

6

Regional integration in Europe and in the Americas

This paper aims to provide, on the one hand, an analysis of new regionalism, its causes and implications and, on the other hand, answer the question of whether and how the European Union is exporting its integration model in the world. It is structured in three parts: in the first part we draw the attention on the importance of the debate arisen in the international literature about the nature of neo-regionalism in the world, the causes of its development and the implications in the frame of multilateral negotiations and global governance; in the second part, we present a case-study devoted to Mercosur and NAFTA, America's most important regional organisations; finally the last part of the paper deals with insights on the EU's further political integration and international identity.

Causes and characteristics of neo-regionalism in the after-Cold War world

Several debates divide the very large international literature devoted to neo-regionalism. The first debate is focused on the respective weight of systemic and internal factors in the development of regional agreements. As the specialists unanimously agree on the fact that, ten years after the end of the bipolar world, the European Union is the second global actor, its international action is to feature among the external systemic factors that reinforce neo-regionalism in the world. From there the cleavages appearing at "policy recommendations" level when determining what the EU should do, or rather avoid, as far as world trade regulation and balance between regional agreements and multilateral liberalisation are concerned.

In my opinion, it would be wrong: a) to underestimate the various specific internal – national and subnational – factors of the different regions of the world and the "domino effects"; b) not to care about the systemic causes of the neo-regionalism that came up independently from the EU's action.

Internal factors

The international literature draws the attention upon:

a) the decisions taken by States and the policies adopted by governments: in general, States try to recover some of their territorial political authority by taking part in regional organisations and so reinforcing their contractual strength through collective negotiation with international partners. Regional powers, such as Brazil in the case of Mercosur, or the US in the case of NAFTA, Indonesia in the case of ASEAN, South Africa in the case of SADC, etc., get particularly active. Of course, in Europe, just like in the US ("no" by the Congress in the "fast track" quarrel with President Clinton) and in the world in general, the pressure of sub-national, social and economical interests may induce countries to return to some forms of national protectionism. But sometimes neo-regional organisations manage to channel domestic requests, to control deregulation and to face up to localist desintegration tendencies and national State's withdrawal. In short, they give the States an opportunity to relaunch a great politics, i.e. to have a supplementary political option rather than being obliged to simply adapt to the international competition constraints, and also to stay a player in the governance by developing a subsidiary level of political authority;

b) the economic rationality of the intermediate levels between national dimensions and global market openings. Apart from these advantages in terms of localisation and geographical proximity (common investment standards in social and environmental matters, transportation cost reductions, scale reductions, etc.), creating larger regional markets eases trade and adaptation to international competition. More particularly for the less developed countries, it gives the poorer countries the opportunity to implement gradually their restructuring and to adapt their export industry to the market, without immediately exposing it to world competition;

c) the internal spill-over resulting from the success of initial ways of cooperation, regional forums, sectorial projects;

d) the "domino theory" focuses on the emulations and reactions to some decisions (of inclusion and/or exclusion of new member-States) taken by other regional organisations and on their multiplying effects.¹

International factors

Only on the basis of a deep analysis focused on the changes undergone by the international system, we will be able to correctly appreciate the relative weight of the other factors, the different national and subnational internal causes and the role played by the EC and the EU.²

For the last fifteen years (this means already before the Single European Act and the redynamisation of the European integration) the literature has been focusing the importance of the American hegemonic stability during the last decades, which installed a more favourable context for the neo-regionalistic dynamic.³

The international regimes, even those that were created in the frame of the American hegemony during the post War decades, show their ability to survive, independently from the initial impulse, and even to reinforce themselves thanks to the challenges of the globalisation and the uncertainties that characterise world governance. The influence of systemic factors, that was already important after 1945, became much stronger during these two last decades of economic, financial and technological globalisation, especially after 1989⁴. It is precisely in that context that we attended the birth of new regional organisations and the revival of old regional agreements. The financial crisis of 1998/99 confirmed the effects of international economic environment on regionalism: when several countries in a same region are submitted to the same recommendations from the IMF and other international organisations (to liberalise, to create new regulation frames, to increase transparency, to develop intra-regional trade as well as fiscal and monetary cooperation), they are inevitably stimulated to reinforce their regional organisations, as they find it easier to reach the reforms that are aimed at and to encounter the constraints by grouping their national powers at regional level.

