

# Multilateralism

## Fading or changing?

---

DORU ROMULUS COSTEA

*Ambassador and Romania Permanent Representative  
to the United Nations in Geneva*

‘The World Is A-Changin’

—*Bob Dylan*

‘—What do you think of the French Revolution?

—It is too early to tell.’

—*Mao Tse-Tung to André Malraux*

### ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF MULTILATERALISM

FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS—POLITICIANS, ANALYSTS, AND DIPLOMATS HAVE been worrying that multilateralism is in danger—at best—or actually so emaciated that it is as well as dead—at worst. The arguments that are brought forward to prove the truth of these warnings are mostly related to the challenges facing the global security and peace, and the main message is targeted to countries that have been increasingly dealing with these challenges clearly favoring a ‘one-on-one’ approach or, sometimes, resorting to clusters of (more or less) like-minded states.

As a general principle, it is healthy to debate whether this quickly-changing world of ours can still be governed by methods and rules that were set more than half a century ago. It would be a cliché to state that the world in the twenty-first century is radically different from what it used to be fifty years ago; the same worn-out truth is that the aftershock waves of the end of the Cold War are still roaming and impact on realities

that used to be considered settled once and for all. Last, but not at all least, 9/11 is a turning point in the approach of global affairs: there are few days in the history of mankind that are credited with such far-reaching and complex consequences, in terms of both their scope and depth.

There are many issues at stake in this debate: multilateralism is about more than security—or, to be more accurate, security has become more than the absence of military threats, of acts of war or of terrorists. Likewise, the international institutions that were set up after WW II—and that have proliferated, as we shall see later on—have been constantly trying to cope with a reality that goes on being more dynamic, less predictable and even less manageable with old tools—be they time-proven ones.

One line of thinking would be to question whether it is worth wondering about our ability to keep up with what is going on around us. This does NOT mean that whatever is happening does so without us knowing about it—for it is us, after all, that are the direct producers of this change. But this very fact may be the reason of the confusion: the development of technology, information, communication, and everything else that we all know only too well, and which is flattening the world, as Friedman says, is enabling us to do things to our environment—in the wider sense—that would have effects about which we are not fully aware. We may be too close to the evolving picture—and too busy with making it develop.

This chapter is an attempt to cast a quick glance at what multilateralism was—or rather at how we have grown accustomed to see it—and then to be an invitation to pondering whether the multilateral approach is indeed in crisis. We might find that what we need to do is not necessarily an emergency intervention to resuscitate a deeply wounded phenomenon, but rather to think about the need to follow the ‘breakthrough’ pattern of almost everything that we, as a global community, have been doing for the last couple of decades. We may conclude that it is us who should be more daring and innovative, more forward-thinking and positive-acting rather than indulging in finger-pointing while cunningly ignoring what each of us—meaning nations of the world, or member-states of international organizations—should have done, and did not. In other words, the intervention may prove necessary, but not for bringing the system back to order, as much as for re-thinking and rehabilitating it, including by providing it with new tools, ways of decision-making and means of action.

## WHAT MULTILATERALISM?

The literature on the topic has been growing apace and so did the alternatives, both conceptual and operational: Wallerstein writes about the ‘soft multilateralism’ of the United States;<sup>1</sup> important political statements refer to ‘effective multilateralism’;<sup>2</sup> and Robert Kagan predicts the advent of ‘multilateralism American style’<sup>3</sup>—to name but a few. As for ‘multilateral actions’, there are more than a couple of instances where the educated Tom, Dick, and Harry would be in a really difficult position if they had to answer to a ‘yes-or-nay’ opinion poll on whether the attack on Iraq in 2003 was a result of a unilateral decision or the outcome of a multilateral endeavor; in this latter case, it is still unclear to what extent their opinions would be shaped by the (international) media.

It is not a mere coincidence that worries about the fate of multilateralism took shape and voice after the world had passed from a familiar multipolar system to something else. Some call it a unipolar order and acknowledge the supremacy of the United States in all the fields that count—from military might to the cultural performance; others noted years ago that, in certain aspects, there were emerging powers—be it in economics, finance, or trade—that would certainly contradict the widely-accepted perception of the two world superpowers.

