Can Europe Help Prevent a Bi-polar World?

Jean-Christophe Bas and Richard Higgott

The contribution which an organized and living Europe can bring to civilization is indispensable to the maintenance of peaceful relations.

Declaration on the creation of a European Coal and Steel Community.

Robert Schuman, May 9, 1950.

Abstract This essay is built on three assumptions. Assumption one is that the *American led “rules-based world order”* is waning. Assumption two is that the world is witnessing an accompanying trend towards a *growing geo-political bifurcation* in two distinct global political ecologies; one under *US suzerainty* and the other under *Chinese suzerainty*. This essay proposes that *Chinese suzerainty is not inevitable*. Other major players must be engaged in this process and the European Union must be among them. Assumption three is that it is essential to *block the drift towards a bi-polar world*. That means that *European Union foreign policy* efforts must take a much more proactive and strategic role in revising the *American led “rules-based” world order*. To-date, Europe is struggling to develop a coherent position towards these challenges. This paper suggests the idea that the EU Commission should be (i) a “geopolitical commission” operating in an increasingly geo-political world and (ii) a continued the commitment of the EU to the values of multilateralism and *cooperative, collective action problem-solving*. While not necessarily contradictory, these are messages that do not normally sit easily together.

This chapter is the product of a major re-writing and updating of a Working Paper by Richard Higgott and Luk Van Langenhove, “The EU and the Unravelling of the World Order in Times of the COVID-19 Pandemic”, <https://cris.unu.edu/sites/cris.unu.edu/files/WP20.1%20-%20Higgott%20and%20Van%20Langenhove.pdf>. Copyright is held by the authors and permission is hereby granted to Higgott and Bas to use material from the Working Paper.

J.-C. Bas (✉)

The Global Compass, Paris, France

R. Higgott

University of Warwick, Coventry, UK

Keywords American led “rules-based world order” • Growing geo-political bifurcation • US suzerainty • Chinese suzerainty • Chinese suzerainty is not inevitable • Drift towards a bi-polar world • European Union foreign policy • American led “rules-based” world order • Cooperative, collective action problem-solving

1 Introduction

This short paper is built on three assumptions. Assumption one is that the American led world order is waning.¹ Assumption two is that we are witnessing an accompanying trend towards a growing geo-political bifurcation in two distinct global political ecologies; one under US suzerainty and the other under Chinese suzerainty. The paper does not assume this second trend is inevitable, but we do assume it is likely without positive intervention to ward it off. To mix metaphors, the ball is, of course, very much in the court of the two major players; but the ball is not for them alone to run with. Other actors must be engaged in this process and the EU must be among them. So, the third assumption of the paper is that if we are to have any hope of containing the drift towards a bi-polar world, then the European Union² must, to use a final sports metaphor, “step up to the plate”.

This paper investigates two core issues.

- (i) At a strategic level, it investigates the thinking of the major actors—the US and China—towards this trend. Depressingly, we argue that the bi-polar dynamic is increasingly driving the strategies of both powers and is unlikely to change in the near future. President Biden, we assume, may soften the rhetoric of bifurcation but not the practices—such as decoupling—that are in motion and will continue.
- (ii) At an applied policy level, the paper identifies the core issue areas in which processes of bifurcation are taking place; especially in the domains of security, economics, commerce and technology (especially AI, digitalization and cyber) embedded in a wider growing ideological-civilisational contest.³

At a regional level, we look at how the European Union is addressing the process of bifurcation. Its role will be examined as a series of both reactive and proactive responses to the challenges of pending bi-polarity. The first part of the paper sets out briefly these assumptions. The second half of the paper looks at them through European lenses. It sets both the challenges for Europe and the tasks that face Europe in mitigating them.

¹Always a problematic, the idea of “order” is used here descriptively not normatively. For a discussions See Acharya (2017).

²Europe and the EU are used interchangeably in this proposal.

