

Four International Relations Pillars: Europe, China, US and Russia Reshaping Roles

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Abstract Until one-two years ago, the world relations were based on the former long lasting stability established at the end of the Nineties, after the Balkans conflict. Then the advancement of competitiveness of China, the difficulties of European Union, the stormy winds of populism and nationalism, the new leadership at the White House of “America First” Donald Trump start changing the full scenario of the international relations quickly arriving to tensions and antagonism in technologic sectors and direct investments specifically with China.

The emergence of a systematic meddling of Russia in the US presidential election of two years ago; the assertiveness of Chinese expansionism in East Asia with the building up of artificial islands and military compounds into a number of reefs close to Philippines, Vietnam, Singapore, Taiwan, Indonesia and Brunei; the Syria war quagmire of violence and horrible internal and external butchery mainly by ISIL terrorism and internally against the despotic Assad’s brutal dictatorship over his own citizens; the North Korea nuclear crisis: all these titles of a destabilizing world contributed to shape in less than 24 months a total different scenario of antagonism and fragility in the world order.

Even the positive Chinese farsighted and welcome program BRI called New Silk Road, extending investments and support to development to all the East, South Asia, Near East, Mediterranean, Eastern Europe and Africa - as an “Oriental” inspired historic “icon”- interpreting the more institutional BRI-Belt and Road Initiative - the ambitious China program of utmost importance for Central Asia, Caucasus, Black and Caspian Seas, the Mediterranean bordering countries but also the whole European Union and the Central-Eastern-Baltic part in particular, in the frame of a millenarian background of the relations between Europe and Asia - is losing its capability to balance the high stake of the disputes around the world and among the main players: Europe, China, US and Russia.

Keywords: Trade disputes; New players; Silk Road; Thucydides’s trap.

JEL classification: B; P; Z

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Three Millennium of History

A heritage much deeper and long-lasting than generally assumed, even in the scientific community, quite often too much focusing on the last pages of a long and never-ending romance, not to talk of the protagonists of the new events and developments often unaware of the sense of analysing the past for a better forecast of the future. Since Alexander the Great, the Greek role, the Roman Empire, the Republic of Venice, the Byzantine Constantinople and then Ottoman Istanbul, had been for centuries outreach terminals of trade, diplomatic relations, investments from all of Europe to China, with recurrent wars but long enough seasons of relatively constructive civilization and international relation building up. Collateral projects such as the Eurasia Economic Union lead by Russia, still in the “doldrums” (as the ancient maritime language called the low-pressure areas, where the prevailing winds were calm, too calm to proceed sailing fast) and many less ambitious but concrete initiatives by the connected institutions and organizations will soon modify not only the Central Asian role but directly the Europe Union, China and USA strategies and programs, in other words the international world order and its crucial developments.

This paper intends to propose an indispensable historical background to the ongoing new initiative, finding some robust correlations with the recent theories of International Relations and focusing on data to support the assumptions of the New Silk Road forecast and outlook both in terms of economic, trade, infrastructure, defence multilateral cooperation and 2030-2050 developments outlook. In relative terms, the past has brought a high-profile heritage to the entire European-Asian world and to China in primis. The “progress” and new discoveries have enlightened the world and imposed the reassessment of international relations, economy, finance, technology, military might, alliances and conflicts of interests.

The paper states and motivates the reasons why the era of the nationalistic, unilateral, populist policies, obsolete past structuralism - even more now as in presence of military mighty exhibits and enforcing, apparently gaining again ground in front of liberalism, reforms and sound trend to democracy-, has in fact definitively entered in the “sunset boulevard”, the older ageing season, because the great failures accumulated in the last century (and even now in our contemporary age) are too much resulting in multiple crashes of theories and practices in International Relations but not at the end of the game in economics, finance, environment, new technology and investments. That is why we should better think beyond the blocs and the regime of permanent “cold war” as salvific, when in fact they were showing to be failing from all points of view. Not because of the will of “nations” but due to the pressure, the interference of economy, trade, investments, markets and first of all the geostrategic conditionality.

At the end, the pressure of very innovative defence technologies diffusion - where the continuous advancements are pushing the leading countries towards a neverending race, in an environment of scientific new generation weaponries, on earth and in the outer space - all these factors show to experts and specialized research centres an increasing, sophisticated differential among single powers than in the past (IISS Military Balance,

2017; SIPRI Yearbook, 2017). In other words, the most advanced innovative and high-tech actors are progressing in relative terms quicker than the followers. In an imaginative version, as in hunting, has a wild hare ever been reached by the dogs? Hardly ever.