In many respects, the roots of the ‘conceptual confusion’<sup>4</sup> go beyond the political readiness to blame the powers that be, and merely express the degree of uncertainty that prevails on the theoretical approach of current global affairs. That the media is a political-decision shaper is part of the basic electoral training of any politician; yet, there are many

<sup>1</sup> I. Wallerstein, ‘Soft Multilateralism’, in *The Nation*. [www.thenation.com/doc/20040202/wallerstein](http://www.thenation.com/doc/20040202/wallerstein).

<sup>2</sup> The US–UK Joint Statement on Multilateralism, 20 November 2003. The Irish Presidency of the EU (first half of 2004) had used the same phrase in outlining its priorities.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Kagan, ‘Multilateralism, American Style’, in *The Washington Post*, 13 September 2002.

<sup>4</sup> This is the title of a chapter in John V. Oudenaren’s paper, ‘What is Multilateral?’ in *Policy Review*, no. 117, February/March 2003. The confusion that Oudenaren is talking about is between multilateralism and multipolarity; it is our view that many aspects that are presented there may be related to the new reality of the global scene, which challenges theoretical approaches.

cases when major decisions were taken regardless of the public opinion, and *that* is also a well-known fact. The impact of the global information village is, alongside other globalized phenomena, another factor that renders the assessment of the true meaning of multilateralism difficult.

It could be readily agreed that '[i]n the political sphere, multilateralism is embodied in the universally accepted obligations contained in the U.N. Charter, the provisions of international treaties, and customary international law'.<sup>5</sup> However, '*multilateralism is easiest to define in economic affairs, where it remains the bedrock on which the international financing and trading systems are built*';<sup>6</sup> this seems to be such a well-known fact that the first line of the definition of multilateralism in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Politics* reads '*an approach to international trade, the monetary system...*'.<sup>7</sup> It is then safe to note that (a) the political meaning of multilateralism is rather loosely defined; and (b) it is in the economic domain that multilateralism has proved its resilience and strength. So, we may want to look closer to the economic multilateralism first, in order to see to what extent it is hurting. As a side-thought, we could discover that it is not the 'usual suspect' that is always to blame for unilateral attempts; it is also true that we may find that very few international actors can indulge in this dangerous kind of attitude any more. However, this chapter deals with the political aspects of multilateralism.

As mentioned before, the literature would reveal an interesting list of qualifications for the multilateralism that is seemingly taking shape nowadays: all of them are inciting and may be true, if put together into the same definition. It is a sign as to the multitude of aspects that one has to take into account when trying to find a way out of the dilemma.

To try to sort things out and reach a clear understanding of multilateralism in the Third Millennium is a challenge worth facing. Like in many other instances, it certainly is more feasible to put forward negative definitions and, sometimes, trace the causes of certain developments back to a source that everybody knows is there, somewhere, but very few—if at all—can really delineate. Looking at the trend-setting actions of US international policy, the debate seems to be rather '*less about unilateralism*

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Iain McLean, Alistair McMillan, eds, *Oxford—The Concise Dictionary of Politics*, Oxford University Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, 2003, p. 356.

*versus multilateralism than about the trade-offs of alternative strategies and frameworks of multilateral cooperation*.<sup>8</sup>

#### MULTILATERALISM SINCE WW II

It can be argued that multilateralism was born, Phoenix-like, from the ashes of the League of Nations—and, more painful, of the last thirty-year World War, as some call it. There is also a common acceptance that multilateralism was a reality during the Cold War. However, during the Cold War, the UN was largely marginalized in international security issues, as the P-5 seldom succeeded in working together. Things have improved during the last decade of the last century, and ever since, with the notable three exceptions of the Middle East conflict, Kosovo, and Iraq. Three trends have developed:

- a. international bodies have become more involved in internal matters of various states (there is also a conceptual breakthrough that has a Romanian touch: the resolution on democracy and the human rights, which is a Romanian initiative, introduced the term of ‘democracy’ in UN documents in 2000);
- b. references to Chapter VII of the Charter have become more frequent (although the present Iranian file is an argument to the contrary...); and
- c. the alternative of international administration of failed/collapsed states.<sup>9</sup>

Many analysts point to the second term of the Clinton administration in order to highlight the beginning of the erosion of multilateralism; yet, it is more accurate to consider that multilateralism, which was hailed as a new approach after 1945, seems to have a longer troubled record. Indeed, if multilateralism is to be equated, or at least, closely related to the UN, then it would be but normal to conclude that it has been sharing the fate of the latter. Consequently, the syllogism would run like:

<sup>8</sup> Shepard Forman and Stewart Patrick, *Multilateralism and U.S. Foreign Policy: Ambivalent Engagement*, Carnegie Endowment for Peace (edited transcript of remarks, 5 February 2002 [www.cceia.org/viewMedia.php/prmTemplateID/8/prmID/127](http://www.cceia.org/viewMedia.php/prmTemplateID/8/prmID/127)).