The increasing impact of the multinational and transnational companies is also estimated in some literature to be one of the systemic factors that are responsible for the retreat of State but also of any territorial authority: they have indeed developed their autonomy toward their State of origin and can be decisive in the evolution of regional organisations.

The second debate in the literature concerned with international political economy, partly tied to the first one, is focused on whether the preferential regional arrangements are harmonised or rather conflicting with the international liberalisation at global scale.

The first school of thoughts, based on an optimistic interpretation of the famous art. 24 of the GATT-WTO Agreement of Marrakech, believes that regional agreements only are the "antechamber" of globalisation and that they give nations and companies the possibility to encounter the risks and global market opportunities by opening gradually their markets to trade. As a matter of fact, in certain cases, these regional arrangements opened the way to multilateral agreements between a more limited number of actors and made it possible for some States to accept them, for example at the Uruguay Round; furthermore, regional regimes diminish internal conflicts and open to a larger number of countries the access to the opportunities of sharing the profits of the globalisation; last but not least,

¹ R. Baldwin, *Domino Theory of Regionalism*, CEPR paper, London 1993.

² R.O.Keohane, *The World Political Economy and the Crisis of Embedded Liberalism*, in J.H.Goldthorpe (ed.), *Order and Conflict in Contemporary Capitalism*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1984.

³ R.O.Keohane, *After Hegemony. Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy*, Princeton, 1984, R.Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, Cambridge University Press, 1981. Even if in the framework of a discussion focused on the so-called American decline, see also P.Kennedy, *Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, 1985. About the multiplication of associations and regional organisations: Paul Taylor, *International Organisation in the Modern World. The Regional and the Global Process*, Pinter, London and New York, 1993; L.Fawcett & A.Hurrell (eds), *Regionalism in World Politics*, Oxford University Press, 1995, E.D.Mansfield & H.V.Milner (eds), *The Political Economy of Regionalism*, Columbia University Press, 1997; W.D.Coleman & G.R.D.Underhill (eds), *Regionalism and Global Economic Integration*, Routledge, London, 1998.

⁴ I.Clark, *Globalisation and Fragmentation. International Relations in the Twentieth Century*, Oxford University Press, 1997; and L.Fawcett and A.Hurrell (eds.), *Regionalism in World Politics. Regional Organisation and International Order*, Oxford University Press, 1995.

some countries seem to accept more easily regional deregulation than global deregulation⁵. In short, according to this approach, one could in fact say that regional liberalisation is the best way to global liberalisation and that neo-regionalism does not hinder multilateralism but that it rather is a decisive step toward liberalisation⁶.

On the opposite, a second school of thought focuses on the fact that regional agreements are in reality reactions to globalisation, which they consider to be a threat, and that these agreements easily can be changed into potential regional trade blocs. International uncertainties, worsened by hardening negotiations in the final stage of the Uruguay Round and the controversial experiences made during the WTO's first years, can't but deepen the conflict between regionalism and multilateralism. Neo-regionalism would thus not only be an obstacle to globalisation, but would even bring into question multilateralism and the future World Trade Organisation⁷.

According to this approach of the problem, regional organisations exacerbate international competition and happen to have unilateral strategic priorities that really are in conflict with globalisation, as shown by the example of the European Union, and more particularly, according to some scholars, the EMU⁸. Consequently, neo-regionalism might lead to a multiplication of geo-economic conflicts, raise trade neo-mercantilism and also dangerously interfere with the transition under way at the international order political dimension level⁹.

We have set out these two scientific debates, without taking into account any qualitative value appreciation. In short, we may say that, in spite of their large diversity and ambiguity, preferential regional agreements and regional economical and political organisations, in one word, neo-regionalism, are developing in the frame of globalisation for many (internal as well as external) causes, and independently from the EU's will. But, on the other side, we notice that the EU, as a typical example and because of its policies, acts on the evolution of neo-regionalism in the world, in a way that does not find a unanimous agreement in international literature.

A normative question occurs logically as a conclusion of this part of the paper. The so-called "public good" of stability and world governance has become rather seldom in the post-hegemonic world: is such "public good" rather ensured by an increasing role or, on the contrary, by a limited role of regional organisations? In other words, does a reduction of the number of players facilitate or, on the contrary, complicate conflicts regulation? To find an answer to that question, we will try to check, with a significant case-study, the effects of the EU's world regionalisation policy on multilateralism.

First case study: NAFTA as a turning point in the American economic foreign policy?