New/Neo Theories and the Need for More Advanced Assumptions

This is the crucial point in Political Science or International Relations of the many “new” or “neo” theories trying to be only a transformist attempt to make “change everything so that nothing changes”. We have relevant examples on stage and in presence of populist and, illiberal thinking diffusing dangerously. The paper considers the contributions by Kenneth Waltz (1924-2013) - in fact the intellectual “father” of the most relevant works on neorealism, the mastermind of the theories accompanying “de facto” his precious contributions to the International Relations - who left a heritage of main works and researches in almost half a century, starting with “Theory of International Politics”(1959), a cornerstone introduction of neo-realism, a kind of post “realism” reformulation and revision of the approach and theories supported by Hans Morgenthau in his “Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace” in 1948, when the world was divided in two blocks and a dramatic confrontation was building up. The change is on the way also now. The NSE - New Structural of Economy had been Professor Justin Yifu Lin’s key remarks in a recent conference in Duisburg University and the contents of his last 2016 book “Going Beyond Aid: Development Cooperation for Structural Transformation” has really a great value added. As for realism and neo-realism, the former structuralism was in fact not only antagonist but even dangerous as hiding sometimes attempts to restoration of old failure political systems and statehood.

China March to West and Europe March to East

Literature is already wide on these perspectives. I would say that the book I am quoting, “China March to West” by Peter C. Perdue, inspires to me as a seduction but with rationality at the same time. The Author promises in his incipit: “China Marches West” is a tour de force that will fundamentally alter the way we understand Central Eurasia”. I want to propose again some references to before mentioned aspects. “From about 1600 to 1800 – the Author continues - the Qing Empire of China expanded to unprecedented size. Through astute diplomacy, economic investment, and a series of ambitious military campaigns into the heart of Central Eurasia - wrote Perdue - the Manchu rulers defeated the Zunghar Mongols, and brought all of modern Xinjiang and Mongolia under their control, while gaining dominant influence in Tibet and in all Eastern Central Asia”. (Perdue, 2005). We are talking of course of almost three-four hundred years ago. And the Author shows a neo-realistic approach to International Relations that is a bit static while those theories are very often not applicable to contemporary global governance and security issues.

Europe has been and will always be looking to the East in its history and really intensively with the European Union, on the fresh wind of the impressive events of the German reunification and the following openness of the policies of enlargement and further fair integration to the East, where Russia attitudes shifted back becoming not as

clear as they were in the immediate post FSU “spring” beginning of the new post-soviet era. Remembering then the mentioned title of Perdue’s book, we could write that even so “Europe Looks East”, a really historic multipolar East as we have seen before, ending on the Pacific and Indian Ocean but passing as well through Central Asia, Middle East, Black and Caspian Sea up to Mediterranean and Baltic regions, where Russia is one of the players but together with fast growing surrounding main new actors and certainly not the first power as shown in the war movies of military drills style.

On the West side, if US President Trump’s policies will let us understand whether chatting will be substituted by strategies - as old fashion and populist ideas have been often flooding rather than analysis and strategies - we could be more confident in positive results for all the international community. Any further sound of drums and twitters showing nationalist drifts, skirmishes and antagonism among US or China or Russia or Japan or Europe, or India could have rather unpredictable developments and might compromise the final results and also affect negatively the New Silk Road/BRI. To containing and reducing pressures on this Asia-Pacific and TransAtlantic issues represents the best strategy in order to bring benefits to all the involved parties. The same could be applied for the Middle East, Africa, Latin America and Southeast Asia.

Heritage and Historic Factors of Partnership

The heritage is the composite accumulation of history and basic factors of economy, trade, scientific progress, culture and faiths, international relations, wars and peace among nations and regions. The future is the “cluster and drivers” of factors that might determine a set of scenarios and developments, some well-founded and widely debated but others assuming the character of unexpected outcomes.

We discussed encouraging aims and scopes, projects, investment feasibilities, possible geopolitical value added perspectives in the longer run, when this initiative will oblige the main players of international policy, investors and banks, regional actors like the European Union, China and East Asia, USA, Russia, ASEAN to compete more intensively in Central Asia. Collateral projects such as the EEU-Eurasia Economic Union lead by Russia (EU ISS, Chaillot Papers, 2014) are still in the “doldrums”, as I defined before in the abstract, while many less ambitious but concrete initiatives lead by connected institutions and organizations will soon increase not only the Central Asia role but directly the Europe Union, China and USA strategies and programs, in other words the international new world order and its crucial developments .

How were the great Central Asia, Persia and India bordering kingdoms in the almost 2500 years past history? I present to you a view from ancient history and I leave aside the modern time. And what about Europe’s contacts with China? Which heritage are we talking about? Since Alexander the Great, the Greek role, the Roman Empire, the Republic of Venice, the Byzantine Constantinople and then Ottoman Istanbul, with recurrent wars but long enough seasons of relatively constructive civilization and international relation building up had been for centuries outreach terminals of trade, diplomatic relations, investments from all Europe to China up today, with the New Silk Road (UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, 2017).

Global Governance is the Challenge of the Current Century

Already in BC time and then in all the AD times up to now, the concept of global governance existed in different forms of course in the known world and with the limits of the lack of recent centuries' scientific advancements never even imagined, amazing technologies, with an industrial revolution still ongoing. Infrastructures, economic growth, finance strategies and practices must continuously be implemented and reshaped in order to keeping competitive and growth paths.