³This tendency is discussed in some detail in the 2019 Rhodes Forum Report. See Dialogue of Civilisation Research Institute, *States, Civilisations and World Order*, <https://doc-research.org/2019/09/civilisations-states-and-world-order>.

2 Bifurcation and Its Implications

A drift towards bi-polarity is a multidimensional process. It is built on the growing competition between the USA and China in a range of distinct policy areas: broadly speaking security (military hard power), economy (trade, finance and infrastructure), technology (AI and cyber) and ideology (education, science and culture). In combination, these areas are building towards a generic level contest between the world's two dominant powers that in some of the more alarmist analyses is leading us inexorably towards a new Cold War. If not a new Cold War, then at least a new *geo-political order* is in the process of evolution with major implications for USA-China competition and implications and challenges for Europe.

To-date, Europe is struggling to develop a coherent position towards these challenges. It welcomes the arrival of Joe Biden, but it is wary of a full-blown recommitment to the trans-Atlantic relationship in the wake of four years of Donald Trump in which the US came to be seen as an untrustworthy ally. But Europe is also cognizant of what is perceived by many as the bullying and ruthless nature of China's growing global influence captured recently for example in the rise of its "wolf diplomacy" during 2020. Thus, the EU—which was at the epicentre of the first bipolar world during the Cold War—is yet to formulate a recognisable cohesive strategy to address the current trend. Pew recently found European views of both the USA and China to be more negative than positive. In brief, European (especially German) distrust of China as a country and Xi Jinping as a leader is at an all-time high.⁴ This growing lack of trust in China reflects the same lack of trust in the USA that developed in the EU during the Trump Administration.

The structure of a future world order is a work in progress. Currently, the EU seems to think it can cover the spectrum from being a genuine good liberal internationalist multilateral citizen at one end to being a realist geo-political strategic actor at the other.⁵ The issue for the EU in 2021 and beyond is how to manage the relationship with these two superpowers as they force a bifurcation of world order. The early signs are that this emerging order will be very different from the constituent form that dominated during the Cold War. If China, or perhaps more precisely, Xi Jinping's diplomacy, has over-reached in recent years with attendant negative consequences and trust issues for China, then Biden's desire to secure a new alliance of liberal democracies via a Summit for Democracy to "renew the spirit and shared purpose of the nations of the Free World" is equally fraught with the danger of over-reach following four years of Donald Trump's wrecking-ball diplomacy.⁶

A good idea in principle, the proposed summit nevertheless risks looking like an attempt to put the genie back in the bottle by simply rehashing a G7+ view of world order. Like it or not, allusions to the "free world" no longer carry the moral authority they might once have done when Joe Biden first entered the US Senate forty-seven years ago. Adding several other countries to his summit—for example,

⁴Silver et al. (2020).

⁵For an early articulation of this argument see Higgott and Van Langenhove (2020).

⁶See Stiglitz (2020) and Biden (2020).

Australia, South Korea and India—would make it look no less elitist or exclusionary. Other inclusions or exclusions will only make the enterprise seem more problematic. America's unipolar moment has passed.

In an op ed published in *The Guardian* 22 December 2020 entitled “*Biden wants to convene an international ‘Summit for Democracy’. He shouldn’t*”, David Adler and Stephen Wertheim argued:

...the summit will not succeed. It is at once too blunt and too thin an instrument. Although the summit might serve as a useful forum for coordinating policy on such areas as financial oversight and election security, it is liable to drive US foreign policy even further down a failed course that divides the world into hostile camps, prioritizing confrontation over cooperation ... If Biden is to make good on his commitment to ‘meet the challenges of the 21st century’, his administration should avoid recreating the problems of the 20th. Only by diminishing antagonism toward the nations outside the ‘democratic world’ can the US rescue its democracy and deliver deeper freedom for its people.

