

## **Barack Obama and Herman Van Rompuy New leadership to educate international politics**

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### **1. Out of the Bush era**

Four years ago, when we still found ourselves in the “Bush era”, I wrote an article for the Review ‘Pace diritti umani-Peace human rights’ (2006, n.3, pp. 93-101) entitled “The European Union within the trans-Atlantic schism”. I considered the historical identity of a West headed toward meltdown.<sup>1</sup> After observing that any discussion of identity is always complex, especially if it concerns huge territorial areas of the planet, I suggested that today we cannot attribute an identity of any sort to the West, beyond a historical one and, obviously, a merely geographical one. I wrote: “What remains is a West of the past, with all its rich cultural heritage made up of multitudinous lights and shadows. However, today there exists no West of the future, nor for the future”. As regards the positive aspect of the Western historic identity, I was referring to the West characterized by the great theological syntheses, by humanism and the Renaissance, by coherent philosophical elaborations on the theme of individual dignity, and by constitutional charters recognizing each person’s innate rights. That is, I was referring to the growth of a “civilization of law” which, starting with Roman law, had reached the 20th century enriched by the tradition of common law, and then striven toward perfection by embracing International Human Rights Law.

As I wrote, and as I still believe, this West came to the end of its journey in 1945-1948 when, after winning World War II, it bequeathed universal values to the entire world: we refer here to the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, particularly the principle that “recognition of the dignity of all members of the human family together with their rights, which are equal and inalienable, is the basis of freedom, justice and peace in the world” (Preamble to the Universal Declaration). I wrote: “In creating this nucleus of a true ‘world constitution’, Europe and the United States are still authentically ‘West’: a West purified at the very fountainhead of the ‘universal’, which it offers to share with the entire world, under the seal of *ius positum*, and not simply through its theological and philosophical treatises, or its poetic inventions.” It was as if the West now wished to redeem itself of the negative part of its historic identity (colonialism, fratricidal wars, Nazism, the Shoah), while offering the best of itself, even to the point of immolating itself on the altar of the universal common good. A sort of swan’s song rose up, then, from the unified identity of the historical West.

From 1948 to 1989, during the forty years of diarchic world governance by the USA and the USSR, the West remained as a geo-strategic “bloc”, held together by

variables which were prevalently exogenous. A great lesson in universality was taught by the Fathers and Mothers of the world constitution (starting with Franklin D. Roosevelt and Eleanor Roosevelt), but the memory of that lesson soon faded under the impact of incoherent choices made on the American side of the Atlantic. On the Western European side, protected by NATO, the European integration process began to take shape as a construction of positive peace, in the tradition of a common supra-national law. As it began to develop in terms of political as well as economic unification, this process fell out of favor with the American administration. Alongside “commercial wars”, political conflicts were triggered between the Atlantic seaboard. Two of them stand out, in particular, for the harshness of their nature and the language used. The first concerns the decision of the old European Community, to institute its Economic and Monetary Union, EMU, according to indications in the Werner Report of 1970, with the aim to consolidate integration: an innovative move with respect to the Bretton Woods agreements. The USA opposed this move, claiming that the need for a stable international monetary and financial system should prevail over any (sub-systemic) European motivations. In the face of the determination shown by the European institutions, president Nixon abruptly proclaimed the inconvertibility of the dollar. America came out the winner here. The EMU, formally instituted by the Council of the EC on 23 March 1971, would not go into effect as such, but would be reduced to a series of substitutive formulas designated as the “monetary serpent” and “European monetary system”<sup>1</sup>. It was not until the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992 that any authentic, coherent economic union was launched.

The second harsh political conflict related to the way of conceiving the New International Economic Order, formally proclaimed in 1974 by the General Assembly of the United Nations, in a solemn Declaration, attached to a Plan of action. It is interesting to read the minutes recorded during meetings of the General Assembly in the early 1970s: note the violence in the language used by Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, when he opposes adoption of the above-mentioned Declaration. The American administration would make the same strenuous opposition to UNESCO’s Declaration on the World Order of Information and Communications (NOMIC), adopted according to the famous MacBride Report. In 1975, by French initiative, the European Community convoked in Paris the so-called “North-South Conference”, involving wide participation by developing countries. Under the impact of sharp attacks made by the USA administration by way, again, of Kissinger’s speech, the Conference floundered in 1977<sup>2</sup>.