It is still an open question within international scholars whether US had or not a long-term interest to bilateralism and regionalism¹⁰. However, to emphasise the domestic political streams, the lobbying and economic interest coalitions fighting since years for a free trade agreement with Canada, does not explain the fact that this agreement was only finalised in the 90s, after the Uruguay Round and the revival of the European integration.

The USA decision to sign and implement a Free Trade Agreement with Canada (1989) and to extend it to Mexico (1994) opens, according to the article by A. Sbragia, "a new chapter in American foreign economic policy" and raises a question: why such a new referential trade area along regional lines, in spite of a symbiotic relationship between European and American companies and the Atlantic Alliance?

⁵ D.Piazolo, European Regionalism and Multilateral Trade Negotiations, in "Journal of European Integration", vol.21, no.3, 1998, pp.251-271.

⁶ Larry Summers (ed.), Policy Implications of Trade and Currency Zones, Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City, 1991, and particularly the article, Regionalism and the World Trading System.

⁷ J.Bhagwati & P.Arvind, Preferential Trading Areas and Multilateralism: Stranger, Friends or Foes? in Bhagwati & A.Panagariya (eds), Free Trade Areas or Free Trade?, AEI Press, Washington DC, 1996. Also see interesting article of A.Sapir, The Political Economy of EU Regionalism, in "European Economic Review", 42, 1998, pp. 717-732.

⁸F.Bergsten, Globalizing Free Trade, in "Foreign Affairs", no.3, 1996, pp.105-120 and Open Regionalism, Washington, 1997.

⁹ G.Luttwack, From Geopolitics to Geoeconomics. Logic of Conflict and Grammar of Commerce, in "National Interest", Summer 1990 and R.Gilpin, Politics and Economy in International Relations, 1987.

¹⁰ R.Baldwin, Le cause del regionalismo, in "Europa/Europe", no. 6. 1998 edited by P.Padoan.

A first answer is that, after the end of the Cold War, US can decouple security and economy. NAFTA has no political underpinning as EU, ASEAN or Mercosur. Two economic regionalisms on both sides of the Atlantic would not undermine the transatlantic security community.

A second answer takes into account the weight of the negative US perception of the Single European Act, the doubts provoked by the image of a "European Fortress" and the willingness to react by a Northern American regionalist policy.

As the perspectives of NAFTA are concerned, the Miami Conference of 1994 and the Santiago Summit of the Americas of 1998 had to imagine a Free Trade Area of the Americas, namely a continental integration process.

The problem is that a free trade agreement with the poor Mexico and the rich Canada emphasises huge asymmetries in regional arrangements where USA are concerned. NAFTA is particularly asymmetric and the institutional capacity is so weak that asymmetries are not counterbalanced.

The comparison with the EU shows a long list of variations. However, some similarities do exist and they go beyond the simple free trade. Sbragia's article underlines three of them:

a) the Commission for environmental cooperation. It is impossible to ratify NAFTA without an environmental section. Environmentalists do prefer regional agreements for an increased environmental protection and cooperation (Sbragia) which helps to understand why there is a relatively deep institutionalisation in comparison with GATT and WTO.

b) The Commission for labour issues makes it possible to get the first international agreement linking labour issues to an international trade pact.

c) The institutionalisation of dispute settlements is particularly interesting: one of the member-States can request a binational panel with binding decisions to review decisions in antidumping areas and replace domestic judicial review. International settlements are usually less protectionist in their outcomes. International literature does agree that "the selection of effective mechanism for resolving commercial disputes is fundamental to generate compliance with these mechanisms by parties to partners of trade agreements"¹¹ and the question is open whether or not functional arguments explain that increasing institutionalisation (compared for instance with ASEAN). Will the establishment of such a dispute-settlement mechanism deepen the commercial integration process among the three countries?

In conclusion, though it can be classified as a modest regional agreement, NAFTA not only goes further than GATT-WTO as for investment liberalisation, environmental protection, labour issues and institutionalisation of dispute settlement, but according to the international literature, it also entails some important foundational norms which constitute a *de facto* protection much as the EU¹². The regionalist choice of US is very important at international level, given the weight of the Northern American trade, which represents together with the EU some 40% of world trade.

As the future is concerned, NAFTA is far from becoming over. The Seattle WTO failure and that of Clinton free-trade agenda is pushing the US either to more isolationist policies or to a strengthening of its own regional alliance, using them to influence trade globalisation worldwide. In the first scenario, Mexico and Canada will no longer resist the temptation of achieving deeper trade deals with the EU and with Latin-American countries, independently from the US.