Unlike the bi-polarity of the US-USSR Cold War, any new bifurcation will not be built around hard and fast politico-ideological blocs. China does not represent the existential threat of mutually assured destruction that drove strategy and diplomacy in the earlier bi-polar era. Rather its challenges arise more in the domains of technology and economy. Moreover, smaller global actors in the current era—state and non-state alike—are not simply waiting for the US to return to provide their security. They can be expected to flow between either the US or the Chinese spheres, traversing specific issue areas in a manner that was not the case in the twentieth century Cold War. A potential further unintended consequence is that talk of democracy alliances could exacerbate the bifurcation process by driving Moscow and Beijing closer together.

Much stock—indeed far too much stock we believe—is being placed on the potential of the new administration in the United States to address this trend. But how the Biden Administration will change both the rhetoric and practice of international order can only be assumed at this stage. For sure, the rhetoric will change, as will some US practices—especially with regard to a range of multilateral activities such as the Paris Agreement, and the WHO to name but two—but we can only speculate at this stage regarding the degree to which policy will halt, let alone roll back, the wider *structural geo-political* and *geo-economic* trends currently in motion. Biden, one can only assume, will rapidly come to the conclusion that he needs to deal with the world as it is, not as it was prior to Donald Trump. But this will require a shift in thinking for the incoming administration away from a Trumpian transactional approach towards a system in which delusions (for that is what they are in the 2020s) of American exceptionalism should no longer drive US foreign policy.

A disagreement on values, culture and modes of governance should not prevent cooperation on fundamental issues to guarantee peace and stability, the fight against terrorism, sustainability of the planet and health safety. Nor should it be impossible to find a path to agreement on a reformed multilateral framework to achieve the indispensable goals of development and prosperity. Bifurcation does not only not correspond to the aspirations and well-being of humanity but also makes cooperation difficult if not impossible. Alternative approaches other than bifurcation must be explored. Alternatives on offer are captured well in an article in *The Atlantic* in

July 2020. Then, President of the Carnegie Endowment, William Burns (President Biden's new head of the CIA) proposed that:

The United States must choose from three broad strategic approaches: retrenchment, restoration, and reinvention... We can't afford to just put more-modest lipstick on an essentially restorationist strategy, or, alternatively, apply a bolder rhetorical gloss to retrenchment. We must reinvent the purpose and practice of American power, finding a balance between our ambition and our limitations...

3 The European Dimension

Joe Biden has expressed a desire to reassert American trans-atlantic leadership in dealing with China economically and Russia militarily. Yet an optimistic view of a diplomatic reset is problematic. After four years of Donald Trump, both Europe's leaders and its general public have indicated that they will only cautiously and selectively support American rapprochement. As a recent German Marshall Fund survey found, there is little support from the French or German public for their governments to get involved in a number of current international issues central to US policy.⁷ Indeed, despite its expressed preference for global multilateral cooperation, Europe's leaders have indicated an intent to hedge geopolitically when faced with a growing bifurcation of American and Chinese positions in key policy domains such as ecology and climate, trade, investment, finance, infrastructure, digital, military, education, culture and science.

Rhetorically, for example, Emmanuel Macron has advocated: "European solutions for European problems", and Josep Borrell, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, has more pointedly called for EU, "strategic autonomy".⁸ The rhetoric of strategic autonomy is increasingly reflected in EU policy behaviour. On the one hand, the EU signed an investment agreement with China that has disappointed the incoming Biden Administration, seeking to establish a common position against what it regards as malicious Chinese behaviour. However, the agreement has been welcomed by some prominent American analysts.⁹ On the other hand, British and French aircraft carriers have conducted freedom of navigation operations in the East and South China Seas, much to China's ire and America's delight. But one-off examples of individual policy behaviour do not represent a consistent approach to diplomacy. It would be naïve to believe that a European strategy could be built on a process of issue-by-issue hedging between China and the US.

Multilateralism may be instinctively preferable for Europeans, but there are no simple panaceas in a world of prospective growing spheres of influence. First, establishing operational strategic autonomy requires the EU selectively developing a

⁷Transatlantic Trends, 2020, https://www.gmfus.org/sites/default/files/TT20_Final.pdf, pp. 12–13. See also Stokes 2020.

