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March 2006

SECURITY, THE END OF HISTORY, AND THE LAST POLITICAL SCIENTIST

In this short presentation I propose that not just the context has changed for what we define as “national security”. I propose that the very notion of “national security” should be re - defined.

I base these reflections on my experience as a – certainly minor – actor in this realm; and then try to tie these to some highly general theories on the evolution of the global system; to return in the end to some practical conclusions.

In the time between 1970 and 1975 I had been private secretary to the Chancellor of the Austrian Republic. In this capacity I became involved in the drafting of a new security doctrine for Austria. This doctrine was intended to provide a comprehensive definition of security, of the threats that could undermine it, and of the tools available to thwart such threats.

According to this doctrine, maintaining a maximum of self sufficiency in the production of food would have been one essential safeguard for this external

security. Now, notoriously, farmers worldwide will use any pretext to claim exemption from international competition. But it is noteworthy that a mere forty years ago this their claim was still accepted as valid in terms of external security.

In the meantime, though, it has become difficult to ignore that the international exchange of goods has become intense even in this protected realm of agriculture. Austria itself imports much of the high - protein feed – stuff for its herds of cattle. On its turn, it exports quite some cattle and beef. Fortunately thus, one had not heeded this injunctions of the new Austrian security doctrine as it had been drafted in the Seventies. And it would be difficult to argue that Austria's security has suffered as a consequence.

Independence does not enhance security

But lets take a more recent and relevant example of a country that tries to maximize security through maximizing independence. North Korean policies are guided by the JUCHE philosophy of maximal self – sufficiency. To safeguard its isolated existence, it maintains one of the world's largest armies. It is assumed to already have assembled a few nuclear warheads. It has the missiles too, to carry those warheads far beyond its borders across the sea of Japan. What will North Korea gain in return for having produced these weapons, and for maintaining an outsized army; and for paying for all of that by starving millions of its people to death? Security from military attack and invasion? Hardly –because its security is not threatened by such an attack. No volunteers are in sight to take on the job of battling a million of North Korean soldiers,

ready to die. Few nations too, would relish a role as occupiers of this impoverished country with its downtrodden, traumatized society. Not just for its own miserable citizens, for the world at large, the North Korean regime is a menace and an irritant. It is something to be wished away. And vanish it will sooner or later. Even nuclear arms and missiles will not secure its future. Its isolation, the ensuing poverty and economic inefficiency endanger it.

Now compare that to the long term security of its sister nation to the South. South Korea has opted for the opposite strategy of embracing interdependence. Inevitably it thus has become to depend on others; and inevitably too, this implies uncertainties and risks. But such risks are more than compensated for by the fact that others have come to depend on South Korea; and thus have come to have a vital interest in the further existence and well being of that country. To take an example: South Korea supplies a good part of the world market for micro chips and disk drives used in the computers that have become an essential, vital, part of our existence and which we could not do without. Would South Korea disappear – for example in a mushroom cloud of exploding North Korean nuclear weapons - that would have the most dire consequence for the rest of the planet. This dependence of others bolsters the security of South Korea; and provides it with some political relevance and weight in world affairs.

Yet the notion of enhancing security by maximizing independence still returns again and again. Not just economic and environmental arguments are, for example, advanced for the aim of reducing reliance on the import of oil. The motive of advancing national security also comes into play. It can not be rejected off hand; but an argument could also be made that such greater independence from imports of oil would not actually enhance security. As the

