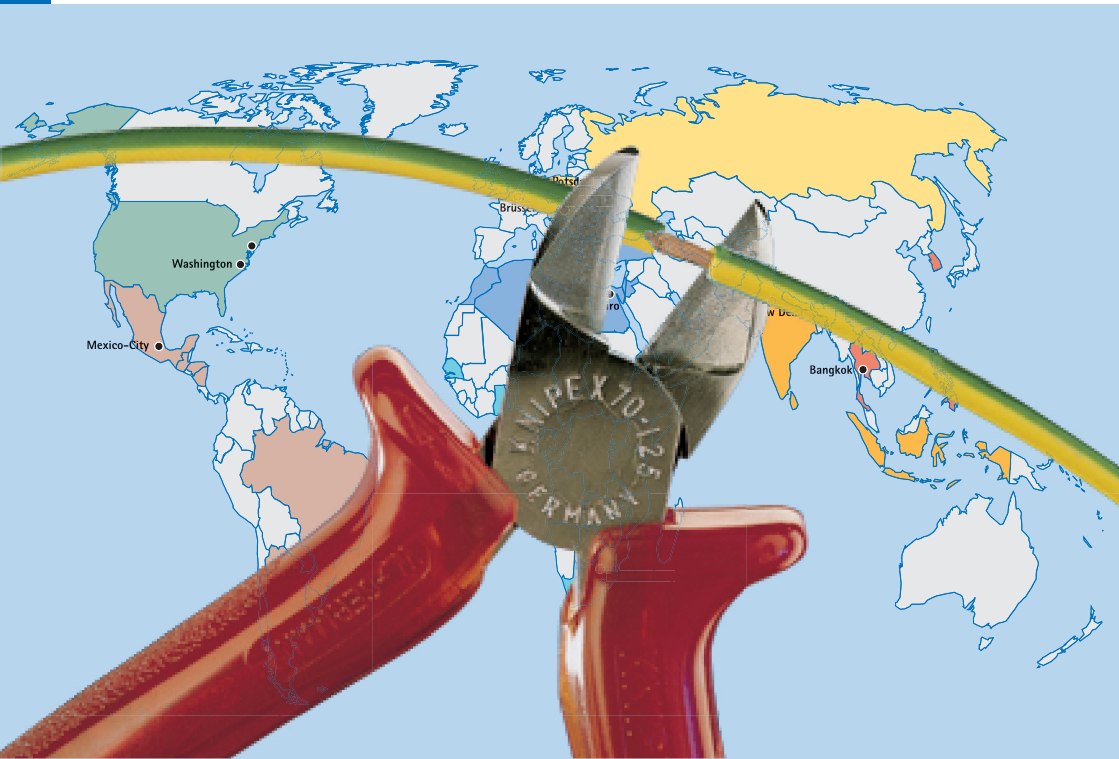


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Jacques Garelo

The West Divided? The Future of Transatlantic Relations



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The West Divided? The Future of Transatlantic Relations

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About fifty years ago

In Washington, December 1949, twelve countries were united in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Greece and Germany joined NATO in 1952, Germany in 1955, but France left in 1966: a first division!

On the whole, NATO had been successful in providing a common defence against the USSR. It was a symbol of efficient transatlantic relations, based on common diplomacy and military coordination between nations having the same opinion concerning the principles of good government (constitutional democracy) and the respect of the individual rights (life, liberty and property). These objectives appeared as sufficient to create a solid transatlantic entity.

More recently, NATO has been involved in different local conflicts. It seems to have been more efficient than the UNO in Bosnia and in Afghanistan. However, the Riga summit (November 2006) has been rather disappointing, due to the new situation in the Middle East, the imperialist Russian challenge, the Turkish issue, and so on: the oldest and the strongest transatlantic organization is faced to deep divisions. Could it be in danger of collapsing?

Five years later

We have just commemorated the fifth anniversary of the Twin Towers crash.

Five years ago, everybody in the Western world felt as an American. That was not only by spontaneous sympathy with the victims and their families, but also because we had understood that a new threat was appearing: the threat of barbarity and fanaticism.