⁸Brzozowski (2020), Borrell (2020).

⁹See Sachs (2020).

member state consensus on the best ends, ways and means to consolidate an independent yet complementary position between the two behemoths. Secondly, but still significantly, EU policy will need to develop a coherence with a post-Brexit UK if it is to be successful. This will require a greater flexibility of strategic thinking and diplomacy than either side of the Channel demonstrated in the final stages of the Brexit negotiations. Both will require skill and a nuanced use of material resources—adaptable to a variety of contexts. But the prospects of managing the US will be enhanced only the unlikely event of the EU and the UK proving capable of aligning their respective approaches to their transatlantic ally.

To address the limitations in its coherence and capacities and to avoid sending out mixed messages to the wider international community, Europe must address two major issues in its diplomacy:

- (i) The development and viability of the core elements beyond simply the rhetoric of European *strategic autonomy* as a means to combat global bifurcation. The priorities, forms and limitations of that EU strategy must be articulated.
- (ii) The tools that the EU has at its disposal, and those that it will need to build, if it is to succeed as a diplomatic actor enhancing its economic and military security in the increasingly bifurcated world, will also need to be articulated and honed.

4 How is the EU to Avoid “Mixed Messaging”?

The EU is surely correct to adopt a more strategically independent approach towards a troubled and competitive world order. But a full-bore commitment to a *geopolitical* strategic disposition is at odds with the path the EU has taken over the last several decades, especially in its commitment to collective problem solving in multilateral institutional settings. For all the challenges it faces, multilateral collaboration is still the best approach for the EU to articulate and propagate. Notwithstanding setbacks along the way, it has served the EU well as it has developed over the last sixty years. Moreover, all things considered, multilateralism remains the best option for a more peaceful, stable and prosperous world order.¹⁰ Objections to the rationalist, liberal multilateral endeavour of course exist, but realists describe attempts to secure common, collective action solutions to global challenges as no more than globalist-cosmopolitan meanderings.¹¹

In an era when populist leaders try to normalise the nationalist postures of the realist, it falls to the EU to provide the intellectual and practical leadership necessary to halt this trend. It will best do so by reasserting the core liberal values that underpin the European project. We present seven propositions as to how this might be done.

¹⁰ Although this argument can only be asserted here we have fully elaborated it in the 2020 Rhodes Forum report: *Can Multilateral Cooperation be Saved?* https://doc-research.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Rhodes-report_Download-file2.pdf.

¹¹ See for example Mearsheimer (2018).

We propose these seven in a way that resists both the populist-nationalist discourse and, in turn, mitigates the geopolitical discourse of traditional realism with which the Commission was dabbling throughout 2020:

4.1 The US is looking a less reliable actor and long-term partner. Thus the EU—while embracing the US security relationship—should do more to defend itself.

There are damaging long-term splits in the EU's relationship with the US that need to be repaired. The future of NATO, the strategy towards Iran, trade and protectionism, the importance of international institutions (especially the UN and WTO) and global environmental policy are all in need of priority attention. A strategy of European Defence can coexist with NATO, especially with the EU buying more than 80% of its military hardware from the US. Russia should also be engaged, but in a European way. On an issue such as Russian readmittance to the G7, we need to adhere to President Macron's view of re-engagement with "necessary prerequisites", rather than former President Trump's condition-free approach.

4.2 Europe must lead the reform and (re)-strengthening of multilateralism in the absence of either US or Chinese leadership. This is especially poignant as we celebrate the 75th anniversary of the creation of the UN. As both High Representative Borrell and President Von der Leyen have noted, multilateralism comes naturally to the EU. As she says "Cooperating and working with others is what our Union is all about". But multilateralism must change. It needs to adapt to the growing hybridity in international relations, become less bureaucratic and be more open to non-state actors. A new multipolar system will require new rules, or at least reform of the old rules. Sensitively espoused and properly contextualised, "rules-based order" preferences emanating from long-standing liberal democratic norms still have considerable purchase power and Europe remains a laboratory of multilateralism and multi-level governance. It must act as a defender of these principles and support the reform of institutional practice where necessary.