<sup>9</sup> Shepard Forman, Kishore Mahbubani and David Malone, *Unilateralism and U.S. Foreign Policy*, edited transcript of remarks, 24 April 2003, Carnegie Council panel discussion. [www.cceia.org/viewMedia.php/prmTemplateID/8/prmID/933#2](http://www.cceia.org/viewMedia.php/prmTemplateID/8/prmID/933#2).

- multilateralism is linked to the UN;
- the UN has been under permanent pressure to reform;
- multilateralism is undergoing deep reform.

It may well be that the feelings towards the ways in which the world used to be ruled during the second half of the twentieth century are somehow distorted by the nostalgia of the ‘*good old times when one knew who is against what*’.<sup>10</sup> The bipolar world has deep roots in the geopolitics of the confrontation era and not even the NAM could do much about it. The Agenda for Development (1994) admitted that ‘development is in crisis’ and that the ‘poorest nations fall further behind’. This came after the Third Development Decade had proved to be as less successful as the previous two decades.

On a scale wider than development issues, the multilateral environment has undergone tremendous changes since the end of WW II: the UN membership; more and more International Governmental Organizations, or IGOs, whose expenses are public money, go beyond \$ 200 billion a year and are hardly accountable; the stunning number of 5,000 international treaties and conventions; and the increasingly strong positions and influence of the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)—to name but a few. At the same time, a major trend has developed, which may be called the democratization of the international environment: it consists of the increasing number of the players that have the world as a stage. This number is made of states; business entities, whose net profits surpass sometime national budgets; organizations that are bringing together public and private partners; the media, both national and international, as sometimes it is difficult to tell one from the other—the list can go on. One of the magic links that binds these actors and makes their interaction not only possible, but also effective, is the information technology—the Internet and the world wide web that has reached the point when nobody can afford to ignore it, at their own loss.

There are other actors too, less traditional in terms of identity, yet not less efficient and, in some cases, even more visible than well-established IGOs. The life-record of the G-8 is a telling illustration of multilateral approaches of another kind: as the group arose informally during the

<sup>10</sup> Robert Cooper, *The Breaking of Nations—order and chaos in the twentieth first century*, Atlantic Monthly Press, New York, 2003, p. 164: ‘Pleas for multilateralism by European countries [...] may reflect a nostalgia for Cold War days when Europe was at the centre of a global struggle in a world in which there was still some military balance.’

1970s from the meetings of finance ministers arranged by President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing of France and Chancellor Helmut Schmidt of the then West Germany, its main agenda was economic. As the years went by, this field, even if increasingly complex, has gained fellow agenda-items, like non-proliferation, promotion of democracy, fighting pandemics like AIDS and combating counterfeiting and piracy. Moreover, participation in these meetings began to widen, and representatives of developing countries and emerging economies are now regular guests. The latest event in this respect—i.e. the St. Petersburg meeting—also provides the most recent evidence about the possible increasing significance of such formats on major international developments: the second paragraph of the G-8 statement on trade urged the WTO members ‘*to commit to the concerted leadership and action needed to reach a successful conclusion of the Doha round*’ and called on the Director General to facilitate ‘*agreement on negotiating modalities on agriculture and industrial tariffs within a month*.’<sup>11</sup>

#### REACTIONS TO PRESSURES ON MULTILATERALISM

Following these developments, multilateralism has been under pressure, as a concept and, even more important, as a practice. As a result, two trends of thought have basically emerged:

- a. multilateralism is undermined, basically by the sole superpower in a unipolar world: action is needed to recover its strength; or
- b. multilateralism needs to adapt: hence, *the effective multilateralism*, which *will guide our approach* (the US/UK Joint Statement on Multilateralism, 2003, November 20)