Five years later, a dramatic evolution has led to a deep division among the Western governments (and may be the Western nations). About the war in Iraq the French President took the head of a revolt against the „unilateral diplomacy“. The United States and the United Kingdom have soon been isolated, with only Berlusconi and Aznar as supporters.

During the recent Lebanon crisis, we have observed again the diplomatic cacophony, opposing the supporters of Israel against those who had estimated the retaliation as „out of proportion“ and requested (and obtained) a ceasefire rather beneficial to the Hezbollah. In that instance, the European governments did not

speaking „with a single voice“; as a matter of fact Zapatero and Prodi are less Atlantist than their predecessors. Anyway, the European constructivists have failed to give a common foreign policy to the European Union.

So, in a first approach, we could conclude on a division among the Western countries and, inside Europe, a division between Atlantists and „Europeists“.

Those divisions are not really a fact of conjuncture; they have old and deep roots. They come from two different views of the West, its way to relate with the rest of the world, its economic and social system, its history and its moral values.

Thus arise two questions: Why? For how long?

Three (bad) reasons for the division

These three reasons, strongly connected, are:

- the role of the United States, and the anti-American feelings ;
- the economic and social model, and the anti-capitalist ideology ;
- the way to respond to the new forms of fanaticism, and the anti-war reactions

The USA: too successful, too dominant!

The fall of the Berlin wall could open an era of worldwide peace and prosperity. Francis Fukuyama could proclaim „the End of History“¹. But in fact the success of both the ideas of liberty and the American foreign policy created two kinds of reactions: one of envy, the other of revenge.

Envy by the European Sovereignists, worried by the worldwide domination by the United States in any realm: diplomatic, economic and even cultural. They fear to make the State Department and the CIA the new world policemen, the American companies overtaking the world industries in becoming multinational entities, and MacDonald's and Hollywood imposing a new way of food and life².

Revenge by the people disappointed by the Marxist defeat: Their dream of building a socialist society had been destroyed, but they quickly found a new hope

1 Francis FUKUYAMA *The End of History and the last Man*, Free Press 1992

2 Argument discussed by Johan NORBERG in *In Defence of Global Capitalism*, Timbro, 2d ed. 2002, pp. 264/5

thanks to the Rio Conference and the new myth of sustainable development and of a new class struggle between the North and the South – good arguments to contest the hegemony of the United States. Thus, victims of the Reagan victory, the United States had to pay for their economic, social and moral good health.

The globalization: the end of the welfare state?

The collapse of the communist regimes and the permanent progress of the GATT rounds have led to globalization. But globalization, even if beneficiary to the huge majority of the people worldwide – and mainly to the poorest – was not unanimously accepted, for ideological as well as for private reasons. The supporters of free trade and free enterprise, ready to make the necessary adaptations and the new choices implied by globalization, come into conflict with those who do not want to accept free markets and free competition as ways to coordinate the world economy, and who do prefer the social *status quo* issued from the statist and administrative economy. The conflict has been summarized by the motto „capitalism versus capitalism”³: on the one hand the so-called „Anglo-Saxon model”, based on free competition, market fluidity, entrepreneurial risk-taking, individual initiative and responsibility, and on the other hand the „Rhineland model”, regulating competition and markets, developing the public sector, the „social dialogue” with the unions in permanent collective negotiations, the monopolistic social security and a huge redistribution.

The question is to know if the West, in its history and in its successes, has been wedded to free markets or with the Welfare State. But nowadays the division is even inside Europe, opposing the Old Europe, hooked on its privileges, its regulations, its taxes, its protections, and the New Europe, that of the recently freed countries, seeking to exploit an extended area open to their desire of working hard and creating business.

Thus, anti-Americanism has been reinforced by anti-capitalism.

The victory of relativism

A third break among the Western countries is related to the way to behave in front of the fanatic Islamists. George Bush had a straight line: just as terrorists wanted to destroy the „big American evil”, the President of the USA stood up against the „axis of Evil” and the „rogue States” which threaten peace and liberty worldwide. But some Western governments, like the French one, do reject that Manichaeism. Why?