The venues of diplomacy and dialogue need reinvigoration or, as with the WTO, they will continue to atrophy. The challenge is to get the balance right between a tired-looking international institutional technocracy and the need for a multilateral diplomacy to provide public goods in a nuanced and moderated fashion. This should be a diplomacy that exhibits an appropriate compromise, reflecting the demands of *all* major players in the modern order and taking advantage of modern communicative technologies. The EU must support multilateralism with all the vigour it can muster. It must put real support, not just rhetoric, behind the Franco-German led *Alliance for Multilateralism*. But while the EU must stand firm in the pursuit of modern-day multilateralism, it must also tread softly and deftly.

4.3 The EU should strengthen its inter-regional multilateral relations, especially in its own neighbourhood. In a world drifting away from global multilateralism, inter-regional relations will become increasingly important. This is especially true regarding Eurasia, East Asia, the Middle East and North African (MENA) and Sub-Saharan Africa regions. EU-Asia relations will grow as trans-Atlantic relations become more strained. The EU understands the global "China issue". But in

contrast to US policy towards China, the EU should work towards accommodation, not confrontation. This does not mean accepting everything that China does that may be questionable. Cautiously nurturing the relationship is not the same as either passive acceptance or aggressive rejection.

The EU should treat the concept and practice of Eurasia seriously. It is gaining momentum as both an economic and a geopolitical fact of life. The relationship between Russia and China might be fitful, but it would be imprudent to assume that it will not consolidate in the security or the economic domain in the near term, especially since the relationship is now developing more on the basis of strategic pragmatism rather than, as in the past, ideology.

The EU should recognise that events across the Mediterranean will have an adverse impact in the longer run if sustainable governance and growth and development strategies cannot be put in place to contain the pressures of economic and political migration. Less talk of Europe as a “cultural superpower” and more talk of pragmatic partnership and business potential that takes the relationship beyond a residual colonial legacy will change the atmospherics of the relationship. The two continents are going to be more integrated across a range of economic and political issue areas in the years to come. Now is the time to think comprehensively about a systemic strategy that balances both optimism and pessimism about the future of the continent. The development of a “continent to continent” relationship, with North and Sub-Saharan Africa treated as a single entity, should be an important development.

4.4 The EU needs to take the lead in combating climate change: The European Green Deal is premised on the assumption identified in the 2019-24 *New Strategic Agenda for the EU* that climate change is “an existential threat”. The EU cannot solve this challenge on its own. It is a foreign policy issue. The new Commission has the impressive ambition to combine growth with sustainable development. In theory, the proposed EUR 100 billion deal will cut emissions while also creating jobs and improving quality of life. But to do so it will require massive investment in infrastructure, research, innovation and green technologies, as well as a commitment to stimulate a circular economy. Moreover, it will also need policies to decouple economic growth from resource depletion and environmental degradation. This implies levying carbon taxes on imports, becoming carbon neutral by 2050 and developing the various technologies needed to get there as the EU becomes the partner of countries also wishing to address the climate change challenge. This task is not simply an internal affair, but also one that will change the EU’s external policy. Its ambition here will, for example, affect EU trade policy and its policy of scientific and technological cooperation.

4.5 Dealing with digitalisation and digital disruption must be another EU priority. These issues are foreign policy and international relations questions as much as internal questions that the EU must resolve. The need and desire of states to preserve their “information sovereignty” is a major policy issue, as issues of sovereignty and jurisdiction compete with freedom and openness. The EU will need to respond to both the *hierarchical* behaviour of the digital “superpowers” (the US and China) and the aspiring great powers (notably Russia and India) and the *hybridity*

of the principal non-state digital players that have driven digitalisation in the twenty-first century: notably Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon and Microsoft (GAFAM) companies in the US and Tencent, Huawei, Baidu, Alibaba and Weibo in China.