The first trend seems to be rooted in the logic of the Confrontation Age, even if there is truth in the assertion that ‘[w]hatever the United States does has global consequences. That cannot be said for most other countries. Given that basic imbalance, there are naturally diverging views about the merits of multilateralism.’ (*Globalist*, 8 April 2004). At the same time, to recognize that one—or just a couple—of states can exert a critical influence on the course of the international developments is merely to admit a reality; but it is also a step on the slippery slope of mixing equal sovereignty with equal power. It is obvious that all actors on the world stage are not stars; it is also morally binding to allow all of them to live

<sup>11</sup> en.g8russia.ru/docs/16.html.

their parts to the best of their abilities. This is what the Charter of the UN pledges to do and this is what all who have signed it and gained a seat in the General Assembly expect to happen. Many critics of the US 'unilateralism' seem to be persuaded that '*all the United States needs to do to put the country back on track is to return to the policies of the past thirty years*'.<sup>12</sup> Then, again, it seems that even in the United States, the debate between multilateralists and unilateralists is about 'style and tactics', since '[m]ost would rather have allies. They just don't want the United States prevented from acting alone if the allies refuse to come along'.<sup>13</sup> The question is: are the options that are put forward, anything more than a conservationist approach to a changing environment?

At the end of the day, this looks much like the age-long tension between the old—i.e. the 'known' reality, with its ups and downs, with its several 'good things' and many 'bad things' that we have grown accustomed to and so, they don't scare us, even if they do cause problems; and the 'fear of the unknown', the threat of the new, the familiar apprehension of the things that have not been done before (especially in rather conservative institutions like the MFAs and/or the international organizations). As we are going to see further on, the 'new' here is actually the day-to-day events of the increasingly interdependent international environment; and this is one of the features of globalization—a reality that is taking shape as we try to manage it. In a sense, it is like adjusting the rules of the game while the play is still on; not that decision-makers and policy-planners have not done that before! But never before has this environment been so complex and inter-related, while the intellectual exercise and the political and diplomatic tool-kit still has a long way to go in terms of being updated.

The second tendency seems to pay more attention to the reality-check: there are instances when old solutions, even if successfully tried, simply do not work. The example that has become classical now, not because of age, but because of repetition and complexity, is the anti-terrorism fight. The arguments are well known, so there is no need to repeat them here; what is worth mentioning though is the importance that the anti-terrorism camp gives to 'out-of-the-box' methods and ways of action. The cooperation and open dialogue among intelligence agencies, as well

<sup>12</sup> I. Wallerstein, op. cit.

<sup>13</sup> R. Kagan, op.cit.



as the amount of creativity that is needed to tackle a phenomenon that means more than relatively small-scale attacks on predominantly civilian targets, call for new structures, new organizational skills—and new thinking. Likewise, the intricate causes of the increasing intolerance, xenophobia, racism, hatred, and rejection of dialogue are demanding holistic approaches and comprehensive understanding.

Terrorism is not the only phenomenon that calls for updated political and diplomatic tool-kits. The ‘soft-security’ challenges, the unconventional threats, the already globalized information community shaped by the communication opportunities provided by the Internet are as many developments that defy traditional posturing and even good results that have been obtained so far in specialized intergovernmental organizations. Migration and pandemics are processes that cannot be monitored, and even less contained any more by resorting to existing mechanisms—the more so when those mechanisms are faulty, slow, and costly.

Hence, the need to reform—or to re-create. The reform exercise of the UN is a good example at hand, for both success (the Peace Building Commission, the Human Rights Council) and failure (the management reform). Then, again, the call for reform is by no means new: the debate on the reform of the Security Council has been there for the last thirty years and more; at a lesser scale, the UN Economic Commission for Europe underwent a reform a decade ago or so, yet it is by the beginning of 2006 that its present shape was agreed upon, along with new programs and ways of action that have still to pass the test of action. Reform of the International Labour Organisation has been the Number One priority of its Director General since his first days in office:<sup>14</sup> by its very nature of having a tri-partite membership—i.e. the governments, the employers, and the trade unions—the ILO has provided *avant la lettre* for the circumstance that would allow the private sector to become more involved in global decision-making structures. The examples of attempted reform are abundant; the success stories are not. Why?