Meanwhile, a frenetic movement toward economic and institutional deregulation was becoming more and more intense on the international scale,

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<sup>1</sup> For a reconstruction of this event in a political key, see A. Papisca, “Economic and Monetary Union Policy The Resolution of the Council of Ministers of 22 March 1971”, in G. Ionescu (ed.), *The European Alternatives. An Enquiry into the Policies of the European Community*. Sijthoff and Noordhoff, 1979, pp. 455-476.

<sup>2</sup> See my essays, “Nuovo Ordine Economico Internazionale (NOEI) o Nuovo Ordine Internazionale Democratico?”, in Vari, *Aspettative e problemi del Nuovo Ordine Economico Internazionale*. Padua: Cedam 1987, pp. 87-109; and “Congesture e ipotesi su nuovo ordine economico internazionale e guerra”, in G. Baget Bozzo, U. Curi, Miglio et al., Venice: Arsenale Cooperativa, 1982.

under the banner of a free world market, of the unilateralism of the strongest, and of international extemporaneous or “à la carte” coalitions. This economic scheme conceals a political strategy which aims to weaken legitimate multilateral institutions, beginning with the United Nations. To the expectations awakened by the events of 1989, president Bush senior responded by proposing a “new” world order meant, among other things, to relaunch the old international law of armed state sovereignty through an implied *ius ad bellum*, thus affecting the validity of the Charter and the role of the United Nations.

In the study quoted above, I wrote: “as Boutros-Boutros Ghali denounced in 1992 in his famous report, *An Agenda for Peace*, addressed to the Security Council, States no longer could find any alibi for failing to implement fully the San Francisco Charter. However, he paid a dear price for his defense of legality, strenuously conducted during his entire mandate. When time came for his re-election, the Security Council gave 14 votes in favor, while the opposing vote from the United States representative constituted a veto”.

Reason and farsightedness, together with respect for legality, should have led not so much to the invention of a “new world order”, as to renew the energetic construction of that world order whose DNA lies in the United Nations Charter.

Instead, after the parenthesis of the Clinton administration, the interstate-hierarchical model put forward by Bush senior found coherent articulation in the “National Security Strategy” which Bush junior made public in 2002, and re-proposed, with no significant variation, in 2006. Words lead to facts. We are fully immersed in an era of “easy war”: of the theory and practice of war<sup>3</sup> defined as “pre-emptive” on some occasions, or “preventive” on others, according to whether the superpower perceives the threats (unilaterally) as imminent or latent<sup>4</sup>.

The Bush era, among the most indecent ones in modern history, officially ended amidst world-wide chaos and decay, marked by the spread of trans-national terrorism and violent fundamentalisms, as well as on-going open wars; and marked, too, by the dramatic failure of neo-liberist policies. Frenetic deregulation burns on amid the growing “security” syndrome which pervades not only State policies, but also the daily lives of individuals, of families, of local governments, of firms.

## **2. International law of human dignity advances**

During a twenty-year period spanning the 20th and the 21st century, Europe as a whole underwent initiatives made by the American superpower in the sphere of world commerce. At the same time, however, it reached new positive goals within its own arena. Member states of the European Union and of the Council of Europe increased in number, respectively, to twenty-seven and forty-six; within the EU the infrastructure of the Economic and Monetary Union was strengthened by the creation of the Euro (to “coin money” is traditionally

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<sup>3</sup> See R. Kagan, *Il diritto di fare la guerra. Il potere americano e la crisi di legittimità*. Milan: Mondadori, 2004. The author gives a highly misleading interpretation of the United Nations Charter.

