future of nationally determined contributions (NDCs) must be in the same room with the political climate players and agree on the new routes and political transformative drivers.

Climate change will seriously impact the global development agenda, the regional and national economic growth and trade arrangements, social needs and inequalities and global security. It seems unproductive, not sufficient and even unfair to address solutions today without engaging the players who have the power and the responsibility to change faster (or not) the directions of climate change. As observable recently in Madrid (COP 25), global civil society groups are moving in one direction while the political sphere seems to be going in the another. It is essential to understand what are the new demands after COP 25, the political and economic motivation and the players that should be charged with drafting the climate change mitigation agenda after 2020. It seems that mobilizing only the environmental political constituency as key players is not enough.

But it is also essential to consider if climate change could be one of those «wicked problems», that are too big for politics to «solve» (Kelly, 2019). Can the complex inter-relationships between the past (historical responsibilities), present (emerging economies and their actual carbon emissions) and future (shared-responsibilities) be addressed by current political systems that base on democratic decision making-processes? Why is it so difficult to mobilize a political coalition to tackle climate change based on agreed rules? It is imperative to better understand the impacts and to master disruptive technologies (like AI and 5G) that are already changing and will continue to change our economic system as well as way of life. It is imperative to avoid being/feeling trapped in a polarized world split between the USA and China, and to overcome geopolitical rivalries that render everyone worse off in this ever-increasingly interconnected world.

Last, but certainly not least, we need to engage the US and China now, in 2020. Considering greenhouse emissions in the past and in the present in order to tackle climate change until 2050, the USA and China need to be on board as well as be part of alliances for multilateralism, such as the one initiated by Germany and France. Additionally, regional alliances are urgently needed. Climate change is a matter of political judgment and action, as the natural sciences have already established the limits of 1.50C for the future. In order to reach out for new global partners to help advance multilateral approaches on climate change, we need to open the new gates of the action agenda – as was requested in Madrid by the global society!

# List of Authors

## **Susanne Dröge**

*Senior Fellow, Global Issues Research Division, German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP)*

Dr. Dröge is a Senior Fellow in the Global Issues Division at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP) in Berlin. Susanne specializes in energy, climate and international economics and has a long-standing work experience on trade and environment, including economic policy instruments. She advises the German Parliament, the German Government and International Organizations (WTO, UNEP, OECD) on climate policy issues. Her research focuses on emissions trading, EU's, US's, and other countries' climate policy strategies, the UNFCCC negotiations, security policy implications from climate change, as well as trade (policy) implications of NDCs and the Paris Agreement. Susanne teaches university classes in environmental and resource economics. She is a member of several advisory boards and has held various positions in German research institutions.

## **Giorgio Franceschini**

*Head of Security and Foreign Policy Division, Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung*

Prior to joining the Heinrich Boell Foundation in 2017, Mr. Franceschini worked in the Telecommunications Industry (1999-2008) and subsequently as Research Fellow at Darmstadt University of Technology (TUD) and the Peace Research Institute Frankfurt (PRIF/HSFK). A physicist by training, he was in the Executive Board of Germany's Research Association for Science, Disarmament and International Security (FONAS) and acted as Chairman of the EU Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Consortium (2016-17). At the Heinrich Boell Foundation, Giorgio focusses on the effects of digitization on international security, on issues of arms control, and on German foreign and security policy. He is a member of the Foundation's task force for the development of a new digital strategy, and is actively engaged in the promotion of young green talents.

## **Hanns W. Maull**

*Senior Distinguished Fellow at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP) and Senior Policy Fellow for China's Global Role, Mercator Institute of China Studies (meric) in Berlin*

Prof. Dr. Maull was Professor and Chair for Foreign Policy and International Relations at the University of Trier until 2013. Since then, he has been Adjunct Professor of International Relations at the School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) Bologna Center of John Hopkins University in Bologna, Italy, besides his current positions at SWP and merics. He has published extensively in the field of foreign policy analysis. His present research focus concerns the evolution and future perspectives of the international order,

German foreign and security policy at large, as well as the comparative analysis of German and Japanese security policies.

### **Sithembile Mbete**

*Lecturer in the Department of Political Sciences and Associate Fellow of the Centre for Governance Innovation (GovInn) at the University of Pretoria*

Dr. Mbete specialises in the study of South African foreign policy and international organisations. She has a doctorate from the University of Pretoria on the subject of South Africa's foreign policy during its two elected terms in the United Nations Security Council (2007-2008 and 2011-2012). Dr. Mbete joined the University of Pretoria from The Presidency of South Africa where she was a researcher in the secretariat of the National Planning Commission. She contributed to the drafting of the National Development Plan.

### **Karthik Nachiappan**

*Research Fellow at the Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore*

Prior to joining the Institute of South Asian Studies at the National University of Singapore, Dr. Nachiappan was an advisor to UNDP (United Nations Development Program) China's South-South Cooperation programme. He holds a PhD in South Asian Studies from King's College London and Honours BA in Public Policy and Politics from the University of Toronto. His research focuses on India's approach toward multilateral institutions and global governance with emphasis on issues like cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, data protection, climate change and global health.