With all the implications of the geometric expansion of military capabilities, in relative terms, the past has brought a high profile heritage to the entire European and Asian world and to China in primis. The "progress" and new discoveries have enlightened the world and imposed the reassessment of international relations, economy, finance, technology, military might, alliances and conflicts of interests. The absolute peace in some way has been an ethic value to be pursued but only in a permanent "estote parati" prerequisite, as the "irenistic" attitudes might unfortunately always give rise to fatal conflicts.

Not to find refuge only into the IR theories of realism and neo-realism is a farsighted approach to the future even if understandable how easy it was and it is to simplify the international relations in a world of sovereign states. But now we face the transnational world and the International Relations theories and practices must be reshaped. The era of the nationalistic, unilateral, populist policies, or obsolete structuralism, even more if accompanied by military exhibits enforcing, has "de facto" definitively entered the "sunset boulevard". It's true, we are facing a diffused perception and the provocative exhibits almost every day of the opposite. But let years to come show and restore the really long lasting tracks and trends, because the great failures accumulated in the last XX century (and even now in our contemporary early age of the XXI experiences as in Syria, Iraq, ISIL, North Africa), had been pushing the developed countries to de facto global wars and unpredictable conflicts, with high tolls of millions victims and biblical waves of refugees destabilizing the world. Have we to assist to new tragedies or go back to face again the already known lessons of history? We must admit, time has come to move in an opposite direction. And we need remember the unforgettable warning for the future launched, almost seventy years ago, by an intellectual who was a direct testimonial of the abyss of inhumanity, the annus horribilis and the holocaust in the past Century (Hanna Arendt, (1951), "The Origins of Totalitarianism /Elemente und Ursprünge totaler Herrschaft". This is why we better start think beyond the blocs and the regime of permanent "cold war" presented as salvific when in fact it had shown to be a failure of International Relations from all points of view; a not sustainable financial burden for the public policies and economies around the world; any advantages or rewards but only devastation and crimes against humanity accountability; weakening United Nations to the point to transform the idealistic "crystal" symbol into an impossible institution for action and initiatives, good for moral suasion but not for any kind of governance. The lonely single powers risk soon or later to facing this bitter reality and fall victim themselves into a fatal trap syndrome of irrational militarism and internal set back that will leave them alone or aside. This is the destabilizing effect of

slowing growth, weak civil society, cooling reforms, close economies, trade barriers, marginal welfare, collapsing environment, populist drift, with too high stakes assumed at international level and a lack of enlighten political and historic vision.

Multilateralism, regional strategic approaches, inclusiveness cannot then be left simply to the good will and the sweet hearts or generosity of the single countries and leaderships. Robert Jackson and Georg Sørensen, in their classic but innovative textbook "Introduction to International Relations Theories and Approaches", offered an open window on the many spin-off of approaches, traditional theories and new tentative innovative frames looking to the new world governance scenario and the IR available attempts to include the future landscape with the already known different school of thinking (Jackson and Sørensen, 2016). We just said that the differential in strategic might among the main powers is not narrowing but enlarging more and more. Paradoxically, this situation is the most effective and credible dissuasion against devastating global wars risks the world might experience again. That is why I rather prefer to be involved within the work-in-progress "constructivism" attempts to develop new paradigmatic frameworks, institutions and projects combining the national interests with the global governance.

New Theories, Past World and More Pragmatic Approach to IR

The New Silk Road project had appeared in the beginning a constructive attempt of new forms to shaping international relations and governance. But the results will come in the medium-long run while the possible cohabitation of national interests with a new push towards international opening and competitiveness in growth is a new season of "wealth of nations". But "new" or "neo" have to be build up with the willingness to abandoning the past theories and doctrines if obsolete, as the simply change of the name cannot be a new drive but simply a camouflage to bringing back the reforms and openness uprising also in emerging and emerged countries. In some aspects, also China, India, Latin America, Middle East, Central Asia, not to talk of millennialist Russia, might become suffering a restorative temptation of old empires times. In all the countries there are nostalgic of the "old order" and they represent the enemies of any new development. It happens for theoretic approach as well as in the practice of daily governance. Competition and multipolar policies outside a shared frame and background of convergent, main strategies and rules cannot really produce the desired results in any part of the globe if not new conflicts and again possible terrific wars.

I partially share the deep conceptual results of Professor Richard Ashley's critical arguments and analysis on the neo-realism and his very assertive contribution. We have to quote again, as I had already mentioned in the introduction, Kenneth Waltz (1924-2013), in fact the intellectual "father" of the most relevant works on neorealism, the mastermind of the theories accompanying "de facto" his precious contributions to the International Relations, left main works and researches in almost half a century, starting with "Theory of International Politics" (Waltz, 1959), a cornerstone introduction of neo-realism, a kind of post "realism" re-formulation and revision of the vision and theories supported by Hans Morgenthau in his "Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power

and Peace” (Morgenthau, 1948), when the world was divided in two blocks and hot confrontation was building up.