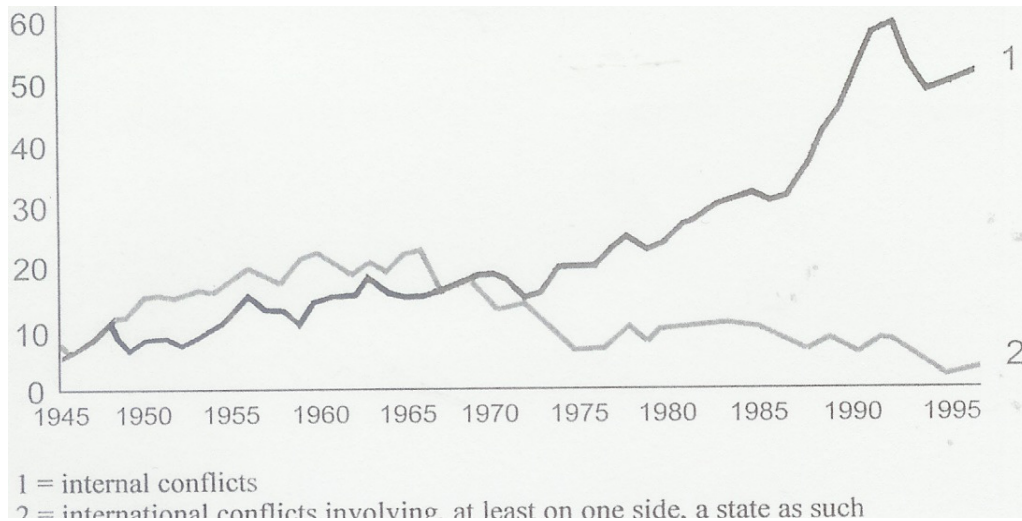
word implies, “interdependence” is a two sided thing. The US and Europe have to rely on exporters of oil. But these, on their turn, have to rely on the importers. Cutting oil import from pre - war Iraq had, for example, provided the US and Europe with quite some leverage over the actions of strongman Hussein.

To strengthen security and increase status – don't wage wars

But to return to the example offered on the Korean peninsula. In view of its position in the network of international exchange of goods and services, could South Korea simply disband its military and rely on its security on its unique position in the supply chain of electronic products? Few are prepared to recommend going to that extreme. But let me just note three facts

- a) the military is still mainly structured for its traditional role of fighting the military of another nation. And wars between nations have become rare.

Table 1
International (2) and national (1) violent conflict
1945 – 1998



Source: Heidelberger Institut für Konfliktforschung

- b) Wars do not achieve what they were supported to achieve. All of the wars that took place over the last hundred years had ended in a different manner than the one presumed by those that had instigated the armed conflict. The cascade of violence triggered by aggressors has escaped their control. No longer are they masters of the process
- c) Wars do not enhance the security and power of a state. They detract from it. Before the onset of the industrial age, victory in war was apt to result in both greater prosperity and greater security. Then, the economic base of the society was still agricultural mainly. The bigger the country and the wider thus the agricultural surface, the greater this base of national wealth; the greater also the base for recruiting soldiers; the more distant too, from the capital the frontiers of the state and the wider thus the terrain an enemy would have to conquer before unseating a ruler. That has changed. The

mere size of a territory no longer correlates with its greater security and greater power. Small city states like Singapore can be secure and powerful; the vast and resource – rich Democratic Republic of Congo is neither. Security power and wealth do not derive from being able to threaten wars to others; but by being useful to others.

When does history end?

Let me draw a connection to some of the big theories; the “meta – theories” on global developments. Overawed by the efficiency of Napoleon’s armies, Friedrich Hegel concluded that the nation state, such as the French one under Napoleon, would stand “at the end of history”. Worldwide no better idea of organizing society could be conceived of. History over the following hundred and fifty years has proven him wrong. Fascism and Communism made race or class an ordering principle of society that transgressed the narrow boundaries of just one nation state. On their turn, these two ideologies perished and thus failed in their claim of being the ultimate ideology, the ultimate ordering principles of society.

Francis Fukuyama thus substituted two other – related – principles as embodiments of this “end of history”; namely principles of the market economy and of political democracy. In the agitated debate over this claim, it was largely overlooked that these two concepts do not denote stable states, but processes. Both of these overarching principles permit and legitimise change. In fact, this is their main purpose and usefulness. One political ruler is replaced by an other. One political programme by a different one. One product and one producer is

driven off the market to make place for an other product and an other producer. This process of “creative destruction” (J. Schumpeter) is the necessary prerequisite for progress in the sense of institutions adaptating to, and making use of changed circumstances; just as in the course of evolution the replacement of one species by an other one is the engine of biological evolution.