### **Amrita Narlikar**

*President of the German Institute of Global and Area Studies (GIGA) and Professor of International Relations at the University of Hamburg*

Prior to joining the GIGA in 2014, Professor Narlikar was University Lecturer, Senior Lecturer and Reader at the University of Cambridge. Additionally, she was Senior Research Associate at the University of Oxford's Centre for International Studies from 2003 until 2014. Prof. Narlikar specializes in International Political Economy, with a focus on international trade and multilateral negotiations. She has published extensively on different aspects of the World Trade Organization (WTO), multilateral deadlocks, and rising powers. Her forthcoming book discusses «Poverty Narratives and Power Paradoxes in International Trade Negotiations and Beyond» (Cambridge University Press, spring 2020).

### **Rachel Rizzo**

*Fellow, Robert Bosch Stiftung; adjunct fellow, Center for a New American Security (CNAS)*

Since July 2019, Ms. Rizzo is Robert Bosch fellow as well as an adjunct fellow at the Center for a New American Security (CNAS) in Washington DC, working in the Transatlantic Security Program. Her research focuses on NATO, the EU, and the transatlantic relationship. Prior to joining CNAS in 2018, Ms. Rizzo worked on the Strategy Initiative at the Atlantic Council's Brent Scowcroft Center on Strategy and Security. She began her

career as a financial analyst at Goldman Sachs, and also has previous work experience in the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, and the U.S. Mission to NATO.

### **Deborah L. Sanders**

*Reader in Defence and Security Studies at the Defence Studies Department of King's College London*

Dr. Sanders is a Reader in Defence and Security Studies at the Defence Studies Department of King's College London, where she specializes in security issues in the Black Sea and small navies. She is also a member of the Corbett Centre for Maritime Strategy. Her publications include *Europe, Small Navies and Maritime Security*, (Routledge, 2019, editor) and *Maritime Power in the Black Sea* (Ashgate 2014); and she has published articles on small navies including the Romanian, Bulgarian and the Black Sea Fleet. Her most recent articles include <Rebuilding the Ukrainian Navy>, US Naval War College; and <Maritime Security in the Black Sea>, Mediterranean Quarterly.

### **Ronja Scheler**

*Programme Director International Affairs at Körber-Stiftung, Special Advisor to the Paris Peace Forum*

Dr. Scheler is a Berlin-based Programme Director and international affairs analyst. Her areas of expertise include multilateral institutions and global order, German and European foreign and security policy, and EU-Southeast Asia relations. Before joining Körber-Stiftung in 2018, she was a doctoral fellow and research assistant at the Europe Division of the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP) and a visiting fellow at the Centre for Strategic and International Affairs (CSIS) in Jakarta. Dr. Scheler has taught undergraduate and graduate courses at the University for Applied Sciences of Law and Economics (HTW) in Berlin and the Free University (FU) of Berlin, where she earned her PhD in 2018.

### **Ulrich Speck**

*Senior visiting fellow, German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF), Berlin*

Dr. Speck's work at the GMF focuses on German foreign policy, the European Union, transatlantic relations, and the global order. He has previously been a senior fellow at the Transatlantic Academy at GMF in Washington DC, as well as a visiting scholar at Carnegie Europe in Brussels. He was DAAD-fellow at the American Institute for Contemporary German Studies at John Hopkins University and previously worked as senior editor at Frankfurter Rundschau, a German newspaper.

### **Izabella Monica Vieira Teixeira**

*Co-Chair of the International Resource Panel (IRP/UNEP), member of the UN High Level Advisory Board on Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA), Senior Fellow of the Brazilian Center of International Relations (CEBRI)*

Before being elected co-chair of the International Resource Panel in 2017, Dr. Teixeira was Brazil's Minister of the Environment (2010-2016) and Deputy Minister of the

Environment (2008-2010). She received the UNEP Global Award Champion of the Earth in 2013, a Global Political Leadership award. She led Brazil's negotiations of the Paris Agreement in 2015; she was also head of delegation to previous negotiations of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). At the invitation of UN's Secretary General, she was a member of the High-Level Panel on Global Sustainability. Dr. Teixeira holds a B.Sc. in Biological Sciences from the University of Brasília, and a M.Sc. and Ph.D. in Energy Planning from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. As career public servant, she held several different positions at the State of Rio de Janeiro, at the Brazilian Institute for the Environment and Natural Resources, as Task Leader of the National Environmental Program (with the World Bank), among many others.

## Imprint

Editor: Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, Schumannstraße 8, 10117 Berlin  
Contact: Giorgio Franceschini, Head of Security and Foreign Policy Division,  
Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, **E** [franceschini@boell.de](mailto:franceschini@boell.de)

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