Richard K. Ashley, Arizona State University, School of Politics & Global Studies, stands out 25 years later with a massive scientific work on the “The poverty of neorealism” (Ashley, 1984), where he really analyzed in depth realism and neorealism in a profound and severe confrontation. “Speaking of a neorealism movement - he wrote - it is necessary to confront several issues. First, the name “neorealism” is not universally recognized by those I am calling neo-realists. Some no doubt assume that their work reflects no larger movement or trend they themselves did not consciously set into motion; they thus reject the application of general labels to their own work. Second, I recognize that the scholars here regarded as neorealist have many serious differences and quarrels among themselves. Third, I stress that my treatment here is with respect to the structure of an overall movement in its context and not the expressed pronouncements or conscious intentions of individual scholars whose work sometimes may, and sometimes may not, contribute to that movement”.

A reference must be made to the essay by Robert Keohane “Neorealism and Its Critics”; “After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy” for the openness of his comments and attempts to keep together scholars and experts of divergent theories and inspired by purely semantic disputes (Keohane, 1986 and 1984).2005). Of course Professor Ashley’s contribution ignited fierce polemics and criticism. He had already taken into account this reaction in advance and dedicated a conclusive part of his main work to a preventive, very intense and intellectually substantiated answer. “In my defense, let me say that I am driven to these lengths by a combination of concern and hope. My concern is that, amidst the wrenching of economic, social, and epistemic crisis, social scientists who study international relations will mistake neorealism’s anti-critical closure for a much needed pillar of certainty, security and, most of all, collective understanding. I am concerned - he underlined - that the faculties that above all distinguish science from non-science and practice the reflective exercise of criticism might being deadened at just the time when their potential is most needed and most likely to burst forth. I am concerned that, as a result, the scientific study of international politics in the United States is gravitating toward a reactionary pole rather than involving itself in the expansion of the field of political discourse and, with it, opportunities for the creative evolution of world society. And I am especially concerned about graduate students and younger scholars who are told to think critically and creatively but whose freedom to think critically in public depends, to a very considerable degree, upon their linking their accomplishments to collectively recognized foundations. Insofar as neorealist lore comes to occupy the collectively recognized foundations of the discipline, the urging of criticism-consciousness can only be a cruel hoax”.

These issues inspired me to dedicate as I said before to the “constructivism” theories in International Relations, a provocative undertaking good enough to waken up the dormant international debate on international studies, European Union specific case of effective “non-statehood” and even United Kingdom choosing to going back to the past but in a total different situation and relative ranking of the Country worldwide.

“Constructivism: an Introduction” by Maysam Behraves, Department of Political Science at Lund University, Sweden, offered a quite comprehensive abstract of the landscape around the new approach (Behraves, 2011). Constructivism is a structural theory of the international system that makes the following core claims: (1) states are the principal units of analysis for international political theory; (2) the key structures in the states system are intersubjective rather than material; and (3) state identities and interests are in an important part constructed by these social structures, rather than given exogenously to the system by human nature [as (neo)realists maintain] or domestic politics [as neoliberals favour] (2011). Constructivist theory emerged in the mid-1990s as a serious challenge to the dominant realist and liberal theoretical paradigms.

Quoting mainly from the Lund University researcher references and literature: “The theory was not popularized until Alexander Wendt 1992 (a direct challenge to neorealism) and Katzenstein 1996 made it a staple of international relations (IR) syllabi around the world. The theory’s relatively recent arrival on the scene makes a constructivist canon somewhat harder to identify and makes the inclusion or exclusion of particular sources in this bibliography a potentially much greater source of contention than in the articles on realism and liberalism. M.E. Sharpe produced an outstanding and comprehensive series on constructivism titled *International Relations in a Constructed World*. In that series Kubáľková 1998 provides a general overview of constructivist theory. Klotz and Lynch 2007 published an extraordinarily useful volume about doing research using constructivist theory, which anyone using constructivism as the basis for their research should read. Fierke and Jørgensen 2001 focuses on the second wave of constructivist scholars and those scholars’ takes on earlier constructivist scholarship. Debrix 2003 has a more narrow focus on the role of discourse in international relations (IR). In addition to the M.E. Sharpe volumes, Adler 1997 and Guzzini 2000 provided article-length overviews of constructivism. Adler focuses on how it fits into the wider IR theoretical context, and Guzzini deconstructs constructivism for the reader and attempts to build it back up in an instructive way. For the simplest explanation of constructivism, see Snyder 2004, which provides brief summaries of realism, liberalism, and constructivism and compares and contrasts them for the reader. Snyder’s article is the easiest article to understand”.

