

Global Shift: The Transatlantic Community and the New Geopolitics

Thematic Outline and Research Questions

Globalization has brought great challenges to the Western centric system which has dominated global politics for the last three hundred years. The transatlantic area faces the prospect of becoming a smaller and less powerful player in the world system by the middle of this century. A relative decline has already begun in demographic terms. Less than three percent of world population growth over the next twenty years will be in the West. In addition to demographic decline, many scenario exercises and policy planning reports foresee a relative decline of Western economic influence over the next half century.¹

Non Western emerging market countries already hold 75 percent of the world's foreign exchange reserves and prior to the onset of the global economic crisis, Goldman Sachs predicted that by 2040 five emerging market countries (China, Russia, Mexico, India and Brazil) will have a larger output than the G-7 countries. China passed Germany to become the world's third largest economy at the end of 2008, and Japan to become the second largest in 2010. The rise of powers such as Russia, China, and India may be ushering in an era of global pluralism in which power is decentralized and the transatlantic community risks becoming less relevant. As the French

¹ See for example the report of the U.S. National Intelligence Council, *Global Trends 2025: A Transformed World*, which predicts that the world is entering a global multipolar system for the first time in human history. See as well, Nicole Gnesotto and Giovanni Grevi, *The New Global Puzzle: What World for the EU in 2025?* (Paris: Institute for Security Studies, 2007) and Fareed Zakaria, *The Post American World* (New York: Norton, 2008) and Gabor Steingart, *The War for Wealth: The True Story of Globalization, or Why the Flat World Is Broken* (New York) McGraw Hill Professional, 2008); for a skeptical view on the rise of Asia see Joshua Kurlantzick, "So Far, It Just Isn't Looking Like Asia's Century," *The Washington Post*, September 7, 2008, p. B3.

strategist, Francois Heisbourg, has written, “globalization is being de-Westernized, increasingly driven by the rise of Asia, limiting the Atlantic world’s ability to write the rules.”²

The sudden eruption of the world financial and economic crisis may alter some of these expectations and may cause a reassessment of what some has seen as the emergence of this post Western world. While the West has been substantially weakened by the economic crisis which began in late 2008, the rising powers or BRICS have also taken severe hits as well. Russia, for example, looks considerably less powerful than it did when oil prices were over \$140 a barrel. Serious concerns have also been raised about the cohesion of the West, both in terms of the transatlantic relationship and in regard to the cohesion of Europe and the future of the European Project.

The dispersion of global power is raising the prospect of global institutional sclerosis in a system in which no one power or group of powers will agree on a common approach to pressing global issues or have the legitimacy to lead. It also illustrates that the concept of the West and who belongs to it is continually evolving and is not limited to the transatlantic area. The West is not about geography but rather encompasses a set of institutions, regime types and values. During the Cold War era, the West came to be defined by security and strategic concerns centered on what was then called the East-West conflict. However, new geopolitical configurations and diverging threat assessments have reopened the question of both what constitutes the West and what is the basis for a transatlantic community.

This seems to be the time to reexamine assumptions about shifts in global power and the response of the transatlantic community to the unprecedented economic turmoil of this still young century.

Research Themes

In its first year, the Transatlantic Academy looked at the movement of people toward Western communities and how the transatlantic region was redefining itself in the wake on these massive population shifts. The second year will deal with the evolving role of Turkey and its relationship to the transatlantic community. In its third year (2010-2011), the Academy will widen its focus to consider how broader changes in the global political and economic order will affect the role of

² Francois Heisbourg, “Knowledge Holds the Key to French Defense,” *The Financial Times*, June 19, 2008, p.11.

the transatlantic states and societies in the world as well at their own understanding of their identities.

The Academy has brought together a multidisciplinary group of scholars to consider the big questions raised by the geopolitical shifts of the Twenty First century. These scholars are examining a wide range of topics to include the nature and implications of changes in the international political and economic system for the transatlantic community, the views of the West from inside and outside, the prospects for new regional orders and the implications for the North American-European relationship. Special attention will be given to prospects for and implications of the rise of Asian powers.

The Academy is concerned with whether the transatlantic community will effectively deal with these challenges or if it will rather begin to fragment and to compete against itself as individual western countries pursue policies designed to protect national or regional interests at the cost of transatlantic or European concerns.

The Academy Fellows will spend the year both conducting their own individual research and in developing a collaborative research project which will come to grips with some of the key challenges facing the transatlantic community.

While in China and Korea the Fellows are interested in discussing the following questions:

- What are the major security challenges in East Asia and are new institutions needed to manage them?
- What is the Chinese/South Korean perspective on the role of NATO in international affairs?
- Do Chinese leaders foresee an international order based on a “harmonious global society?”
- What – universal? – principles do Chinese leaders see (and would accept as binding for China) in such an order?
- Chinese perception of US, Europe, global governance: How does China see the role of the United States and Europe in global governance? Does it perceive the transatlantic

powers as declining, as rivals, or as cooperative partners open to letting China's influence rise within global governance?

- To what extent does the existing structure of global governance adequately reflect China's/Korea's position in the global economy and the global political arena more broadly? i.e. the major international institutions for multilateral cooperation—the UN, the IMF/World Bank, the WTO.
- How does domestic Chinese nationalism impact the country's foreign and security policy? What is the reasoning behind the choice to elevate the South China Sea to a "core issue" of national interest, on par with Tibet and Taiwan?
- What is the current state of China's relations with India, particularly along the border?
- In the years ahead China will face a serious demographic challenge (aging population, growing sex ratio imbalance). How is the government addressing the demographic timebomb?
- If one were to assume the international political order to be a dynamic construct that is gradually evolving, in what direction do you perceive it moving and what degree of overlap can you see between your country's interests and values and those of Europe / the U.S. / other emerging global actors?