Second case study: Mercosur and its evolving relationship with the EU

The relationship of EU with Mercosur is often mentioned as an example of the "Midas approach" of the EU (I mean, example of replication of his model worldwide)¹³.

Since the very beginning (namely since 1991, one month after the Asunción Treaty) the EU created serious bonds with the Common Market of the South (Mercosur¹⁴), and in general supports regional integration in the southern part of the continent.

¹¹ Mansfield and Milner, op.cit., p.7, and the article by Yarbrough & Yarbrough, Dispute Settlements in International Trade: Regionalism and Procedural Coordination, *ivi*, pp. 134-162.

¹² R.Baldwin, Le cause del regionalismo, in P.Padoan (ed), Globalizzazione e regionalismo, in "Europa/Europe", no. 6, 1998.

¹³ Communication of the EC, Appui de la Communauté européenne aux efforts d'intégration économique régionale des pays en développement, Brussels, COM (95) 219, final. Report of the European Commission and World Bank Seminar, Regionalism and Development, Brussels, June 1998.

The bilateral agreement of 1992 is particularly important in helping Mercosur to benefit from EU's experience, as far as regional integration is concerned, through technical assistance to the Secretary of Montevideo (missions of EU public servants), by setting norms and standards, etc. The EU Council Declarations of Lisbon (1992), Corfu and Essen (1994) explicitly support the interregional cooperation between the EU and Mercosur¹⁵. In 1995, the European Parliament mentions the competition between EU's and US's policies towards Mercosur¹⁶.

The framework agreement of 1995, a "third generation" agreement, includes a "democratic clause", an "evolutive clause" and a political dialogue. Its precondition, requested also by the EU, is Mercosur to have a "legal personality"¹⁷. Its goal is to "underline and strengthen the convergences between regional organisations within multilateral organisations"¹⁸. Education and training are included as matters of regional integration.

Foreign direct investments of European companies in Mercosur countries and interregional trade registered a spectacular increase during this decade. EU is the first trade partner and the first foreign investor.

The Rio de Janeiro biregional summit of June 1999 and the meeting in November (starting negotiations for a free trade area, between the EU and the Mercosur plus Chile) look as a confirmation of continuing progresses.

However, important obstacles remain as for the project of a biregional free trade area: non-tariff barriers (NTB). First of all, the Common Agricultural Policy of the EU, but also the CECA, the Multi-Fiber Agreement; generally speaking the marginal weight of Mercosur as far as the external relations priorities of the EU are concerned (particularly after the decision of the Council of Helsinki – December 1999 – to proceed to a great Eastern European enlargement of the EU within next decades).

EU member states are still to some extent divided as far as the progress of relations with Mercosur are concerned: on the one hand, France, while strongly supporting political alliance with Mercosur as part of a worldwide political multipolarism¹⁹, brakes the implementation of a free trade agreement and provoked the pre-Rio Summit mini-crisis of June 1999. Spain and Portugal are on the European Commission's side in supporting an anti-protectionist approach to negotiations. The need to react to the US initiative of 1994 of creating a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA)²⁰, is not felt as urgent by every European State. The compromise seemed to link the bilateral negotiation of sensitive subjects to progress within the multilateral Millennium Round.

After the failure in Seattle, both regional organisations are adjusting their strategies: Brazil's President Cardoso advocated in December 1999 for deepening regional cooperation; the EU is requesting a reform of the WTO's bargaining procedure, paying more attention to requests of developing countries and where regional organisations should play a major role.

There are in fact many signs showing that the US commitment to liberalisation meets growing obstacles as far as domestic politics is concerned.

Most probably, the interregional dialogue between the EU and the Mercosur will be more independent upon the global liberalisation process.

¹⁴ When signing the Asunción Treaty on March 26th, 1991, Argentina and Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay decided to found the Mercosur, officially born on January 1st, 1995 as a semi-complete free trade area (95% of the intra-regional trade is free of custom duties) and as an imperfect customs union (the common exterior tariff covers about 85% of the products marketed by the bloc with third countries). The full and complete settlement of the free trade area and the customs union are respectively planned for 1999/2000 and 2006.

¹⁵ Conclusions from the Presidency of the European Council of Lisbon, 26 and 27 June 1992, p. 24.