A choice representing rather a high stake in the present recurrent debate on theories of international relations, where realism and neo-realism seem to appear the fatal, never changing, unique possible approach to global governance. A really blind attitude from the scientific and research point of view. As colleagues and scholars don’t take enough into consideration the completely new landscape of the economic structure, financial role, highly innovative deterrence in the arsenals, policy choices and new multilateral conditionality, I am always trying to take these factors into account and attribute utmost relevance to them. We talked before about heritage and its great push forwards a never-ending change in history and world system. The change is on the way also now, in the moment in which we are debating and discussing, even if the scenario seems foggy and compromised by populism and nationalism apparent irresistible rise. The NSE - New Structural of Economy had been Professor Justin Yifu Lin’s scientific contribution in the last ten years. But there is a crucial point in Political Science

and International Relations: too many “new” or “neo” theories risking to falling into a transformist attempt to make “change everything so that nothing changes”. It’s not the case of Professor Justin Yifu Lin, former Vice President of the World Bank, distinguish professor and honorary Dean of the National School of Development at Peking University, who is proposing his brand new “neo-structuralism” not only with reference to Asia and China governance but to all the world developing countries assuming their growing leading role in the future and then enlarging the horizon to the global policies and practices. His last book in fact has a very indicative title: “Going Beyond Aid: Development Cooperation for Structural Transformation” (YiFu Lin, 2016). The book has a focus on the “win-win” solutions and structural reforms in the developing countries. “Studying the successful economic transformation of countries such as China and South Korea through ‘multiple win’ solutions, based on comparative advantages and economy of scale, wrote the Author on the introduction, and presenting new ideas and different perspectives from emerging market economies such as Brazil, India and other BRICS countries”.

The World in Transition is Global

I have considered a large number of files with readings, fact sheets, reports, data and background information. My focus on heritage derives from the assumption that “history is not water” and leaves permanent signs and imprinting to countries, inhabitants, all citizens. I propose and invite you to update and refurbish continuously the “common ground” of the heritage vision and lessons impact referring to present situations and not to remote past. A good map it’s for sure coming from theoretic and intellectual fundamental contributions to governance and IR studies as Anne-Marie Slaughter did in her “International Relations, Principal Theories”. (Slaughter, 2011)

Now I have to come directly to the future ahead, to the outlook 2030 or 2050 of the New Silk Road, Central Asia and Eurasia. As you can perceive, the future is promising; all the indispensable actors are more and more involved; the transition and the complexity that it determines appear quite clear before our eyes, in Europe as in China, in the USA as in Russia, in the Pacific as in the Atlantic regions. But incredible to say, some of the main players are now feeling this assumption bringing under discussion their roles and the future as if the developments should have for main powers and emerging new players in a sort of fear to downgrading, of a too binding multilateralism, in a word of losing power.

Scientifically we observe less and less national states roles, even among the really superpowers as wide partnerships, regional alliances, multilateral organisations advance, compete and challenge for better governance, security and growth. But not in the framework of the old fashion “universalistic” and a bit utopian approach, with a unique formal common house of world institutions, the United Nations, in presence of a Security Council hand made in Yalta, with diversified rights and vetoes power of the five winners on the all the other ten rotation members. Nevertheless, the alternative for really new decisional formats, innovative levels of common interests, strategies and shared policies to pursue advanced, sophisticated international aims and scope are still lacking or advancing too slowly.

European Union for sure belongs to the antagonist front of this restoration of the XX Century. China as well had recently stated at the highest level that global approach, inclusiveness and regional multilateralism are the requirements for the future international order giving continuity to the growth and development of all parts of the world most suffering and weighed in terms of poverty, human and social drama due to the absence of tangible prospects and openness to opportunities, trade, investments and infrastructures.

A transition still not clearly perceived and adequately addressed even by the most influential players. Several reasons and domestic political forces seem to want to restore old-growth nationalist and populist views, erecting barriers and foreclosures to the free movement of people, trade and investments. The nineteenth century and the restoration of the last century had been not only anachronistic but a harbinger of possible scenarios of increasingly acute conflicts, in the absence of a credible counterweight to the isolationist temptations and ethnic-religious antagonism, even in the heart the liberal and democratic system. Wondering the reality of the global world dimension and supporting ideologies and denial policies or building walls and fueling contrasts so similar to the dark eras of racism, colonialism, dictatorships and regimes based on the division and collision among powers, all these reactionary temptations and irresponsible strategies must be contrasted and rejected in the name of the civilization and the transnational cultures we have in our roots and millenarian heritage.

Restorative Attempts of the Old Nationalism Will Fail

In a world that is now irreversibly changed into a reality still magmatic - but in any case driven by the third technological revolution of the modern history, by innovative, cultural, environmental and social repercussions that shakes all continents and really represents hope for all of humanity - what is happening is likely to become an antagonistic and restorative attempt to turn the clock back, with unpredictable political and economic opportunities.