3 Michel ALBERT *Capitalisme contre Capitalisme*, Le Seuil 1991

First, it is a question of political and economic opportunity. Politically, these governments worry about their domestic situation, because they have welcome millions of Muslim immigrants who have not been integrated into the nation. The responsibility once more is that of the States, through the failures of the educational systems, through the extension of social benefits, and of a high unemployment (itself due to mistakes in economic policy). Thus governments do not want to appear „provocative“ to those marginal citizens. „Foreign policy“ is often oriented by „internal affairs“.

There is also an economic opportunity for those governments and they do not want to loose their usual oil springs. But opportunity is not the whole. We have to take into account a philosophical element: the victory of relativism in Europe. Most of the Europeans have lost their moral and spiritual references. They are unable to have a clear vision of the Good and the Bad, and they cannot accept the idea of any „Western values“⁴.

After „*Veritatis Splendor*“ (Jean Paul II, 1993)⁵ Pope Benedict XVI has recently denounced the danger and the vacuity of the relativism „You have to resist the temptation of relativism“⁶.

The relativists are joined by the traditional pacifists, who do prefer serfdom to courage.

Two scenarios for the future

How long the Western Countries will continue to divide themselves, and to swing between two „Weltanschauung“? „Any kingdom divided against itself will fall into ruin“.

I suggest two scenarios for the future of the „transatlantic relations“: chaos and rebirth.

4 Comparatively, in the United States, most of the people are faithful and loyal to religious freedom, and respect life, liberty and property as universal and timeless principles.

5 *Veritatis Splendor* § 101 « The ethical relativism withdraws from the civil conviviality any clear moral reference ... A democracy without moral values turns easily into an avowed and crafty totalitarianism”

6 Communication in Poland, May 26, 2006

Word war III and the „Clash of civilisations“

Chaos is that of a third world war. Some observers do pretend that the war is already declared, and that we have to wait for a global deterioration of foreign relations, leading to a nuclear apocalypse. It could happen, if some evolutions should occur: extension of radical Islamism, renewal of nationalism in some countries like Russia and China, disorder in the European relations.

The extension of radical islamism is programmed by the Iranian regime. It explains a lot of recent events: the provocative behaviour from the Hezbollah and the Hamas, the reappearance of the Talibans in Afghanistan, and (last but not the least) the control of Algeria by the GSPS⁷. The network of Al Qaida is now present on the whole European space, the number of converts and of demonstrations is rapidly increasing.

One way to block Islamist imperialism could be to neutralize the Iranian regime. But the diplomatic positions of Russia and China are not very clear. Both these governments want to have an access to the oil springs of the Gulf, in view to satisfy their huge need of energy. They can be expected not being very cooperative with the USA and the Western countries. In China, but still more in Russia, the imperialist views are again at work. China would like to control the Pacific and Central Asian areas. Putin wants to rebuild the great Empire of the Tsars. Western diplomacy is hesitating to define the best way to conclude a solid alliance against Iran and Syria⁸. Last but not least, President Bush is more and more criticized for the US diplomacy in that part of Asia⁹.

Europeans themselves are not united to face the renewal of nationalist surges in Russia and in some other countries (with the help of Russia). The temptation of an „Ostpolitik“ is again there, and the Baltic countries worry about a Russian comeback. In Moscow the discriminations and violence against Georgians, Chechens, Uzbeks are so frequent that some observers speaks of a „new achoa“¹⁰.

7 GSPS : Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat (Salafist Group for Preaching and Fighting). Directly connected to Al-Qaida this group is fast growing, as President Bouteflika has recently liberated some two thousands prisoners, former members of the GIA (Groupe Islamiste Armé), a terrorist organization. The GSPS (by its leader Ayman al-Zawahiri) has announced it was ready to develop new terrorist activities in France.

8 These hesitations are very harmful concerning the Lebanon. That explains the General Aoun's position in favour of Syria : he has lost any trust in the Western countries, included the United States.

9 And Donald Rumsfeld has been fired.

10 Some Georgians use to wear a yellow star in the streets of Moscow to denounce the discrimination they are nowadays suffering from.

Thus, faced with a new thrust of fanaticism, the rest of the world, and the West itself, could be unable to prevent a new world war. The situation echoes that of the late nineteen-thirties.

We have to stress the point that this Third World War would not be the result of a „clash of civilisations“, as suggested by Samuel Huntington¹¹, because there is no civilisation behind Islamist terrorism. There is only barbarity. Like during the Second World War, it would be a fight of civilisation against barbarity.

