

# **The European Open Strategic Autonomy: External and internal conditions for an ambitious project**

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# introduction

- the European Open Strategic Autonomy is an ambitious project for the EU. Even more than “civilian power EU” in the 70s and 80s.
- It is about a « longue durée » change (Braudel) from the small EC to a global actor and an incipient international power
- I will focus on its external and internal pre-conditions

# The EU as an unprecedented power

- **The GDP** of the EU has grown up as one of 3 “giants” (resilience in spite of Brexit, higher degree of internal stability within the current turbulences)
- Notwithstanding internal unbalances, the **enlargement process** from 6 to 27 MS and the ongoing negotiations in view to a further enlargement, are unanimously considered a success story in stabilizing a quasi-continental area and expanding democracy and prosperity in the near abroad.
- 450 million inhabitants represent just **5 % of the world's population**: however, surrounded by 550 million neighbours, which are both a potential market and a source of immigrating labour force and energy supply.
- **Trade** : the EU is the **second trade actor**, the largest exporter and the 2nd largest importer of goods; around 20% of the global imp. and exp., beyond USA and China.
- **EU currency** has not only provided the EU with regional exchange stability within an unbalanced global financial system, but is the **second reserve currency** balancing the rising costs of oil and the serious energy dependency.
- the EU **development policy** is still the largest and the most comprehensive in the world as its budget and scope;
- the EU is recognized after the conferences of Kyoto and COP 21 as a world leader in environmental policy ( **COP 21**) and the fight against climate change; **COP 26?**
- the EU benefits from the largest **network of bilateral, multilateral, interregional agreements** with near and far partners: recently CAI with china, japan, Vietnam, S Korea, Canada, MERCOSUR, Mexico and more negotiations with African Union, ASEAN, Australia, New Zealand
- ***In spite of CDSP and PESCO, It is not a political/military power: need of NATO art 5 for nuclear security***

# Neither strategic autonomy nor civilian power during the Cold war

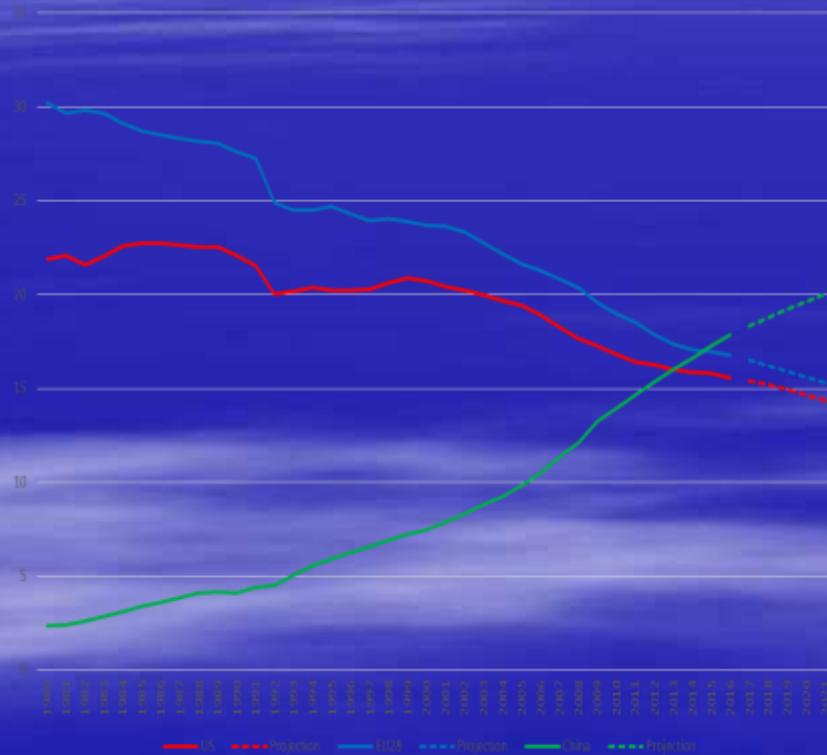
- No competences in defense and security ( art 5 NATO)
- Neither capacities, not institutional set able to cope with a bipolar world
- The famous academic debate between Duchêne and H Bull