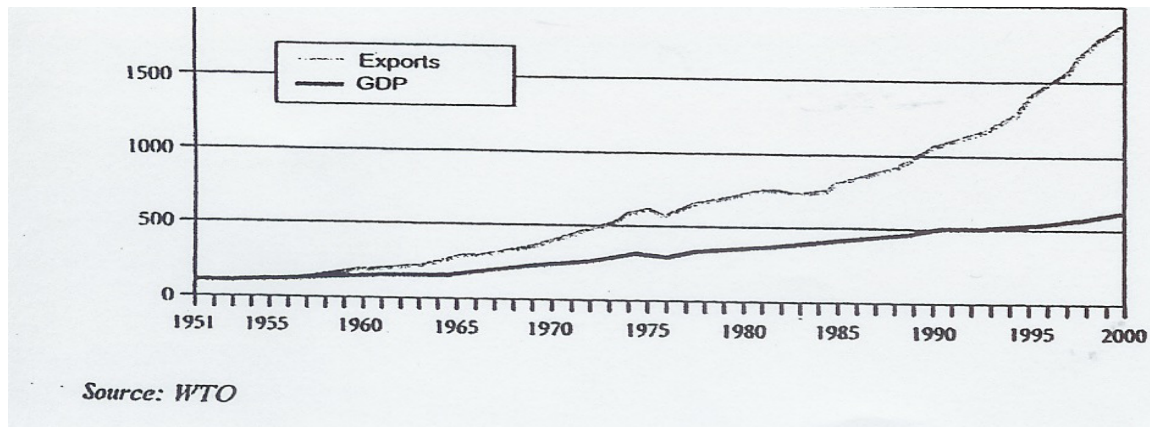
What does that imply for the concept of “security”? Traditionally, we associate “security” with the absence of unexpected change. The very word “security” implies the notion of preserving that what exists. Yet if Francis Fukuyama is right in his claim of democracy and market being the sole viable principles of organizing successful societies, then we also have to adapt the notion of security. We no longer may associate it with lack of change or with the absence at least of unexpected and unwanted change. We have to associate it with a notion of continuous change, yet with change that is contained in, and legitimized by a generally accepted institutional framework.

Yet even such a new concept of security would be insufficient still. It builds upon the notion of security deriving from, and benefiting states that are market economies and democracies. But such a perspective ignores the changes that have occurred in the world. I propose a “Copernican” change of the paradigm. Let us conceive of the Earth as being part of the solar system. Let us see security mainly as an emanation of the global system, and not as the result mainly of what single states do or wish to do.

Seen from that perspective, security should have grown as a result of the growing interconnectedness. It has altered not but the scope, but the very nature of relations between nations. Trade has grown faster than national wealth. That

implies that an ever greater share of what we consume comes from other nations; and that an ever greater share of what we produce is consumed in other nations.

Table 2
Growth of world production and of world trade
1951 – 2000
(Index 1951 = 100)



Foreign Direct Investment has grown even more rapidly than foreign trade. It has become difficult for instance to say where an automobile has been produced. Fifty years ago you could be certain that a GM car had been made in the United States. Nowadays it might hail from Romania or Korea; whereas many of the Toyotas come from United States. For big firm and even for a number of medium sized ones, the world has become not just their market place, but their production site too.