The risk of a second Cold War is already palpable in Europe, where there are questions about appropriate responses to oppose the current drift in international relations. Recently, creeping transatlantic tensions emerged just as an unexpected and alarming symbol with the aggressively menaces of Russia towards the EU borders, from Baltics to the Black Sea, with an operative militarism deployed from the Arctic to the Mediterranean and the Middle East. The conflicts and horrible tragedies with Islamic terrorism and civil war in Syria have destabilized in these recent years the entire region, with direct repercussions in Europe, as I mentioned before through waves of terrorism and wild migrations, with the reminiscent of biblical escaping and the several holocausts just in the last century. To the fatigue of dialogue and detente we have seen now added the winds of the national-populist in America and in Europe syndrome, as the tensions in East and South East Asia will add up the confrontation with national sovereignty. The commitment to farsighted policies and the choice of the negotiations instead then the statements when negotiating policies will make profitable and safe relations among countries from Japan to China and now also India becoming an international actor of first magnitude towards the entire Pacific scenario. The role of Europe and China

becomes even more essential and decisive to building up a new international scenario open to globalization and change as before mentioned.

But in any case we have to consider that European Union and China have confirmed the past commitment even if they introduced some “different” approaches on the foreign policies and in the South China Sea.

Silk Road Multiplicity

The debate on the New Silk Road, looking like a fresh initiative starting from the pragmatic assumptions that there are two main belts:

- a) the maritime classic “road” touching the East Asia Sea, the Indian Ocean, the Persian and Red Sea spreading out via the Suez Channel to the connectivity hub with the big Mediterranean common “lake”, a good example of successful settlement of navigations disputes, by the way;
- b) on the other side, the traditional land route well known by Alexander the Great, Roman Emperors, Marco Polo and the Ottoman Sultans through Central Asia, the Caucasus, the Mediterranean, Southern and Central Europe up to Baltic Europe, with the integration of the spin-off to Russia as a corridor existing since the previous Century but in my view without the potentiality of the New Silk Road requirements, preconditions and targets.

An update on the BRI-New Silk Road had been done at the last recent Davos Forum, where a round table had updated the positive results until now achieved and the optimistic perspective ahead. (The BRI-Belt and Road Initiative impact, World Economic Forum 2018). The same attitudes had been expressed by Chinese experts and high ranking researchers, like Liu Youfa, Shanghai Institute for International Studies, in his recent interview “Riding the Silk Road: China’s promises”, 2017.

The implications are not simply infrastructures, great investments, environment, trade, the new AIIB Bank in Beijing widely endorsed by almost all the world crucial countries, border-crossing agreements, higher education and human capital increase, just to mention key factors. In fact, these are the new settings of the reshaped international relations among the main powers, the emerging ones and the long queue of new actors already crucial and competing fiercely in the waiting list. Just observe how the Bologna Process has identified a common ground for higher education and university cooperation. Again history “docet” and Central Asia is a specific case. We cannot underestimate the diffidence of these countries from Kazakhstan to the Black and Caspian Seas for too much binding international cooperation proposals. As well we cannot predict the South China Sea disputes outcomes and the future of the Korean situation as well as the Taiwan choice until now not to become part of the “One China”, at least as integrated national part. All destabilizing issues if not faced with appropriate fine diplomatic and security tuning. A map of the results achieved until now by the BRI-New Silk Road are showing lights and still some shadows. But how could be in a different way if the results are already remarkable and other projects would be soon relaunched also with the support of the collateral support of a fan of

Chinese institutions and bodies as the State International Development Cooperation Agency-SIDCA activated in April 2018.

Europe Looks to Asia

Europe has been in its history and will be always looking to the East even more intensively with the European Union, celebrating this year the 60th Anniversary of the Treaty of Rome. On the fresh wind of the big events of the German reunification and the openness of the policies of enlargement and further fair integration to East, where the attitudes of Russia shifted back and are not as fair as they were in the immediate post FSU beginning of the past, in the Treaty of Helsinki, in the dialogue of NATO with Moscow, now even reawakening the spectrum of a destabilizing strategy in the Southeaster Europe after the aggressive role in Ukraine conflict and in Crimea annexation.

“Europe Looks East” a really historic multipolar East, as we have seen before, ending on the Pacific, Indian Ocean but passing through Central Asia, Middle East, Black and Caspian Sea regions, where Russia is one of the players but together with other fast growing main actors. Propaganda is rather poisoning public opinion than informing it. We Europeans learnt this dramatically and we will never be tempted again. Now we observe on the spot mainly the military dynamics and the shadow rumours coming of a kind of second Cold War as I before mentioned. We have to be ready to confront firmly this intellectual menace. A development to be considered as being very negative if the geopolitical situation does not enter soon into a dialogue and a diplomatic channel of appeasement. The absence of a “détente”, in fact, will seriously disturb the best results desired by the European Union and its NATO military collateral pillar. I guess the same questions might rise and more attentively evaluated in China, for the unpredictable implications of these tensions and the military build-up ongoing in the world on vital foreign relations, economic, financial and investment projects from a multipolar point of view too.