The final questions in that scenario could be:

- First: will the American people and some (few) allied be ready for that war? If they have the means, have they the desire to save once more civilisation and liberty?
- Second: If the Western people are convinced of that threat, why not to accept the fight as soon as possible, before being submitted to the war? Are the lessons of the thirties forgotten?

The preventive fight for civilisation

So, I would really prefer another scenario, less dramatic, but more exacting. Less dramatic, because there are three sufficient reasons to avoid the apocalypse.

One reason is the continuous trend of globalization, sustained by the ever stronger interdependence of the different countries, and by the new technologies. Free trade and free enterprise have ever and anywhere been factors of peace. They are powerful incentives to the mutual understanding among the peoples. More or less, the significant role of the American economy will be accepted, and the reference to the neo-imperialism of the United States could be less frequent. The anti-American reaction does not concern young people and dynamic entrepreneurs who are sensitive to the Atlantic attractiveness.

That leads to a second reason: by weakening the role of the States, because they have lost their absolute sovereignty and are themselves in competition, globalization is reducing the possibilities of the Welfare State, and progressively the role of lobbies, the importance of regulations, the share of the public sector, will decrease. European governments will be forced to abandon the „Rhineland model“ and the social democrats will not survive in a world of competition. So the anti-capitalist reaction will disappear.

11 Samuel HUNTINGTON *The Clash of Civilizations*, Foreign Affairs, 1993

The third and main reason will be that most of the people who are not aware of the danger of a third world war will be conscious of that as the international relations will be more and more strained. The threat from Iran is now appearing, and even Russian and Chinese governments begin to doubt the true intentions of that regime. The necessity to control immigration and terrorism, and religious propaganda, thanks to an international cooperation, is now emerging, with the support of the populations. So it could be a salutary change in the minds of the people and of the politicians: to be finally motivated by the defence of civilisation.

Nevertheless, this change cannot be realistic without two requirements: one political, the other moral. The political requirement is to stop claiming for an „economic war“, and supporting economic, social and cultural nationalism. It is not easy, because the political process pushes the candidates towards demagogic and easy speeches, and alliances with lobbies (always opposed to competition)¹².

The moral requirement is to honour the religion at the root of the Western world, and at the origin of its economic and humane success: the religion of love, according to the civilisation of peace and happiness. It is the only answer to the religion of war, which wants to find God through violence (as said recently by Pope Benedict 16th in Ratisbon). The West, the whole Western people, has to associate again liberty and responsibility, liberty and dignity of the human being. If these moral and political requirements are satisfied, we could prevent the third world war and save the universal values of civilisation.

Rediscovering the West

„Prediction is very hard, especially about the future“¹³

Finally, I am rather optimistic. I am confident that the Western nations will be in time to avoid the Apocalypse, because they will be able to recover their moral health and their unity. First, I repeat, thanks to the globalization, developing open-mindedness and mutual understanding among the peoples of the world. Second and mainly, because the development of the Western countries has not been the result of some economic or physical advantage, but only of the birth of civilisation

12 „Economic patriotism“ is the new fashion in the political speeches in France, and will be successful during the next campaign. It signifies that the French State has to protect the national big companies against the foreign raiders, and that protectionism is justified to save the national jobs ... Bastiat would be happy!

13 Funny device, from Yogi BERRA, recently quoted by David FRIEDMAN

And, more or less, that vital choice has survived many centuries of wars, crisis, and made the Westerners united and able to spread their institutions worldwide.

Even during the 20th century, certainly one of the most terrific of the history, with two world wars and three major totalitarian regimes, the civilisation finally won, and the Western countries have found or rebuilt their unity around the values of civilisation.

In September 2001, after the Twin Towers crash, President Silvio Berlusconi gave a great speech on the „Superiority of the Western Civilization“. He was right and wrong. Wrong, because the true superiority is that of the civilisation upon the barbarity. Still wrong, because precisely during the 20th century some Western nations (i.e. some Western states) have betrayed the civilisation and accepted the totalitarianism. But he was right in emphasizing the historical path towards the civilisation, from the Western nations who pioneered to the rest of the world.