¹⁶ European Parliament, Report (Reporter: Jaime Valdivieso de Cué) on the European Council's communication to the European Parliament in favour of a reinforcement of EU's policy towards Mercosur, Documents of the session from 12.4.1995, pp. 10 and following.

¹⁷ J.Grandi, "Le Mercosur en période de transition: évaluation et perspectives" in BIBES, Problèmes d'Amérique Latine, op. cit., p. 80.

¹⁸ Communication of the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament and the Economical and Social Committee, Un nouveau partenariat : Union européenne/Amérique Latine à l'aube du XXIème siècle, COM (99) 105 final, 9 mars 1999, p. 7.

¹⁹ Assemblée Nationale, Union européenne et Mercosur: mariage ou union libre?, Rapport d'informations de l'Assemblée Nationale (Reporter: Alain Barrau) no. 1721, 17 June, 1999, p. 43.

²⁰ In December 1994, at the Miami Summit, the US proposed to all American States (Cuba excluded) to create a free trade area of the Americas. A second summit in Santiago de Chile, in April 1998, confirmed the creation of the FTAA (ALCA) in 2005.

European Union and Mercosul as driving forces of a new multilateralism?

The external relations of the EU are to be set in the frame of the reality of international relations characterised by a multilevel asymmetric governance: you find, side by side, tendencies for multilateralism, unilateralism, bilateralism and neo-regionalism. The first question is to know which is the strategic aim of the EU. The relations with Mercosur illustrate to what extent a dialogue leads two former protectionist regions to a commercial and economic opening; but, on the other hand, the EU has supported the deepening of the Latin-American regional integration, which can't but have implications at WTO or international relations levels.

There is no doubt about that: the EU prefers relations between regional organisations and its involvement in "deep integration" at Latin-American (and world) level is part of the EU's very identity.

Its very existence and the emulation processes it gave rise to²¹, as well as the cooperation policies and the common values put forward (peace between old enemies, democracy stabilisation and prosperity) have more particularly drawn the two regional organisations closer together.

As far as the first above-mentioned debate is concerned, we have stated that the EU supports a deeper neo-regionalism, even if it has developed independently from the EU's will and that it is due to internal causes to the member-States and the American continent ("domino effect" after the creation of NAFTA); it is, of course, also the result of systemic causes linked to global competition.

As for the second debate, we think that the opposition between globalisation and neo-regionalism must not be overdramatised; it has to be replaced into a long-range analysis. Both processes are going to evolve in parallel and also to interact, even if they are not always complementary. Globalism will not possibly be able to absorb nor to suppress neo-regionalism, neither will neo-regionalism manage to avoid interacting with multilateral negotiation. The real question is: what new type of multilateralism is going to characterise the beginning of the XXIst century.

Multilateralism has, historically speaking, assumed three different shapes: the British hegemonic stability from the XIXth century to 1931; the US hegemonic stability developed since 1944 and 1947, until the break down of the Bretton Woods system and the economic crisis of the 70s; the post-hegemonic multilateralism, started in the 80s, characterised both by the American leadership and by the emergence of new international entities, among them more assertive State-powers and stronger regional organisations. Even the American hegemony has to adapt to a more understated leadership role; however, the multiplied private transnational actors and the economic interdependence confirm that this is not, in any way, a coming back to the old balance of power.

The relations between the US and the EU are necessarily determinant elements in the working out of a satisfactory answer to the following question: what kind of a new multilateralism is going to emerge? This implicates that the different relations of each of the two "giants" of world's trade and economy with Mercosur are to be explained within the frame of the so-called transatlantic triangle. In spite of their numerous common interests, USA and EU have met several commercial conflicts, but also deeply disagreed on the WTO agenda and on the general conception of international relations.

Part of the literature proposes a comparison between the so-called "two global strategies" of the US and the EU. The second, last comer, global strategy is raising largely by reaction, as a search for a global answer to the main competing actors. Let's state the differences between them.

First of all, as for the "negotiation game": the EU does not have at disposal the same choice of options, whereas the US global strategy entails multilateralism, bilateralism (e.g. with Japan), unilateralism, regionalism (NAFTA), interregionalism (several groups, not only the FTAA, but also APEC and perhaps TAFTA, etc.)²². As a consequence, the US always have at disposal a "second best option", should the multilateral negotiations fail, and even, sometimes, when they succeed (the Congress control process allows them to go back on agreements or to restrict them, cf. the "fast track" case).