# The new context between 1989 and 2016

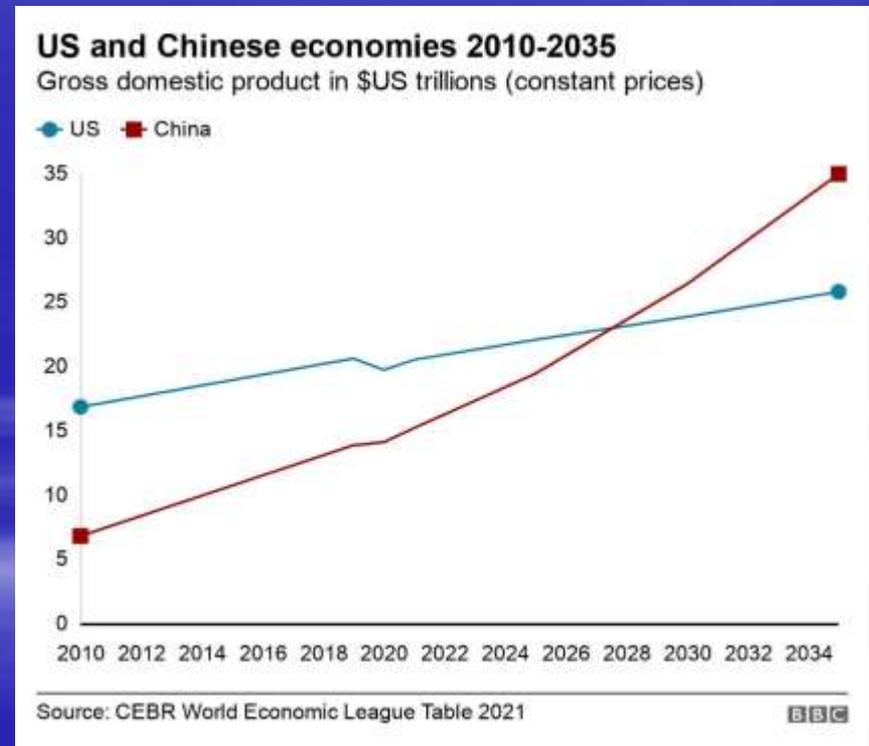
- From the Maastricht treaty to Lisbon Treaty
- the external conditions: the failed unipolar momentum ( 2000- 2008) and the new multipolarity
- Multipolarity as opportunity of multiplication of new actors including regional entities

# The great transformation: a global economic change...

## West and Rest: the turning point of 2007



## China as n1 Economy as unprecedented challenge



and, on the other hand, by the unprecedented multipolar distribution of power

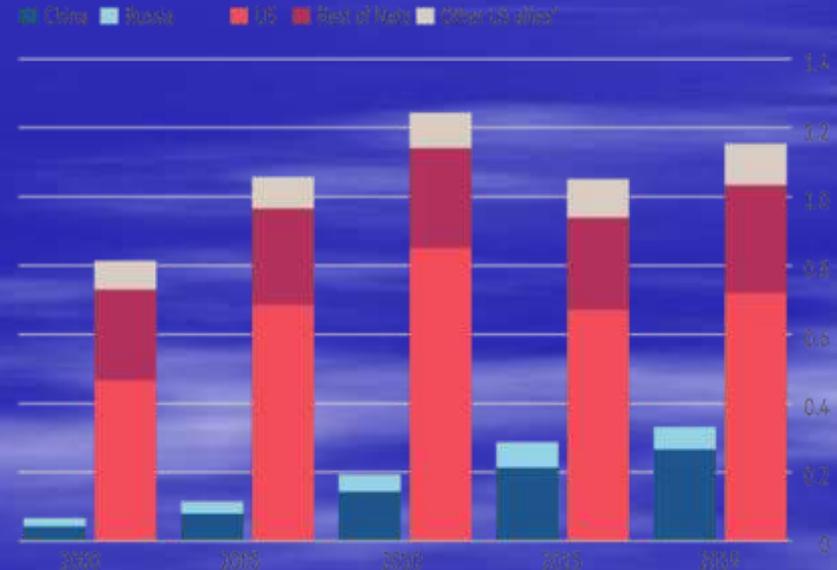
## Heterogeneous multipolarity: US, EU, BRICS