So if what I said before holds true, and if this vastly increased interdependence would indeed result in greater security and wealth for each and every state and person, we would truly live in the best of all possible worlds. In the very long perspective – such as the one underlying the theories of Friedrich Hegel and of

Francis Fukuyama - such an optimistic conclusion might be valid. In the medium run though, and that medium run might extend well over more than just a century, we have to temper such optimism. Progress might be bumpy; or might cease altogether. This is for three reasons mainly:

-first: the global system of interdependence does not profit everyone. Some are even clearly disadvantaged by it

-second: the material incentives provided by greater wealth and security might be subverted by stronger, countervailing incentives; especially by the refusal to accept change, and by the urge to maintain unaltered old identities

-third: as in many complex processes, dramatic reversals (“catastrophe – theory”) might occur. The evolution of a stable system of global interdependence is thus contingent on the co – evolution of a supporting system of values, attitudes, norms and institutions that impede such reversals.

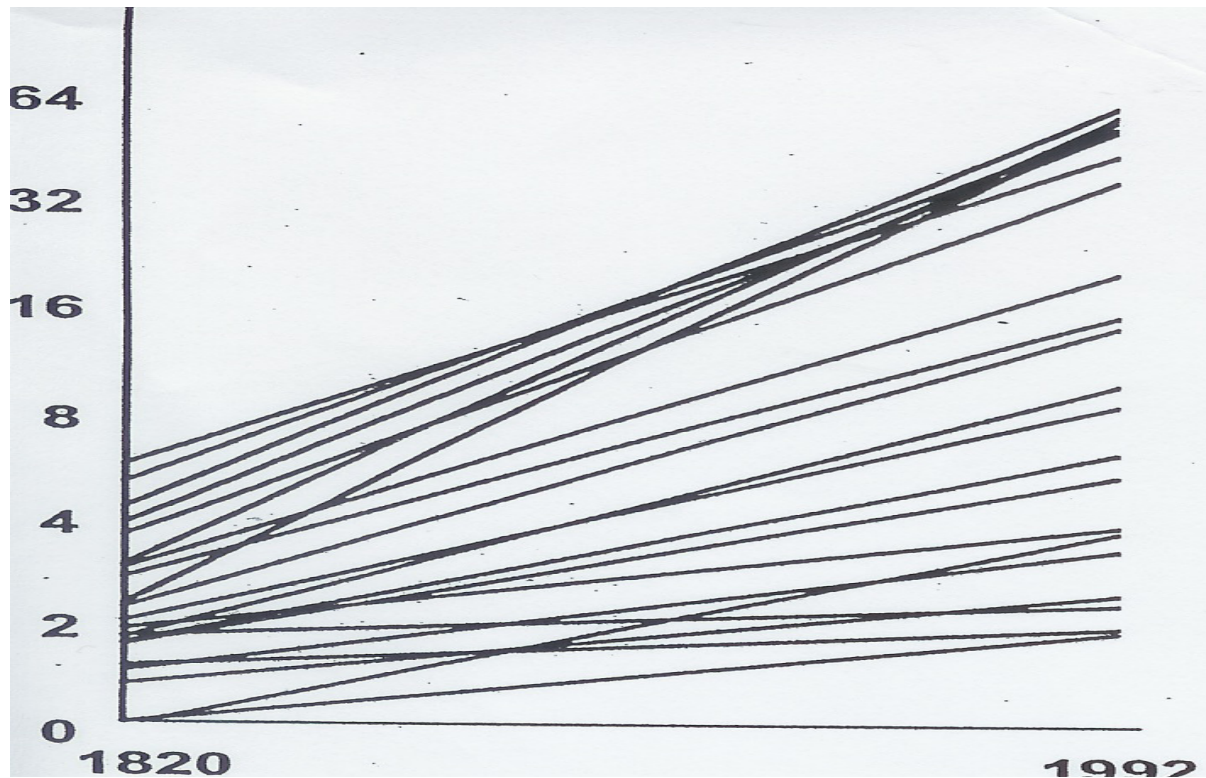
The global system of interdependence does not profit everyone

Let us first deal with objection number one. It is true that global interdependence does not benefit all equally. It even marginalizes some parts of humanity. This is expressed in a rising inequality between nations. Among the nations that once were poor, some – like Korea – have managed to develop rapidly. Doing so, they have surpassed some countries which previously had been wealthier than they. By and large though, these were the exceptions. Most of those that once had been poor, remain poor; whereas those wealthier continue to become wealthier still. The graph below provides proof of these developments. The lines show how the wealth of various nations has evolved over two centuries