What about Russia? If we should prepare a good title for the book of the great Russia, the largest country of the world, with its impressive dimension but few inhabitants - less than 150 million, 77% in the European part and only 6 millions in the Far East - following the Perdue style, we should write paradoxically “Russia Looks South”. In fact, Russia’s influential non-governmental Council on Foreign and Defence Policy stated recently, in a rather nostalgic way, that “economically, but also mentally, Russia should not be the Eastern periphery of Europe, but the Northern part of enormous Eurasia”.

But I wonder: would the Eurasian countries and other main regional players really accept this strategy? Could EU and China simply assist to attempts of destabilising the crucial regions of Eurasia and Central Asia already affected by evolutionary long term events and complexity in governance? The European Union first of all, even if facing the Brexit concrete possible negative fate for UK follow-ups, had shown to be capable to manage the refugees crisis in Syria and North Africa, not as in the past staying at the window but implementing policies and actions. The impact on the last four years events and the terroristic attacks also in France, Germany and UK in any case had changed deeply the attitudes and the strategies in government and public opinions. Not to forget the war in Ukraine and the pending Crimea fate after annexation. But also

recent statements of Chinese leading representatives on Taiwan and its independent statute assumed as untouchable both by US and EU are growing the tensions already high in the South East Asia.

A reason more not to afford superficially the complex geopolitical situation in all the Eurasian continent. As the dark perspective insinuated by Graham Allison, Director of Harvard Kennedy School's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs and the bestselling author of his essay "Destined for War: Can America and China escape Thucydides's Trap?" must be considered less utopian and more politically alerting the antagonism of the two major economies and power worldwide.

China Eastern Asia Future Approach

China as well must be aware of the changing attitudes towards former not so critical issues. To use a paradigmatic scenario, the South and East China Sea dispute over the islands and the freedom of navigation must soon turn into a negotiation process. The positive steps on the backstage might bring to a general ASEAN/international framework agreement for the global dimension of the interests, the rights at stake and at the same time to specific bilateral formal agreements to take in the near future the format of real "state treaties", in the ways and the forms China will agree with the involved countries, more or less all the East Asian countries, on the base of the "freedom of navigation" indispensable acknowledgement.

The relations with US remains in any case a vital reciprocal need for both the Pacific powers, with the implication of the already high threatens present north-eastern Asia and waiting to see the developments of the Korea peninsula strategic and diplomatic follow ups to the recent positive top leaders of the two countries meeting in the border remembering the war and not yet enough the "one nation" as they said to have in the perspective ahead.

The last development, in fact, had been a kind of unexpected "rainbow" but the inspirer of the "coup de theatre" seems to have been aware of the "national" reconciliation itinerary that might characterize the two Koreas in the future if really a great Peace Treaty and denuclearization pact would be signed by the 2020. China and US are careful to avoid surprise or underestimation but at the end the diplomatic process has been activated.

The quite touchy "cahiers de doléances" in East Asia should be closed soon for the benefit of the more general security policies in the whole of the Asia-Pacific region. In diplomatic terms, the election of the of leadership in democracies are producing a different drive in key points of governance and specifically on the hot issues of foreign policy, a change that might be for better or for worse, depending on the winner. The case of US is rather peculiar and unprecedented. So we have to wait and see which will be the outcomes of the White House policies and strategies at the conclusion of this presidency mandate. The evidence is that we will see still many smoke signs at the horizon and random doses of cheap populism and antagonism with unexpected choices. But the American democracy, values of liberal trust, multi-ethnicity and "exceptionalism" will hardly leave in the medium term any room to a real changing of its historic identity and fundamental values. Even so the downgrading of relation with China had been signed

by a trade dispute assuming months after months the tune of a typical trade war, usually eroding the fairness in international relations to all the contending parties and countries.

As before mentioned, specific consolidated data and detailed analyses on the economic, financial, environmental, technology, infrastructural and higher education developments in Central Asia, Caucasus, Near East, Central and Eastern Europe, Mediterranean, South Asia - the great regions applicable to the still very recent New Silk Road/BRI strategies and investments - are not yet available and we can just evaluate from the half picture we can observe now. We already know the basic trends emerging from existing data and forecasts: the EU and China will continue to increase their influence in the region, with Russia aside and still expecting further developments after the military intervention in Syria conflict to support Assad's regime. By the way, data shows Russia deluding share in value added trade and investments trends more or less with all the Central Asian countries, apart from personal remittance relevant figures. US as well had seen a reduction from the previous ranking data.