<sup>4</sup> See A. Papisca, “Article 51 of the United Nations Charter: Exception or General Rule? The Nightmare of the Easy War”, in *Pace diritti umani/Peace human rights*, 1, 2005, pp. 13-28.

considered a sign of sovereignty...); the “European conventions” were tried out, in their original form as *constituent* bases for elaborating the EU Charter of fundamental rights and the so-called “constitutional” Treaty; the jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg became obligatory for all members of the Council of Europe; the European Union carried out its first “common actions” (civilian and military) outside its own territorial area. During this twenty-year period, Europe has striven to exploit its opportunities to preserve the memory of the DNA in its concept of world order, expressed in the Charter of the United Nations and in the new international law, which has taken coherent shape beginning with the Universal Declaration of human rights, adding fundamental innovations in various chapters regarding international humanitarian law and international criminal law.

On 25 May 1993, the Security Council decided to create an International Tribunal to prosecute war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in ex Yugoslavia beginning in 1991. Note that the two main comprehensive proposals for the relative Statute were made by two member States of the European Community, France and Italy<sup>5</sup>. Institution of the Tribunal for ex Yugoslavia, and of a second Tribunal regarding Rwanda, gave momentum to the creation of the International Criminal Court, whose Statute, significantly, was adopted in Rome on 17 July 1998. The European Union supported these initiatives, in part by generously financing campaigns led by NGO networks favoring the efficient functioning both of the special Tribunals and of the Penal Court. Within the new international law, several “revolutionary” principles become clearly visible, including personal penal responsibility which is directly pursuable on the international level, and the universality of criminal justice.

The European Union immediately grasped the importance of the United Nations Declaration of 9 December 1998, concerning “the right and responsibility of individuals, groups and organs of society to protect and promote human rights and the fundamental freedoms universally recognized”, widely known as the *Magna Charta* of human rights defenders. The EU thus decided to finance the activities of the Special representative of the UN General Secretary, who was to oversee its application. Article 6 of the Amsterdam Treaty (1997) declares that the European Union is founded on human rights, on the principles of democracy and the rule of law. During that same year, the EU began to finance a European Master’s Degree in Human Rights and Democratization, created by the interdepartmental Center for the rights of persons and peoples, of the University of Padua, through direct intervention by the European Commission. This was the first educational institution of its kind in Europe and the world, nowadays fully functioning<sup>6</sup>. As before mentioned, on 7 December 2000, in Nice, the European Union Charter of Fundamental Rights was solemnly proclaimed and ‘adapted’ in

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<sup>5</sup> See my essay, “Giustizia penale internazionale: il contributo dell’Italia alla costituzione del Tribunale internazionale sui crimini di guerra e contro l’umanità nella ex Jugoslavia”, in A. Bedeschi (ed.), *L’Italia e l’ONU. Esperienze e prospettive*. Padua: Cedam, 1997, pp. 125-148. See also “Nominati i nove per il varo della nuova Norimberga”, *Corriere della Sera*, 25 January 1993.

<sup>6</sup> See M. Nowak, H. Fischer, A. Papisca, “Curriculum Development and Academic Institution Building in the European Union: The Experience of the European Master in Human Rights and Democratisation, E.MA”, in *Pace diritti umani/Peace human rights*, 3, 2004, pp. 123-146.

Strasbourg in 2007. This international legal instrument stands out for the recognition of civil and political rights, as well as economic and social rights, according to the principle of their interdependence and indivisibility. Full juridical and formal validation of the Charter, made in virtue of Article 6 of the Lisbon Treaty, into force since 1<sup>st</sup> December 2009, allows the EU Court of Justice to pronounce judgment more amply than in the past, on matters concerning the violation of human rights committed by Union institutions and bodies. According to the same Article, the EU is obliged to accede to the 1950 European Convention for the safeguarding of human rights and fundamental freedoms. This fact means that the European Union as such may be called before the Strasbourg Court even by single individuals claiming violations of the human rights (civil and political) recognised in the 1950 Convention. That is to say, a double-tiered guarantee is set up at the same *supra-national* level of jurisdiction. We see here an absolute innovation in the international legal and political system. As regards this pathway toward the accelerated advancement of the humancentric civilization of law, we must also note that for nearly twenty years, the EU has furthered the inclusion of the “human rights clause” in the treaties it stipulates with third states, a clause considered as an “essential element” of such treaties.