Table 3

Over the long run, (most) poor countries stay trapped in poverty

(vertical axis: ratio of income to subsistence income; log 2 scale)



There were only a few “Koreas” that once were very poor but which, nonetheless, have now overtaken others that once had been even a bit wealthier than they. On the above graph only few of the lines cross that show this economic development of nations. The majority of lines spread out in the form of a fan. This indicates that the distance has widened that separates today’s wealthy countries from the poor ones. In fact, the gap has grown into an abyss with the per capita income in the wealthiest country being 200 times larger than the per capita income in the world’s poorest countries. In history, this is unprecedented.¹

¹ But within nations too, the gap between the rich and the poor has become wider. This is against all prior predictions forecasting that this gap would narrow as the economies matured in the most advanced countries. In those advanced countries the rich became richer still. And the poorer - mainly unqualified labour - sank deeper into poverty. Changing technology is the main cause of this slide into poverty. But the surge of international trade and international investment has also contributed

This glaring and still growing inequality² poses a serious challenge to the notion that the developments that brought growing interdependence would be welcomed by all. True, even the poor of this world are better off in absolute terms than they have been before. Life expectancy has increased together with literacy. Stark starvation now affects a much smaller part of the world's population. But that alone will not make the poor accept and love the existing international arrangements. Inevitably, they will compare their fate to those that are 200 times better off than they themselves. And such a comparison breeds hatred and resentment. Equally negative is the fact that in many essential ways, these poor ones are being bypassed by interdependence. In the positive sense they connect to no one. They have nothing to offer others might use. They just are a source of potential trouble. On the side of the wealthy this will re-enforce tendencies to keep them distant instead of drawing them closer. The web of global interconnectedness will be torn along this line.

To its credit, the new US Security Doctrine³ deals with this issue at quite some length. Yet the solutions are not fully credible that it offers for hauling on board the downtrodden and poor of this world. The security doctrine claims that, provided they would be helped by some assistance from the US, and provided they would heed the tenets of conservative ideology such as reducing the state to a minimum and liberalising their foreign trade, those poor nations could

to it, with many labour intensive products being imported instead of being created at home; and with some of the labour intensive production migrating overseas where wages and thus costs to the producer were lower.

² There are different ways of assessing inequality as it exists among nations. We have given each country equal weight in the above graph. Using that method, the finding is unambiguous indeed. Differences are widening. But giving each country equal weight is not unproblematic. Is it right to give equal weight in such a comparison to China on the one hand, and to Niger on the other? So if we change this method and adjust for the uneven size of the population of each country, the differences become smaller. Some claim that by using this gauge, differences in wealth would shrink instead of growing. But this still leaves us with the fact that such differences as they exist today are indeed bigger now than ever before in human history.

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readily escape their dire straits. Very likely though, this recipe will prove as inefficient as all recipes that have been tried before. We simply do not know what causes economic development. And we know very little about how to promote it. The experience with Official Development Assistance – ODA now extends over more than five decades. Europe has carried its proper share of the burden⁴ in world wide development assistance. Yet all these international efforts have yielded meager results, if they have yielded any results at all.

This can not be seen as an invitation to cease all such efforts. We will have to redouble them, search for new tools and try harder. The problem is too great and central. Seeking security in a world where some are 200 times wealthier than others will prove to be an effort in futility.