- contrary to the European multipolarity of the 19th century, many asymmetries:
- - demographic
- -territorial
- -economic/trade
- - soft power

## US as single superpower

Spending on the military by the US and its allies still far exceeds that of China and Russia

Military expenditure at constant prices (2020 \$tr)



\*Japan, S Korea, Australia

Source SIPRI

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# A very relevant open question

## A tripolar game: 2020. GDP ?

- 14,7 B CHINA ( 361 M,1990),
- 20, 9 B USA (6B, 1990),
- 13, 3 B, European Union 27 (7,6 B. in 1990)

**Or A bipolar game:** League A (USA,China),  
whereas, EU, India, Japan,Brazil, ..... In  
League B

# How to cope with China?

## Obama policies (2008-2016)

- facing with China: TPP and TTIP, alliance with EU and with Japan.
- The EU adjusted and started its own trade policy agenda( open strategic autonomy) :  
TTIP, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, negotiations with China as part of multiple interregional relations and of the new trade policy ( many partners of new trade and investment arrangements: Korea, CETA, Japan, Mexico, Vietnam and many others)

# The TRUMP presidency as a turning point (2016-20)

- US-China rivalry at the center of the global agenda
- Dismanteling multilateral cooperation at regional and global level (WTO)
- Supporting BREXIT and marginalizing the EU

# Biden administration: US new hegemony? A controversy in IR

- The Biden main advisor is the group J.Sullivan/J.Ikenberry : »A world safe for democracy» A new approach: Internationalism based on democracy and national interest
- The theory of US «structural decline» (Keohane After Hegemony, 1984-2004) is accepted by Zacharia, Kupchan and others Recent reference book: G Allison «Destined for war », 2018

# Europe and the West

## Open strategic autonomy?

- Since 2012, ambitious agenda of the EU as a regional entity, becoming a global actor and an incipient power: realism and idealism
- it is not a classical political/military sovereign power: it needs NATO art 5 for its nuclear security: interest to «a new transatlantic deal ».