Second major difference: the inconsistency of the EU's external relations. We shall have to study the working up of the Amsterdam Treaty by the Commission and by the Council, and more particularly

²¹ W.Wallace, *Regional Integration. The West European Experience*. The Brookings Institution, Washington DC, 1994; the exception that constitutes the EC-EU experience does not prevent these important emulation effects from taking place.

²² See S.Haggard, *Regionalism in Asia and in the Americas*, in E.D.Mansfield and H.V.Milner (eds.), *The Political Economy of Regionalism*, op. cit.

the impact of the reform of art.3 (ex-art.C), and art.133 (ex-art.113), etc. For the moment, one can hardly talk of a unitarian and strategic actor as for international relations, even at the first pillar level.

One thing is certain: the EU is acting for a long-range change of international relations and of the necessary conditions for multilateralism, in trying to multiply the cooperation agreements and reducing the numbers of actors taking part in multilateral negotiations.

What positive impact can this orientation possibly have on the offer of the rare "public good" of world's governance? The question is open: deep regional integration diminishes nationalism but can eventually toughen the negotiation (e.g, CAP, preferential agreements) and increase the number of issues on the table, even if this can give way to several issues-linkages. Furthermore, deep integration eases the choice of autonomous priorities. There are many examples to illustrate this reality: the pressures for endogenous increase and for protection against the exterior; the regional rules aiming at creating new regional holdings, lobbies inducing an external strategic confrontation; furthermore, in the frame of decision-making system reforms, one might give the European Parliament the power to block a decision agreed upon at multilateral level.

However, a more unitarian regional actor should not necessarily reinforce "neomercantilistic" mechanisms: this would also help overcoming more easily the various national protectionisms in suggesting the States to introduce internal reforms and to adapt themselves to rules and long-term agreements. Besides, a more unitarian regional actor would be in better condition to ensure some consistency and be able to reappraise common policies such as CAP; at the moment they limit the EU's credibility as for international negotiations and give way to the creation of opponent coalitions.

So the question is open. Regional organisations are a fundamental variable. Even if the EU's international identity is favourably considered, it is not yet a real international strategic actor comparable to the US. Of course, even the US is submitted to internal multilevel governance constraints. But the theoretical scheme given by the American political analyst T. Lowy – according to which internal multilevel governance hands over to centralisation when the international challenges become crucial and dramatic – does not work as well in the case of the EU, because it is submitted to a double internal inconsistency: the inconsistency between the external relations dimension and that of diverging interests among the member-States.

At present, its action cannot aim at the long-run; it is structural in the sense that it contributes to limit the structural anarchy of international relations, not only by reinforcing a regime, but by disseminating and deepening the regimes²³. So the post-hegemonic multilateralism *in fieri* cannot seriously be compared to the multipolarism as it was during the period that preceded the Cold War ("balance of power"). Not only will it be an asymmetric multilateralism, implying many and heterogeneous actors, but will it also be stuck by losing the economic optimism of 1989 and by the fact that no super-power will be able anymore to assume, on its own, the world governance. In this framework, the eventual EU transition from the stage of a simple international entity to the stage of strategic unitarian actor is, to be sure, difficult and very ambiguous and cannot be easy – considered as a new search for power, for the hegemony of a continent that would be less dependent on the US on what concerns security, and more protectionist on what concerns trade.

If it manages to control the neo-mercantilist drifts, this difficult transition stage might be less dangerous for world governance than its failure. And according to a share of the literature, there is a possibility for the EU to become an original civilian power, one of the driving forces of a new multilateralism, able to meet the challenges of this new century, a heir of the democratic multilateralism values of the past, but rooted more deeply in the neo-regional organisations. The alliance with a deepened Mercosul is crucial in this respect, as it is the convergence with other potential civilian powers like Japan, the ASEAN and so on. They would effectively be "the first post-modern actors" – civilian powers acting for the international governance – and that cannot possibly be interpreted with purely realistic, "Westphalian" and "Realpolitik" concepts²⁴.

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²³ St. Krasner, *International Regimes*, Cornell Ithaca, 1983.

²⁴ G.Ruggie, *Multilateralism Matters*, New York, 1997. This implies, at the methodological level, the end of the classical distinction between low politics and high politics; between internal and external politics; between trade relations and international politics relations, etc.