The major states are now harnessing privately developed technological platforms of power to enhance their rhetoric and practice of nationalism in the battle to safeguard (and control) national digital economies. Current tensions over design, governance and jurisdiction reflect broader global fissures. In the current era, the US and China are creating two sharply defined technological and online systems—or separate *digital ecologies*. The American system is still primarily private sector-driven, while China's is state-driven. But both systems envelop the development of AI, big data, 5G and instruments of cyber warfare. The European President appears to understand the implications of this for the EU, especially the digitalisation of finance. Importantly here, it is time for the EU to get over its inferiority complex vis-à-vis the US dollar, especially as the US now uses it as an economic weapon. As Russia and China look to trade in roubles and renminbi, the EU should ensure that European financial instruments are used strategically to enhance Europe's leadership and influence in the world of digital practice and governance.

4.6 The EU must not follow the US in seeking a major decoupling of manufacturing and industrial sectors. Decoupling in the name of national security is a US response to China as a strategic competitor. China is also showing signs of a decoupling strategy. But supply chain integration is much greater than vocal “decouplers” appreciate and support for this trend is still alarming. Integrated supply chains are still one of our best hopes for avoiding a new Cold War. Europe lacks the clout to contest US, Chinese or Russian politico-strategic power. The EU should be a major player *but* has to-date “muddled through”, so it must now make the best of the economic and trade assets to remain the champion of global commerce.

As a top three global trader, regardless of how painful it might be, the EU must deal with US protectionist recklessness and a preference for transactional/bilateral negotiation if an open trading regime is to survive. It will not be alone. Others will support the EU position, especially states along the East Asian seaboard from China down through Japan, South Korea and into the major Southeast Asian trading states. Support will also be found in outward facing Africa, Latin America and Oceania. The EU should show resolve towards excessive Chinese intrusion into its affairs, especially in AI and digital information technologies. But it should equally avoid decoupling from China simply to conform to American wishes and pressure.

4.7 The EU needs to acknowledge that for many people in Europe, migration is the major policy challenge. Therefore, coherent, humane and fair policies are needed. But to do this Brussels must now deal with the principal opponents to a sensible migration policy—populists and nationalists. Not only have they grown more politically powerful, they *are becoming internationalist in their outlook*. While still strongly Eurosceptical, the new populist-nationalists are learning to harness a pan-European identity to further their goal of a racially pure, white Christian continent. Nationalists have done this by adopting a broader “civilisational” outlook on international relations which ironically focuses on European, not nationalist, culture.

Conflict is moving in a nationalist cross-cultural civilisational direction, although nationalist views of European values focus less on issues of freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights than racial and ethnic identity politics and a privileged status for Judaism and Christianity.

Adjusting old narratives to new environments will not be enough to restore the liberal order. New mindsets will need to take into account the impact of modern communicative technologies on international relations as we strive to maintain an open (and increasingly digitally networked) new order. Digital communication changes the nature of state bargaining and cooperative strategies. The governance dilemma is no longer simply democracy *versus* autocracy; it is also *open* governance versus *closed* governance. This applies in particular to the role of those self-empowered international civil society networks outside the scope of governments and for whom many traditional liberal values remain salient. There will (must) still be a place for democracy (of many variants), freedom of thought, rule of law and human rights. Europe must be their advocate. But these values will have to exist within a context of greater respect for national values and civilisational identity. In an open order we should expect power to be distributed more horizontally—both publicly and privately and with flatter, reciprocal structures—than in the past. So-called soft power will become increasingly, not less, important and increasingly digital in its application.