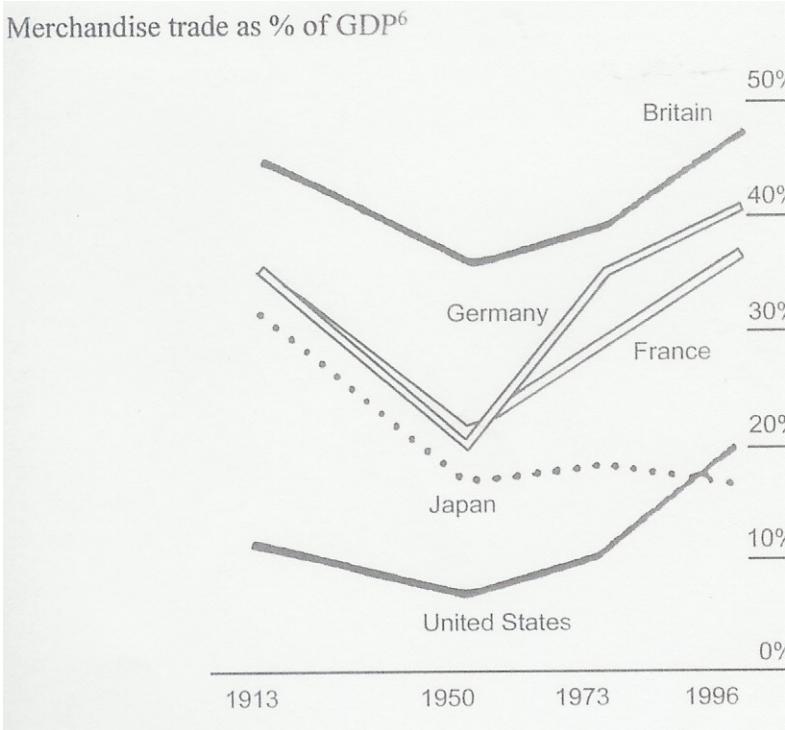
People and states are not just motivated by the aim of greater wealth and security

While intense today, world – wide interdependence is nothing unprecedented. Much of it already was present in the late Nineteenth Century. Then too, a rapid rise in global wealth went together with, and was connected to, a vast expansion of international trade, of global foreign investments and to a broadening and acceleration of the international exchange of information. Then as now, one expected that a rise in global interconnectedness would induce nations to behave to another in a more responsible manner. They would shy from waging wars. Co - operation would prevail over competition or even open hostility.

⁴ By now it outspends the US both in absolute terms and as measured by the percentage of GDP devoted to Official Development Assistance – ODA. In fact, the EU provides roughly half of world wide ODA

But this had not been the case. Desires other than the ones for wealth and security proved stronger. The outbreak of World War I then rang the death knell to this bygone era of worldwide of co – operation. This death was accompanied less by mourning than by jubilation. In all the countries that entered it, the public welcomed the war. People rejoiced in the demise of the old, stable order. They were eager to exchange their personal moral responsibility to national euphoria and to transfer ethic autonomy to military commanders and political ideologues. For fifty years thereafter, co – operation between nations was in decline.

Table 4
 The decline of interdependence in the
 First half of the Twentieth Century



Source: Maddison 1995

Surely, it was no coincidence that this period of decline in co-operation came to be known as the “Terrible Twentieth Century”, with democracies on the defensive; with new totalitarian ideologies having their sway; with a deep world economic crisis creating armies of poor and unemployed; and with a second world war arriving as if by necessity.

Sixty years have passed since. But sixty years of growing global interdependence and peace have probably made us overly confident in quietly assuming that unlike hundred year ago, a reversal of this trend would be impossible today.

Dramatic reversals might occur again; the institutions to prevent them are not in place

Is such confidence truly warranted? Efforts to further liberalise global economic interchange encounter mounting obstacles. The rationality that has to underpin any global order of interdependence is under joint assault from bored, wealthy “new agers” and embittered religious fundamentalists. In the US, military power is glorified and the willingness and capacity to actually project military power has been given first place among the criteria that Americans quote in support of their alleged status as the “sole remaining super – power. Essential pieces of the Post World war II order crumble; such as the prestige of, and the binding nature international law; the authority of the United Nations; or the regime established under the “Nuclear Non – Proliferation Treaty”. Even in Europe, the process of “deepening” integration has stalled and even might become reversed.