The debate between the proponents of either of the two trends is unfolding in a rather unfriendly environment. For one thing, the first decade(s) of the post-Cold War, just when the general feeling was that the age of confrontation was gone, triggered a chain of most tragic conflicts, some in areas that seemed to be quiet and settled. They also brought back

<sup>14</sup> Meeting with the author.

to the fore, with a vengeance, the issues of deepening gaps between the development levels of various regions of the world. The tone of the debates itself has turned sour and is full of recriminations, mutual accusations, and distrust. There was a feeling of *déjà-vu* during the statements of speakers at the Summit that was supposed to celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of the UN: the Millennium Declaration is less than expected when one looks at it as a road-map to reform the organization. The old dividing lines between the North and the South are reinforced.

Sometimes, it seems that policy-makers and analysts alike compete in ignoring the changes that have occurred since the end of the Cold War, in the sense that their meaning is underrated. Dr Kissinger's recommendation for the Americans may be true for others as well: *'For Americans, understanding the contemporary situation must begin with the recognition that its disturbances are not temporary interruptions of the beneficiary status-quo'*.<sup>15</sup> It is true that the time that has passed since the end of the Cold War is too short for a comprehensive image of its results to be drawn; yet, there is a paradoxical tendency for people clinging to patterns of thought and, more intriguingly, of action, that were right—once.

There is another paradox to be noticed when looking into the developments of international relations: while some dividing lines look stronger, even if they seem to be shifting with other criteria—e.g. Huntington's theory—there is a growing consensus on the ever-thinner dividing line between internal policy and international affairs. The number of actors that are involved in managing the international relations is on the increase, while their identities more and more mirror the multitude of the stake-holders—and decision-shaping—that are legitimized to be active in home affairs.

Attempts to adapt to the new realities are made. The 2003 US–UK Joint Statement on Multilateralism includes four major challenges to multilateralism and highlights several actions that are needed under the guidance of effective multilateralism. The hierarchy of the challenges that is outlined by the order of their listing is significant: all of them bear on security, in the wider sense that was mentioned before; another important aspect that is outlined in the Statement is the contents of the actions that are taken into account in order to meet those challenges.

<sup>15</sup> Henry Kissinger, *Does America Need a Foreign Policy?*, Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, New York, 2001, p. 20.

<i>Challenges</i>	<i>Actions</i>
global terrorism	continue the fight against international terrorism
the spread of WMDs	strengthen global efforts against proliferators of WMDs
poverty and disease	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• promote global health</li> <li>• support development in Africa</li> <li>• advance an open trade regime</li> <li>• increase technological cooperation on cleaner energy</li> </ul>
hostile dictators who oppress their own people and threaten peace	promote freedom in the nations of the greater Middle East

From this point of view, the four lines of action that are needed to tackle poverty and disease put that challenge on the front line, as the most complex and compelling.

Several weeks prior to this statement, Kofi Annan had admitted publicly that: ‘We cannot take it for granted that our multilateral institutions are strong enough to cope with all these challenges’. One issue commands attention: if it is true that ‘unilateralism, like beauty, often lies in the eye of the beholder. One man’s unilateralism is another’s determined leadership’,<sup>16</sup> then it follows that the action needed to respond to the Secretary General’s warning has to be the result of decisiveness on behalf of the parties that are targeted by these challenges. The dilemma here seems to be that, under the globalization process, *all* members of the international community—which is a rather fuzzy term to define, though—are supposed to agree on taking a shared initiative in order to adapt the components of multilateralism. The ‘effective multilateralism’ was defined as ‘getting the various international organizations to work more effectively together and recognizing that global security can only be achieved through collective action by the international community as a whole’.<sup>17</sup>

But there are not only new threats—there are also new realities in terms of who is supposed to deal with them:

<sup>16</sup> Pascal Lamy, EU Trade Commissioner, June 2001.

<sup>17</sup> Minister Cowen of Ireland address at the Conference on Conflict Prevention, on 2 April 2004, [www.eu2004.ie/templates/news.asp?sNavlocator=66&list\\_id=497](http://www.eu2004.ie/templates/news.asp?sNavlocator=66&list_id=497).