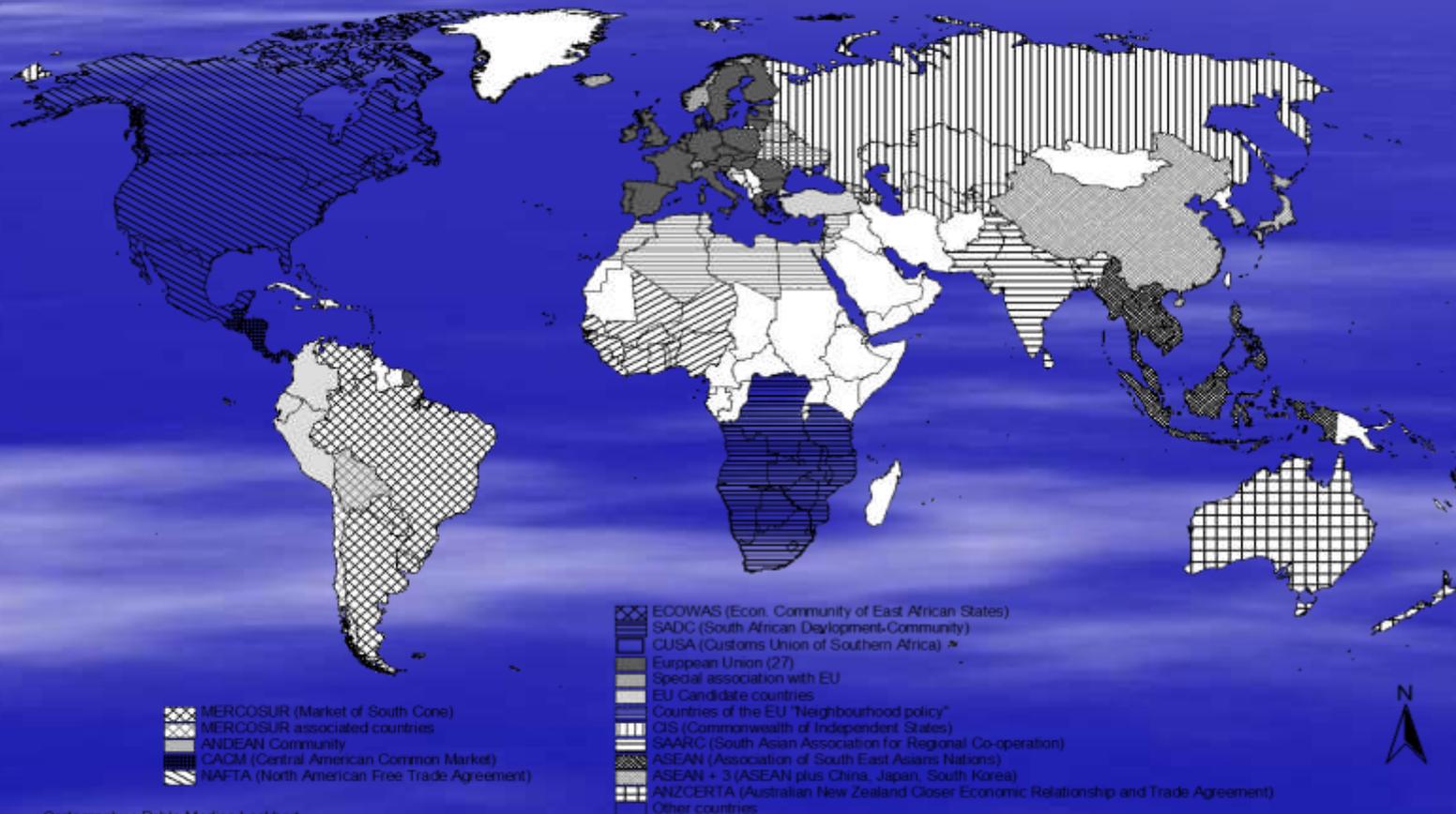
Is the EU a regional association of neighboring states or a global power in the making?

# The weight of the EU in the current world: inspiring regional cooperation abroad

dont underestimate: ASEAN, African Union, MERCOSUR....

MAP 1

MAIN REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS



Cartography Pablo Medina Lockhart

# EU power in synthesis

- An EU that represents only 5% of the global population
- is comparable with the United States and China in terms of GDP and trade power (15%).
- It still represents a monetary power ( Euro as second reserve currency) ,
- a major actor as aid to developing countries and humanitarian aid,
- the world's number one in setting arrangements and agreements with international partners in the near and far abroad.

## Open strategic autonomy: a recent concept and a priority for the HRVP

The Council already used the concept in **November 2013** in relation to defence industry, to strengthen the EU's ability of becoming a better partner through the development of CSDP.

In **May 2015**, the Foreign Affairs Council used the same terminology.

It was further elaborated in the **2016 "EU Global Strategy"**, with a clear reference to "an appropriate level of strategic autonomy".

In the **November 2016 Council conclusions**, strategic autonomy was defined as "capacity to act autonomously when and where necessary and with partners wherever possible".

**Continuity: the concept of strategic autonomy has been mentioned again by the Council in 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 and**

even by the European Council in **October 2020 in its wider sense**. PESCO and the European Defence Fund Regulation have adopted it too.

**a priority in all the speeches by Josep Borrell** ( supported by Macron and many national leaders)

# Weak point n 1: Near abroad

No power is a true international power without peacefully shaping its neighborhood

- Eastern ENP: competition with EEC (Russia)
- Mediterranean ENP: cooperation/competition with Turkey
- Danger of ISIS: How to build up an authentic partnership with Africa? end of instrumentalism.....

