

Università degli Studi di Torino

Euro-American Relations in the Age of Globalization: Risks and Opportunities

Guest Editors

Massimiliano Demata, University of Turin

Marco Mariano, University of Turin



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Introduction

Euro-American Relations in the Age of Globalization: Risks and Opportunities

Massimiliano Demata, Marco Mariano

This special issue of *De Europa* on “Euro-American Relations in the Age of Globalization: Risks and Opportunities” addresses the current state of Euro-American relations by employing a set of multi-disciplinary approaches. Perhaps this is almost inevitable, given that the topic is so controversial and allows – or even demands – multiple perspectives from different academic disciplines. The papers in this issue discuss Euro-American relations in their political, historical and linguistic complexity and offer original insights into one of the key political issues of our time.

What is the current state of Euro-American relations? While most observers agree that 1989 ushered in a new era, what is exactly the place of Atlantica within a global framework transformed by the acceleration of interdependence is subject to debate. At the end of the 20th century exports of goods and services accounted for 20% of the world GDP, a sharp increase from the 13% of 1913 which marked the culmination of the previous wave of globalization. China, as well as Eastern Europe and the new republics created after the collapse of the Soviet Union, were integrated in the world market in a way that, at least initially, seemed to exemplify the irresistible pull of capitalism. Finally, American hard and soft power, and software too, led to what Charles Krauthammer defined the “unipolar moment” of the 1990s. However this acceleration of globalization, far from putting an end to conflicts and crises, opened the way to new ones, as first the wars in Yugoslavia and central Africa and later the attacks of 9.11 and the 2007-2009 Great Recession made abundantly clear.

Such a turmoil has ignited risks and opportunities for Euro-American relations. On the one hand, instability and threats posed by state as well as non-state actors forced transatlantic institutions to adjust to a new reality, while the massive growth of Asian markets has questioned more than ever the centrality of “first world” economies. Furthermore, the post-1989 reality impacted the two sides of the Atlantic in significantly different ways. On the other, the members of the transatlantic club had the unique opportunity to reinvent the mission, the membership, and the mechanisms of that very club created in the aftermath of the World War II.

As “the West” is a polysemic term and transatlantic relations come in different shapes and forms, the assessment of their transformation in the current age of globalization depends very much on the analytical perspective we adopt. For institutionalists like John Ikenberry, for example, the U.S. and its European partners will be able to preserve their

leading role in the global arena by adjusting post-World War II multilateral institutions to the post-1989 reality. In his view, American and Western hegemony based on NATO, the IMF, and other organizations has created a legal and political order and disciplined the exercise of power in such a way that, in the event of a relative decline of *Atlantica*, such hegemony would remain intact. Thus, the answer to current global challenges lies in the adaptation and extension of those institutions (Ikenberry 2001).

From a different perspective, Samuel Huntington has stressed the resurgence of cultural and religious identities as major drivers in the global arena. In this perspective, the end of the cold war and the acceleration of globalization by no means led to the triumph of liberalism and capitalism or, as Francis Fukuyama famously put it, to “the end of history”. After the end of the confrontation between universalist ideologies that informed the 20th century, the “clash” between civilizational blocs is the major driving force of international politics. As a consequence, America and Europe are bound to face this new reality, rediscover their common ground and relinquish utopian, unrealistic dreams of Westernization of the world (Fukuyama 1989; Huntington 1993).

A similarly gloomy outlook is shared by John Mearsheimer, a leading scholar in the neorealist camp. He maintains that the collapse of the cold war order led to a condition of anarchy which is responsible for the promotion of aggressive state behavior in international politics. “The Cold War we have known for almost half a century is over and the postwar order in Europe is ended... the prospects for major crises and war are likely to increase markedly... this pessimistic conclusion rests on the argument that the distribution and character of military power are the root causes of war and peace,” he wrote in 1990. The increasing assertiveness of China in the Far East, for example, would force Western powers to resort to a containment of sorts, which testifies how underlying geopolitical realities continue to affect the post-1989 global order (Mearsheimer 1990). The election of Donald Trump as President of the United States in 2016 started a period of withdrawal of the USA from most world scenarios, including Europe, and the Euro-American relations in the last four years have never been so problematic since probably the Second World War. However, and somewhat paradoxically, Trump’s isolationism derives from the common framework of populist politics shared with certain political movements in Europe. Indeed, the populist rise in both the USA and most European nations has been the catalyst for the creation of a shared rhetoric of fear, hate and verbal violence addressed towards the “other”, represented mainly by migrants (Wodak 2015).