From the works of some prestigious historians and economists, I have tried to select the major characteristics of the institutional and cultural changes which allow Western Europe, and then Northern America, constituting the „transatlantic“ block, to enter into civilisation before the rest of the world¹⁴.

The first characteristic is *equilibrium*: the West succeeded in equilibrating

- economic growth and moral and spiritual self-flourishment,
- economic and civil freedom: joining entrepreneurship and democracy, mainly through the parliaments,
- religion and the State : the „Gregorian revolution“ was the turning point of the Middle Age, as emphasized by Harold Berman¹⁵,
- individual rights and social harmony, mainly through the individual property rights¹⁶.

The second is *opening*: during the Middle Age, and due to the lack of a central political power after the collapse of the Roman Empire, the Western Europe became

14 *Les valeurs de l'Occident* in www.jgarello.com/nouveautés, published in italian by Liberale n°7, déc.2001

15 Harold BERMAN, *Law and Revolution, The Foundation of the Western Legal Tradition*, Harvard Uny Press, 1983

16 The link between property and liberty has been the main theme of the Bastiat's social philosophy Cf. Frédéric BASTIAT *Providence and Liberty*, Philosophical Selection by Raoul AUDOUIN, Acton Institute, 1991 and *Property and the Law*, Foundation for Economic Education, 3d éd. 2001

a free trade area, and through their polycentric relations the merchants created an „extended order”(Hayek), an order where competition, therefore comparison and division of the knowledge could develop. So the West was able to make a synthesis between universalism and diversity. The trust could replace the power, the „open society” (Popper) could appear.

There is certainly the origin of the third characteristic: the **respect of the dignity of the human being** and the institutional framework necessary to enforce the individual rights. Liberty was not enough. It ought to be ordered to a vision of the nature and the calling of the human being, While prepared by the intellectual, spiritual and institutional traditions of Jerusalem, Athens and Rome, the Christianity went further and the new „belief system” designed the new institutions. Let me quote the Douglass North’s famous sentences: *„In going back a millennium to search for the roots of modern economic growth, we must look to the institutional framework and to the intellectual context from which sprang the belief systems and consequent perceptions that guide human actions ... Despite some contrary illustrations, the belief system embodied in Christian dogma was amenable to evolving in directions that made it hospitable to economic growth and political freedoms”¹⁷.*

So, I can conclude that the main chance for the West to manage its current divisions is to go back to the founding principles of the civilisation, which have been primitively discovered in the Western nations ten centuries ago. There is no other future for the transatlantic relations than rediscovering these principles, and so rebuilding the unity around them, or accepting the chaos of an apocalyptic world conflict.

The responsibility of the intellectuals

As suggested by Hayek, the intellectuals have a huge responsibility in telling the truth, explaining the history, deepening the analysis of the contemporary societies. The Road to Serfdom has strongly contributed to the fight against socialism. Milton Friedman, with Capitalism and Freedom has changed the public opinion and the minds of many politicians in the US and worldwide.

In the thirties, most of those who were in duty to speak and alert the people have been too silent (it was „la trahison des clercs” – *The Treason of the Intellectuals*, said Julien Benda¹⁸).


17 Douglass C. NORTH „Competition and Values to the Rise of the West” in *Swiss Review of World Affairs*, nov.1993 pp.23/24

18 Julien BENDA *La Trahison des Clercs*, 1927, reprint Grasset, éd., nov. 2003

Have we nowadays the intellectuals able and ready to convince the Western nations, but also the Western governments, to come back to the Western historical and moral roots? The task is not easy, as the political process in the Western countries is rather in favour of short run and changing decisions, and as the educational system and the mass media is not fond of moral statements. But we have the chance to benefit from a lot of good and efficient think tanks, spreading the ideas of freedom and peace.¹⁹

Personally, I thank sincerely the Friedrich Neumann Stiftung for having led a reflection on that vital topic, and for inviting someone coming from France to give his opinion. France is the weak ring of the chain of liberty in Europe. Let you look to my country not with a glance of commiseration or anger, but in a spirit of solidarity and union in the common defence of the universal civilisation, certainly the best meaning and the honour of „atlantism“.

19 Cf. John BLUNDELL *Waging the War of Ideas*, The Institute of Economic Affairs, Occasional Papers #119, nov.2000



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