In the area of foreign policy, security and defense, the EU’s strategy, unlike the two Bush’s “National Security Strategies” (2002, 2006), stands out in its explicit respect for international law, human rights, effective multilateralism, and the centrality of the United Nations. It complies with a model of world order in harmony with the one sketched out in the United Nations Charter. Consider, in particular, the “European Security Strategy” (2003) and the innovative report entitled “A Human Security Doctrine for Europe. The Barcelona Report of the Study Group on Europe’s Security Capabilities” (2004), a report of independent experts wholly centered around the idea of ‘human security’ and on the human rights paradigm<sup>7</sup>.

In order to grasp the importance of the argument - indeed, of the contrasts - between the two sides of the Atlantic, let us remember that while the EU was disposing financing necessary for the enactment of the International Criminal Court, the USA administration was sending around its own *ad hoc* ambassador with the task of convincing governments to refuse ratification of the Rome Statute or, if they had ratified it, to bar their citizens from the Court’s jurisdiction.

### **3. Barack Obama’s two-fold mission**

The unexpected rise of Barack Obama to the presidency of the United States has itself caused such a radical discontinuity with former US policy, that we may now hope that the two Atlantic seabords may once again meet under the banner of a strong respect for international law.

To use Weber’s leadership typology, we find ourselves facing a personality gifted with high charismatic and innovative qualities, the opposite from the bureaucratic, stabilizing type of leader. The young US President must exercise his charisma in order to elude the terrifying inheritance left him by the two presidents

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<sup>7</sup> For a thorough discussion of this theme, see the recent detailed analysis in the book by M. Mascia, *Obiettivo Sicurezza umana per la politica estera dell’Unione Europea*. Padua: Cleup, 2010.

Bush and, at the same time, to carry forward his two-fold innovative mission, both within and outside the nation. The empirical evidence available to us concerning his first year of presidency shows that his domestic mission, his *missio ad intra*, has found expression in works as well as words: consider his health assistance law, and measures taken in the area of penal justice. His international mission, or *missio ad extra*, has found expression essentially in the announcement of a new course of action, and with the launching of a new program of high politico-strategic impact relative to disarmament and nuclear security; in particular, we refer to the Summit in Washington on 12 and 13 April 2010, which produced a finely detailed work plan accepted by all the participants, sparking off a virtuous sort of best practices competition among countries in the area of nuclear security. On that occasion the other 46 state and government leaders meeting in Washington recognized the merits of President Obama, and their recognition appeared as a coral investiture of Obama as world leader.

Obama had already given an overall definition of his *missio ad extra* in the masterly lesson held at the University of Cairo on 4 June 2009, with the eloquent title, “Remarks on a New Beginning”; and in a speech given at the General Assembly of the United Nations on 23 September of the same year<sup>8</sup>. Such an epiphany is relevant to the entire system, and shows that the President possesses an organic vision regarding the world order, with respect to its architecture, its content, and its methods.

In the Cairo lesson, given in a context of high educational and scientific relevance, we find an illustration of values according to a perspective which, to paraphrase UNESCO, we might call the “respect of difference among cultural expressions”. This respect favors the inclusion and development of a transcendent *transcultural* knowledge<sup>9</sup>. The President of the United States indicates the values which must guide the social, political and economic life, in harmony with the universal which he identifies as the “vision of God”; coherently, at the end of his speech, he sums up this universal in the announcement of peace shared by the three great monotheistic religions. “We have the power to make the world we seek”, he says, “but only if we have the courage to make a new beginning, keeping in mind what has been written. The Holy Koran tells us, ‘O mankind! We have created you male and female; and we have made you into nations and tribes so that you may know one another’. The Talmud tells us: ‘The whole of the Torah is for the purpose of promoting peace’. The Holy Bible tells us: ‘Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God’”. Obama’s ethico-religious inspiration has nothing rhetorical about it, for not only does it go hand in hand with an extremely relevant, realistic diagnosis of the world situation, but also—and even more importantly—it finds coherent response in the methods chosen by Obama to

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<sup>8</sup> Texts found respectively in [www.america.gov-international\\_relations](http://www.america.gov-international_relations) and *The New York Times*, 23 Sept. 2009.