The essays featured in this special issue deal with some of these major themes by focusing on specific case studies. The first three essays address Euro-American relations from a historical or political perspective. Alessia Chiriatti and Davide Borsani discuss the changing role of Turkey within NATO in the light of the transition from the bipolar order of the cold war to the present-day multipolar order. From the vantage point of Ankara, the initial crisis generated by the undermining of its historical role as bulwark of “the West” against Soviet influence in the Mediterranean gave way to the opportunity of playing a neo-imperial role in the Middle East while at the same time preserving its ties with the Atlantic community. This change seems to be a significant

stress-test for NATO vis-à-vis the post-cold war, globalized world we live in. Stefano Luconi shows how the birth of a new era in transatlantic relations was significantly affected by the enduring influence of the geopolitical paradigms of the cold war on the George H.W. Bush administration. His discussion of Bush's cautious attitude toward Mikhail Gorbachev's "common European home" between 1989 and 1990 reveals not only widespread U.S. skepticism that the cold war had really ended, but also the belief that such a proposal would disrupt Euro-American relations, undermine the decades-old American hegemony over Europe, and finally create a Moscow-dominated collective security system in Europe which could pave the way to the Soviet control of Eurasia. Finally, Patricia Chiantera deals with the fears triggered by the collapse of the cold war order and the ensuing globalization within Euro-American culture. Focusing on major authors such as Huntington and Fukuyama, she argues that they both voiced fears about the West itself, rather than about "the other", as shown by the former's concern about the decay and "de-westernization" of élite circles, and the latter's anxiety about the despair of the modern individual and the need to restore his spiritedness in order to consolidate Western democracies. Such fears are all the more relevant within a context dominated by the contradiction between the expansion of cultural differences and the convergence toward market liberalism and capitalism.

The papers on Discourse Analysis of this issue show that the language used in Europe and the USA in the policy areas in which Euro-American relations are most evident reflects (and shapes) both the turmoil in Euro-American relations of the last couple of decades and the shared populist trend. This turmoil emerges quite clearly in Paolo Donadio's paper. On the basis of the analytical tools provided by Critical Discourse Analysis and cognitive linguistics, Donadio discusses the way Trump's narratives undermines the European Union. Through his analysis of Trump's aversion to the EU and his "logic of confrontation", Donadio traces elements of continuity between the discourse of the Cold War and that of the EU as elaborated by US administrations in very different political contexts. Liudmila Arcimavičienė highlights the importance of certain metaphorical constructions as part of legitimacy strategies at the basis of diplomatic discourse in the relations between Ukraine and Russia, the U.S. and Russia, and the EU and Belarus. It has been determined that the collective identity of the international order is mainly represented by two metaphorical legitimacy strategies, value-systems and targeting, serving different ideological purposes. Addressing the populist framework shared by Donald Trump and some right-wing parties and leaders in Europe, Maria Ivana Lorenzetti argues that there are "similar discursive strategies, pointing to a likely cross-fertilisation of ideas and strategies among right-wing populists across the globe." She looks at the convergence between Donald Trump and US right-wing populist leader Matteo Salvini in the discursive strategies employed by the two leaders.

All in all, the papers presented in this special issue of *De Europa* prove that the history of Euro-American relations is a very fertile ground for research from multiple angles. The upcoming Presidential elections in the USA and the current global COVID-19 crisis will certainly determine a very interesting evolution in these relations and will demand even more attention from scholars and observers.

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