## Weak point n 2: A Civilian power must be reliable as its capacities and institutional set are concerned

- Capacity: Internal focus on welfare state, low national budgets for defense. Modest increase and possible rationalization.
- No real Eu budget for defense and security. The proposal of « 28th army »
- However: the weight of memory ( and low profile)
- The decentralized institutional set: unanimity voting procedure, in Council of International affairs notably

**Weak point n 3. Which alliance with USA?  
Solution of muddling through: a USA junior partner**

**Convergences with BIDEN challenges**

- NATO ART 5
- Convergence in anti-COVID (vaccine) and post Covid economic recovery

**-MULTILATERALISM**

- G 20 and COP 26
- Taxation on GAFA
- Iran deal

- Burden sharing or also responsibility sharing?
- Coping with pandemic and climate change cannot work if the global political atmosphere is downgrading

## EU input for a transatlantic agenda combined with Open strategic autonomy

- Vaccination and anti COVID: offensive of soft power ( question of IPR and patent)
- from COP 21 to COP 26: from voluntary to binding commitments ? **COP 26 cannot be an oasis**
- WTO reform: supporting the agenda of subsidies notification, IPR, state's aid, status of former developing countries (emergent economies), digital, ..

The transatlantic debate is open.

Two main issues at stake:

1. How to understand « open » strategic autonomy?

-DG trade paper (March 21) against protectionism and for the new generation T.A.

-Against isolationism: not “going alone” but coalition-building for multilateral solutions to the common goods

-No instrumental approach to multilateralism

- (multilateralize the current multipolarity : Alliance for multilateralism )

- Welcoming a share of work with US ?

Global power and regional power?

# Weak point n 4. How to deal with dictators? What comes after sanctions against China and Russia?

A) are containment and Cold war possible in the current interdependent global economy and notably with China? (Yan Xuetong and Allison versus Mahbubani, M. Wolf: open debate)

Break of the supply chains and digital governance, paralysis of multilateral cooperation

B) Accepting a plural multipolar status quo? (Rodrik and Qin) = no reform of multilateralism

C) Draghi: clarity of values and pragmatism of interests: G20

D) Which alternative ways to pressure for domestic change?

D) Combining bilateralism and multilateralism. Guterres: the EU way of the 70s-80s (CSCE): three dimensional functional regimes (economy, security, cultural/political dialogue).

# What does the EU want as international player? Example : China

- Common goods: climate, public health demand more multilateralism (UN, G20 and COP 26)
- China: combining multilateral partnership and US alliance ( WTO within a few weeks). the alliance with USA: confrontation with China
- China-EU bilateral relations:
- Suspended CAI; EEAS-China dialogue; summit in December, High level economic dialogue in february 22
- Missing information from DG Growth: to what extent does break with China affect the supply chains
- Missing knowledge: cultural gap ( Academy:14 december). The single power defending human rights?

# what the EU wants at global level?

- “Open strategic autonomy”, combining a distinctive language of power with external transformation towards a “**new multilateralism**”
- WTO reform, COP 26/27, WHO
- UN reform: regionalization, more binding and more legitimate
- Focusing on the near abroad:
  - Iran Deal, stopping proliferation
  - Libya post-war reconstruction and non true partenrship with Africa
- Eastern mediterranean multilateral conference



# Research is going on.....

## UN REFORM



## NEW MULTILATERALISM



# The EXTERNAL institutional tools

## EU as a global power?

### representation within international organizations

- UNSC: 1 permanent + 2 or 3 rotating member
- UN General Assembly: EU observer and 27 MSs
- UN agencies: EU observer and 27 MSs
- FAO : EU member and 27MSs
- WTO: Alternatively, EU full member or 27 MSs
- IMF: ECB observer and 27 MSs
- WB: 27 MSs
- G7: EU and 3 MSs
- G20: EU and 3 MSs
- OECD: EU membership and 21 MSs

# INTERNAL Institutional capacity as a very controversial topics

for the Conference?: How to go ahead with Open strategic autonomy?

## Internal institutional conditions

the institutional dilemmas with veto players in the council.

Multidisciplinary research says that thgree options are on the table:

- A) within the context of the Lisbon treaties: Art 46, art 20
- B) reaching consensus for a positive outcome of the « Conference for the future of Europe »: QMV in the council
  
- And if it does not work, **which second best option?**

# Open Strategic autonomy: avoiding shipwreck!