European Union and China are increasing their share on the global flows and stocks trade and FDI's to and from Central Asia even in these difficult years for the world economy and finance. More than this, China has a number of new platforms of international cooperation, like the CEEC 16+1 involving the Central Asian leaderships and major decision making protagonists, as well as those in the Caucasus and Black Sea region. There are great expectations of much higher developments with the two major external players in their own economy, environment and productive sectors as the Soviet era, in real terms, still negatively affects the attitudes, policies and tensions in the wide region. And the still lacking clear concrete really great numbers in the Silk Road-BRI may diffuse some wonderings on the span and horizons of the Chinese really challenging programs. But one thing is clear: for China, this is a pillar of the future foreign policy and economic-investment cooperation and in any case the results must be measured in the long run as based on investments and infrastructures not in a short term perspective.

The political aspects in any case are showing some dual attitudes of the EU and China. While on economic and Investments relations are moving on in a positive trend is in the foreign policy that clouds are at the horizon. South Sea tensions are reaching a too warm stage to be simply left aside, as it had been signaled by the G7 meeting recently convened in Toronto, Canada. In the last April 23 2018 joint communique released by foreign ministers from seven advanced economies that form the Group of Seven (G7) - Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States - the ministers expressed concern over the long-standing maritime row in the South China Sea, one of the issues they discussed in a meeting. The European Union was also represented in the meeting. "We reiterate our strong opposition to any unilateral actions that escalate tensions and undermine regional stability and the international rules-based order, such as the threat or use of force, large-scale land reclamation and building of outposts, as well as their use for military purposes," the G7 foreign ministers said".

They concluded saying that "diplomatic efforts should lead to demilitarization of disputed features" in the South China Sea. "We ask the relevant countries to respect facts, especially when it comes to maritime issues. They should also respect the efforts

made by regional countries to uphold stability while focusing on cooperation and development, and refrain from stirring up troubles and making irresponsible remarks,” Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Lu Kang said in a media briefing in Beijing Wednesday. It seems quite evident that in absence of a diplomatic solution and in front of growing military Chinese installation developments in the contended island and in absence of more diplomatic understanding tensions with the international community and with European Union will fatally grow, as its economic and strategic relations with the countries of the regions, at odds in the present controversial situation for the islands dispute and growing military relevance at global level. Never the less EU had not exasperated until now the scrambling of reciprocal very sharp statements, as the efforts are still done in the search of a more flexible diplomatic approach.

Last Bitter Cup

Last bitter cup to be drunk before concluding: Middle East is the real “conundrum” for the whole international community. The only point of reference in the region as a future player of stability is paradoxically Turkey - specifically after the failed domestic military coup, a failure that represents a sign of stability in the present situation - as it could become an accepted point of reference of a general settlement for all the parties at odds.

Day after day the need of an urgent commitment by the main powers to end definitively horrible civil war in Syria, with millions of refugees and innocent victims; to overcome the ethnic clashing in Iraq; to defeat the terroristic destabilization caused by the barbaric ISIL; to cease the fighting in all the theatres of conflicts in the Middle East, in Libya and in several countries of Africa; to search for a real negotiated solution for the conflict in Ukraine and the Crimea annexation; to avoid that the tension in Palestine and the pending Iran incumbent role in the Middle East region are keeping higher the incertitude. It’s true that Russia presence aside Assad’s regime is out of discussion but is not sure if this will be a value added for solution of reason for more instability and prolonged conflicts in Middle East. The same nuclear deal with Iran on nuclear status seems under evaluation in US for possible renegotiation but in absence of convergent views with the European Union and NATO most influent member countries. The cooling down process paving the way to reaching a sustainable, definitive conclusion of the conflicts in these strategic crucial regions must be assumed as a conditionality also for China and the New Silk Road success.

Conclusion

If the New Silk Road will be successful in the next decades, it means that many of the interrelated international negative factors would be already removed or on in the way to be resolved. A quick look to the summarized outlook of the situation of the economic relations, investments and other crucial indicators in Central Asia and Middle East will immediately show the conditionality of what this paper can assume in the present still fluid scenario. Whenever a pacification endeavour in the political and economic scenario will really be granted in all the regions affected by these destabilizing events, the results could be achieved.

European Union and China should take formal and visible political steps to push forward the process and the appropriate international consensus for the “game over” to all the parties responsible of the disaster of these last five years. As the pre-conditions of the absence of conflicts for a settlement of the millions of migrants and refugees will avoid a worst scenario of never ending revenge and hastily toward the international community. Where US and Russia didn’t reach yet the really strategic targets, EU and China can favour the best conditions and the effectiveness of measures, policies, diplomatic deals and funding of projects in the Central Asia Region, the Middle East, the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean destabilizing tensions, even supporting the East Africa aims of development.

A fresh upgrade of infrastructures and economies, an appropriate flows of resources from Europe and China might in the medium term normalize many of events in these focal regions. Central Asia is in fact the magic place where these events might be conceived and take place sooner than anywhere in different parts of the world, as we have seen the heritage history and the permanent factors of cultural and political relevance pushing in this direction. By the 2018-2019 we will see in which direction the international situation would move and how beneficial the new initiatives of cooperation and partnership will really move up and might bring the so-much-wait turning point in the all “one” Eurasian continent.

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