5 Conclusion

The world is drifting, *faut de mieux*, towards a US-China bi-polar world. The European Union must decide what strategy might best allow it to resist this drift. What should its strategic message be? This paper has suggested that to outside observers two competing views might appear to emanate from its senior leadership: (i) The idea that the new Commission will be a “geopolitical commission” operating in an increasingly geopolitical world and (ii) a continuing commitment by the EU to the values of multilateralism and cooperative, collective action problem solving. While not necessarily contradictory, these are messages that do not normally sit easily together.

Sometime soon, choices will need to be made. The EU should not become a purely *Realpolitik*-driven player—implicit in the first view—if it really believes in and intends to stick to its internationalist values, expressed in the second view. It must behave better than the great powers if it is to lead by example. A geopolitical road needs to be resisted for a geo-sustainable strategic agenda that offers innovative ways to deal with climate change, digital disruption and migration and that strengthens multilateralism as a way to securing greater inter-regional and intercultural cooperation and an open, non-protectionist global trade regime in the face of the protectionist and decoupling urges of its major trans-Atlantic ally. Only by privileging its internationalist message can Europe hope to play a significant role in the mitigation of the trend towards bi-polarity.

References

- Acharya A (2017) *The end of American world order*. Cambridge, Polity
- Biden J (2020) Why America must lead again: rescuing US foreign policy after Trump. Foreign Affairs. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-01-23/why-america-must-lead-again>
- Borrell J (2020) The pandemic should increase our appetite to be more autonomous. European Union External Action. https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/82060/pandemic-should-increase-our-appetite-be-more-autonomous_en
- Brzozowski A (2020) In Munich, Macron presents EU reform as answer to ‘weakening West’. Euroactiv. <https://www.euractiv.com/section/future-eu/news/in-munich-macron-presents-eu-reform-as-answer-to-weakening-west/>
- Higgott R, Van Langenhove L (2020) The EU and the unravelling of world order in the time of COVID-19. <http://cris.unu.edu/eu-covid19-unravelling-world-order>
- Mearsheimer J (2018) *The great delusion: liberal dreams and international realities*. Yale University Press, New Haven
- Sachs J (2020) Europe and China’s year end breakthrough. Project Syndicate. https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/eu-china-investment-agreement-by-jeffrey-d-sachs-2020-12?utm_source=Project+Syndicate+Newsletter&utm_campaign=10de40350f-sunday_newsletter_01_03_2021&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_73bad5b7d8-10de40350f-107044401&mc_cid=10de40350f&mc_eid=d775e5422c
- Silver L, Devlin K, Wang C (2020) Unfavourable views of China reach all time highs in many countries. Pew Research Center: Global Attitudes and Trends. <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2020/10/06/unfavorable-views-of-china-reach-historic-highs-in-many-countries/>
- Stiglitz JE (2020) Reclaiming America’s Greatness. Project Syndicate. <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/reclaiming-american-greatness-by-joseph-e-stiglitz-2020-09?barrier=accesspaylog>
- Stokes B (2020) Joe Biden must think about the transatlantic alliance if he wins. The Hill. <https://thehill.com/opinion/international/505312-joe-biden-must-think-about-the-transatlantic-alliance-if-he-wins>

Jean-Christophe Bas is the CEO of The Global Compass. He was previously CEO of the Dialogue of Civilizations Institute in Berlin; Director of Democratic Citizenship and Participation at the Council of Europe; deputy head of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations in New York; Head Development Policy Dialogue at the World Bank. He is the author of *Europe à la carte* (2009). He is regularly invited to give speeches on issues related to multiculturalism and identity; democracy and participation; cultural diversity; leadership and global affairs.

Richard Higgott is Distinguished Professor of Diplomacy in the Brussels School of Governance at the Vrije Universiteit Brussels, Emeritus Professor of International Political Economy at the University of Warwick and Visiting Professor in Political Science at the University of Siena. His latest book, *States, Civilisations and the Reset of World Order*, published in September 2021.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if you modified the licensed material. You do not have permission under this license to share adapted material derived from this chapter or parts of it.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.