Two factors mainly would be instrumental in causing, in the first half of the 21st century a repeat of what had occurred in the first half of the 20th century:

- a) greater wealth and interdependence; increased social and geographic mobility; the wider availability of information, all of these have not lessened but heightened the yearning and need for an affirmation of a specific and firm identity.

- b) In order to be secured, the evolution of global interdependence has to be paralleled by an evolution of norms and institutions that support it.

The weakening institutional back up – of global interdependence

In the wealthy countries, economic development had been accompanied and supported by an expansion and a development of the state; and by the creation and acceptance of formal and informal norms and rules, that govern interdependence. Both norms and state – institutions (such as social security) cover against the risks that automatically are inherent in a process in which persons have to yield part of the autonomy over their life to others on whom they have to depend for their continued existence⁵.

Such a co – evolution of interdependence on the one hand, and of supporting institutions and norms on the other hand, has also taken place in the international

⁵ It is worth considering thus, whether a reversal of the progress of civilization would not be automatically implicit in the aim of reducing the tasks that have been accorded to the state (“starving the beast” in conservative US parlance), as these new tasks of the state had been the pre – conditions for the more pronounced division of labor that sustains growing wealth

realm. In fact, it would have been impossible to achieve this greater global interdependence with its enhanced international cooperation and security if it had it not been for the establishment of international organizations such as the Worldbank, the Monetary Fund, the GATT, the OECD, the United Nations, the WHO etc.

One essential prerequisite for making such institutions truly effective had been the support of the United States⁶. The US have functioned as the “benign hegemon”, leading by their example and making sure thus that no other and weaker state would defect from the “positive sum game” of international cooperation and interdependence.

This function of the US has been weakened and undermined by two developments. First – the declining relative power of the United States. Second by the US tendency to disregard norms it expects others to observe.

Hundred years ago, the US still created 30 percent of the world industrial products⁷. That figure has fallen to 20 percent and can be expected to decrease even more rapidly in the near future⁸. We may safely assume that this decline in relative economic power stands, in the long run, also for the decline of other forms of American power, such as military and cultural power.

⁶ Which had been instrumental, too, in creating them

⁷ measured in “value added in industrial production”

⁸ if measured with the same gauge, the relative decline of Europe has even been more rapid. Though Europe recovered some of its lost ground in the second half of the 20th century

Even in a positive sum game such as global interdependence, rewards and risks are, by necessity, divided unevenly⁹ and erratically. This creates incentives for some of the “players” to defect into a non-cooperative or even adversarial mode. If they do so repeatedly and if they are being emulated by a growing number of other “players”, the positive sum game breaks down and turns negative. Or, to return to the concrete historic experience: the era of 19th century interdependence and co-operation yields to an era shaped by arms races, ruinous competitive devaluations of currencies, beggar thy neighbour protectionism, and – finally – war.

It is the function of the “benign hegemon” to prevent such catastrophic reversals. He does so, inter alia and mainly, by setting an example and following the rules he expects others to heed, even when doing so would not be in its immediate, short term interest. There are numerous cases to prove that the US is not living up to this role in recent times. The refusal to ratify the Kyoto Protocol on climate change and the treaty on the International Criminal Court stand as an example. There are a number of other ones. They reflect not just the policies of the present administration. They result from a longer term mood-swing in US politics.

Europe – what can it contribute ?

Next to East Asia, Europe has been the main beneficiary of the “American Century” - of the global regime established and upheld by the US. Even the process of its integration (economic at first) had been initiated by the American

⁹ as we have seen above – mainly also to the disadvantage of those countries that are extremely poor and seem incapable to break the vicious circle of poverty

Marshall Plan (and the OEEC which had been adjunct to this plan). But in evolving and supporting interdependence, Europe has certainly gone further than anything the US could contemplate.

In economic terms, Europe has certainly lost the predominance it enjoyed a century ago. But if measured in percentages of World GDP, or in shares of the world's exports, it is equal at least to the US¹⁰.