<sup>9</sup> Reference to the UNESCO Convention on the protection of diversity in cultural expressions, 2005. Note that when it was adopted by the General Conference, only Israel and the USA, led by the Bush administration, voted negatively. On the theme of intercultural dialogue and the development of transcultural knowledge, see A. Papisca, *Dialogo interculturale, diritti umani e cittadinanza plurale*. Venice: Marsilio, 2007, pp. 25-49.

confront issues such as violent extremism “in all its forms”, the conflict between Israel and Palestine, nuclear disarmament, democracy, religious freedom, and women’s rights.

As regards democracy and human rights, Obama makes a realistic, courageous statement which, like other observations of his, marks a drastic rupture with policies of the two presidents Bush. Let me be clear, he says: no system of government can or must be imposed by one nation on another. Democracy cannot be imposed from without, on any nation. Each society, Obama states, must seek out its own pathway, and no path is perfect. At the same time, Obama is careful to point out that there are basic principles which are universal, and certain truths which are “self-evident”: governments which respect these rights are, in the end, more stable; they enjoy greater success and security.

Democracy and human rights are, then, essential in achieving the goals defined in the four “pillars”. Here the President seems to evoke the philosophy of “practical truths” expressed by Jacques Maritain in order to explain the intrinsically practical *ratio* of the Universal Declaration of human rights. We also see an ‘impertinent’ Obama, scolding those who fight for democracy only when they stand outside the power structure, but do not hesitate to suppress the rights of others once they reach power. The implicit metaphor is that of a whited sepulcher... As regards procedures capable of guaranteeing human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law, Obama declares that there exists no single standard; in particular, that elections are not in themselves synonymous with democracy, if leaders fail to meet the challenge of governance through consent, not by coercion. “You must respect the rights of minorities, and participate with a spirit of tolerance and compromise; you must place the interests of your people and the legitimate workings of the political process above your party.” He could not have been more explicit.

As for women’s rights, Obama repeats that the issue of women’s equality is not a problem for Islam alone. In speaking of religious freedom, Obama emphasizes its importance, declaring that it is central to peoples’ capacity to live together.

The method we must use to confront problems is that of dialogue and collaboration; indeed, of partnership, understood as a sharing of responsibilities and interests: “all these things must be done in partnership”. It is interesting to note that in Obama’s discourse, the adjective “shared” is more frequently used than “common”. By this choice, he means to stress that we must all take on the task of solving the great problems together, particularly in order to avoid war and leave behind the wars now being waged. We must bear in mind the bitter observation that “it is easier to start wars than to end them”. Obama has inherited at least two wars from his predecessor, Bush: the war in Iraq and the war in Afghanistan.

The conclusion of his speech to the students in Cairo ends on a note rich in wisdom, realism, religious sensibility, and good common sense. “All of us,” he says, “share this world but a brief moment in time. The question is whether we spend that time focused on what pushes us apart, or whether we commit ourselves to an effort - a sustained effort - to find common ground, to focus on the future we

seek for our children, and to respect the dignity of all human beings.[...] It is easier to blame others than to look inward: to see what is different about someone than to find the things we share.[...] There is also one rule that lies at the heart of every religion—that we do unto others as we would have them do unto us. This truth transcends nations and peoples—a belief that isn't new, that isn't [...] Christian, or Muslim, or Jew. It's a belief that pulsed in the cradle of civilization, and that still beats in the heart of billions. It's a faith in other people, and it's what brought me here today”.

#### **4. *Lamentatio* and hope for the United Nations Organization**

The same universalistic faith expressed in Cairo reappears in the Obama's speech before the General Assembly of the United Nations on 23 September 2009. That was the occasion for expressing his architectural vision of the world order, using the simple, unadorned language that characterizes him: a language years distant from what Italians call “*politichese*”, and from typical diplomatic parlance.

This analysis of the global situation is preceded by the frank admission of guilt and wrongdoing and omission for which the superpower is responsible: “America has acted unilaterally, without regard for the interests of others”, thus creating “scepticism and distrust”. Obama says he is aware of the expectations awakened by his presidency in the world. He does not shunt them aside rhetorically but, realistically, considers them inherent in a “status quo” which has led us more and more to define ourselves by our differences and to distance ourselves from our problems. In order to meet the challenge, “We must embrace a new era of engagement based on mutual interests and mutual respect”, striving toward a future “forged” with facts, and not merely with words. The time has come for all of us to share responsibility for a “global response to global challenges”.