In political and security terms, complex new threats are emerging, along with new centres of power. We are moving to a system of continents. And we all know that in a borderless world, events in faraway places affect our own security. It therefore is in our interest to be engaged in conflict prevention and crisis management. In this new security environment, we must be alert and creative. Above all, we need to be united. On our own, we are political midgets. Policy takers. Condemned to drown in the maelstrom of events. But together we can help to shape the global agenda. Not resist globalization but perhaps negotiate its terms. Not impose our views but get a hearing for them: in Washington today and Beijing tomorrow.<sup>18</sup>

From such programmatic statements and commitments, it is quite clear that there is a general consent on the need to reform. There is a flood of working groups, task-forces and forums of debate gathering together eminent personalities, outstanding names in the international community, who represent, indeed, the best that the intellectual resources of the peoples and nations of the world can put forward. Their recommendations cover all sides of the multilateral system, from basic documents of the organizations that make up this system, to their working methods, rules of procedure and, not least important, their budgets. Yet, the results are modest. The reasons are many—and most of them are both well-known and true. To go beyond this deadlock, it may be worth accepting, for instance, that *priorities are not mutually exclusive*. This calls for a holistic approach, as there is a growing consensus on the deep connections that underlay them.

Perhaps the most difficult choice is between *what is right and what is easy*. In many places, participants at the debates about what is to be done to increase the efficiency of the multilateral institutions are tempted to surrender to the strong bureaucracy of those institutions, even if they strongly advocate the 'member-driven' principle in their work. Concrete steps that would allow for more flexible and less costly structures are, however, hard to implement. Some of the contradictions that hinder their implementation are generated by the feeling that, since the largest part of the contributions to this or that organization comes from certain countries, it is their right to have a larger say in how things are run there; others consider

<sup>18</sup> J. Solana, EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, at the conference 'The Sound of Europe'—Salzburg, 27 January 2006; [www.eu2006.at/en/News/Speeches\\_Interviews/2701solana.html](http://www.eu2006.at/en/News/Speeches_Interviews/2701solana.html)

geographical representation as the paramount criterion in both the staffing and management of the organization and, by doing so, are tempted to belittle the importance of professional competence; there are also those who are persuaded that all organizations should be focused on the developing part of the world only, so that the essence of multilateralism be an aid for development, as a moral duty of that part of the world which is better off.

#### WHICH OF THE TWO TRENDS IS CLOSER TO THE MARK?

There are several questions that, when answered, may help the endeavor to solve the issue of whether multilateralism needs to be resuscitated or changed—that is, adapted to the new realities.

##### *Is multilateralism an issue about leadership?*

Multilateralism was born in a time of crises. Leaders took the initiative to solve problems, and they came from those who had both the power and the means to do so. Now, we live in a globalized world; it is more democratic in many respects—more than sometimes we care to admit: information, travel, even participation. But even democracies need leadership; a collective one, based on those ‘non-mutually exclusive priorities’ and dialogue. Indeed, action is to debates what eating is for the pudding. According to UN folklore, Geneva is the ‘workshop’, while New York is the ‘talk-shop’; putting aside the malicious ring of this sentence, the UN as a whole should turn from a ‘decision-making shop’ to a ‘result-producing shop’. In this endeavor, the credibility problem that so severely undermines the UN can be solved by a strong and democratic leadership that would resist the temptation of smaller-scale arrangements to tackle global challenges. At the same time, responsibility starts at home—and that means, among other things, that no ready-made solution can work by merely transposing ideas into another environment, nor that resources alone can do the job that is supposed to be first and foremost, locally owned.

##### *Can multilateralism be an issue about national sovereignty?*

The European Union is the most complex example of the relationship between multilateralism and national sovereignty. Yet, on a global scale,

the national sovereignty is still young in historical terms, and jealously guarded. At the same time, going alone is easier to sell at the domestic political market, as it is more convenient to look for external reasons of hardships and even failures. There are, of course, instances when the outside interference is to blame; it is even easier to find culprits elsewhere in this globalized environment. The choice between what is right and what is easy, which was mentioned before, also applies here. One of the most common reactions when facing danger is to shut yourself in; by doing so, the world is shut out. In other terms, the increasing nationalism—be it in economy, culture, employment, or wherever—is an attempt to elude responsibility. Yet, sovereignty confers not only rights, but also responsibilities, including the one of building the ability to work with others.

*Could it be that we need a new multilateralism?*

It is hard to imagine that the world of changes can be managed by remaining stuck in a frozen frame. As ‘nothing comes from nothing’, we should build on what is positive and discard failures. The United Nations are a step onwards in the evolution of mankind’s approach to its fate. Its fundamentals remain true; its methods of work, organization and management need something that is more than a mere adaptation to new realities. It needs creativity and courage to do things that were never done before; it also needs the hard, tough love of honesty and unselfishness.