The growing interdependence of the European states has been accompanied and sustained by the development of common institutions and norms¹¹. Yes - the process has now run into troubles. It no longer can be excluded that it becomes reversed. Nonetheless, the more likely scenario is the one of a temporary “muddling through”, with the process of European integration having gained so much of a proper momentum, that it will continue even in face of political adversity.

With that alternative more plausible, Europe's contribution to global security could be twofold. It could support or join the US in the tasks incumbent upon a “benign hegemon”. On rare occasions, it could supplant the US in this function. Second, Europe could function as a pointer for the direction into which global interdependence could evolve. This would not imply that Europe should or could serve as an example others would have to emulate. Its historic experiences and traditions, its social and economic trajectory are too specific for that. But it could, however, serve as a very specific incarnation of a more general development that might be feasible in other parts of the world also.

¹⁰ And superior, if the untenable disequilibria of the US economy are being factored in

¹¹ Not exclusively but mainly: institutions of the European Union

The talk on Transatlantic differences, on some “being from Venus” and others “from Mars”, has tended to obscure the extent of commonality and even integration between the two shores of the North Atlantic. In economic terms, but also by the density of communication in its various forms, these two shores have merged into a single North – Atlantic zone. Over the last four centuries, this North – Atlantic zone has dominated the world; first through its European section; and then, in the later part of the 20th century, through its American section.

Both parts together, the North - Atlantic zone as such, will rapidly lose the predominant position it still enjoys. By now, it still provides for roughly half of the world production. Thirty years hence, this share will have been halved.

Both the US and Europe acting jointly, can still stabilise the formal and informal institutional and normative framework that supports world interdependence and that thus bolsters global security. Together, they can make evolve it in a direction that makes other, rising powers and regions accept these arrangements as being in their proper interest and thus worthy of their support too. This window of opportunity for the North – Atlantic region will be shut in a period that is relatively short if seen in historic terms. Failure to act within this relatively short time can result in developments that would unravel what has been gained since World War II. One example for such a development that could resonate negatively all over the world is an escalating arms race in East Asia.

The true end of history

Both Friedrich Hegel and Francis Fukuyama claim to have seen the “end of history” in the sense of having pointed to basic principles of organizing human society that could not be improved upon further. The big advance over Hegel made by Fukuyama is that the principles he saw as final do not stand for a never changing status quo. On the contrary, democracy and markets must be seen as frameworks for, and embodiments of incessant change.

Nonetheless, developments over the last sixty years have made even these concepts less than final, or – to be precise – they have made them appear incomplete. A good part of their meaning and function derives from their mediating processes. But these processes are no longer constrained by the confines of a single state. History - in its Hegelian sense - will only have come to an end if we have arrived at concepts on the structure of such a global order that will permit – amongst other things – the world wide functioning of markets and of democracy; that will provide a stable framework for an ever deeper interdependence; and that will contain the consequences of unforeseen and often dramatic change.

Such a concept of ordering things on a global scale would, however, have as its most relevant criteria the one of being capable of tolerating widely divergent identities of nations, groups and persons. And more than that: not just to tolerate such divergence; but to enhance it and make it flourish.

The notion of “modernization” has lead us astray in making believe all such identities to converge, in the end, into a single one, that would be the same all over the world and that would be acceptable to, and fit all of its inhabitants.

In the meantime, we have leaned that the opposite is happening. Greater wealth correlates with more rapid change. Greater interdependence correlates with the sense of lost autonomy. The exposure to ever wider choices in defining what one is, or what one’s group is, makes ever more necessary and desperate the need to draw clear lines and to assert the uniqueness of an individual or of a group.

The “end of history” will only have arrived if and after we have found an overarching principle, an over arching “civilization” that can accommodate such differences and channel them in a constructive manner, just as markets and democracy channel in a constructive manner, the potentially destructive yearning for power and wealth.

This is the most important task incumbent now upon the joint North - Atlantic polity.