Obama indicates four areas of commitment, calling them “pillars that are fundamental to the future that we want for our children: non-proliferation and disarmament; the promotion of peace and security; the preservation of our planet; and a global economy that advances opportunity for all people”. In an “interconnected” world, he observes, the traditional division of the world between nations of the north and nations of the south makes no sense. Therefore, “no nation can or must” attempt to dominate over another. Obama's choice is for multilateralism and respect for law. Once more, his break with the policies of his predecessor is palpable. In emphasizing its radicality, Obama hops back in historical time to stand alongside the great F.D. Roosevelt, celebrating him as the creator of a model for world order based on the United Nations Charter. Obama quotes a famous statement by Roosevelt: “The structure of world peace cannot be the work of one man, or one party, or one nation. It cannot be a peace of large nations - or of small nations. It must be a peace which rests on the cooperative effort of the whole world.”

Here we see a relaunching of that institutional multilateralism which, as mentioned above, the orgy of deregulation had subjugated to a multilateralism *à la carte*: in reality, to a unilateralism of the strongest (I insist on using the word “orgy”, often favored in universities as well, and used in paeans to the “new economy” which have little to do with scientific knowledge). Obama ushers in a renewed



centrality for the United Nations, a body made up of sovereign states, which “sadly, but not surprisingly [...] has often become a forum for sowing discord instead of forging common ground; a venue for playing politics and exploiting grievances rather than solving problems”.

We seem to hear a heartfelt lament made over the UN, an organization as fine and crucial as it is abused; it must now be saved from the state of indigence now afflicting it. For this task, as well, Obama evokes the example of Roosevelt, recalling, too, that other “architects of international cooperation had an idealism that was anything but naïve - it was rooted in the hard-earned lessons of war.” Obama appeals to the force of resistance and redemption which he considers as inherent in an Organization that “struggles to enforce its will, and to live up to the ideals of its founding.”

The UN: a cornerstone of the world order and, at the same time, a stumbling block for the dominating *Realpolitik*. May it not sound sacrilegious to think, by analogy, of Jerusalem, and of the Person who wept for it: “As he drew near and came in sight of the city he shed tears over it and said, ‘If you too had only recognised on this day the way to peace! But in fact it is hidden from your eyes! Yes, a time is coming when your enemies will raise fortifications all round you, when they will encircle you and hem you in on every side; they will dash you and the children inside your walls to the ground; they will leave not one stone standing on another within you, because *you did not recognise the moment of your visitation*’ (Luke 19, 41-44, *New Jerusalem Bible*, italics mine).

We might recall here what Obama says about Jerusalem in his Cairo speech: “All of us have a responsibility to work for the day when the mothers of Israelis and Palestinians can see their children grow up without fear; when the Holy Land of three great faiths is the place of peace that God intended it to be; when Jerusalem is a secure and lasting home for Jews and Christians and Muslims, and a place for all the children of Abraham to mingle peacefully together as in the story of Isra, when Moses, Jesus and Mohammed (peace be upon them) joined in prayer”.

“...*you did not recognise the moment of your visitation*”: the UN, as well, has welcomed important “visitations”. In particular, we remember that of Pope Paul VI on 4 October 1965 with his heartfelt invocation, “*jamais plus la guerre, jamais plus la guerre*”; of John Paul II on 2 October 1979 and 5 October 1995; of Benedict XVI on 18 April 2008. All these religious leaders have recognized the moral basis of the United Nations, encouraging its development in faithfulness to the universal ideals of its origins, and to its inherent mandate for the construction of world peace accordingly with Charter provisions and article 28 of the Universal Declaration which proclaims: “Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realised”. It is *opus iustitiae pax*.

In his speech to the General Assembly in 1995, John Paul II forcefully stated: “Fifty years after its founding, the need for such an Organization is even more obvious, but we also have a better understanding, on the basis of experience, that the effectiveness of this great instrument for harmonizing and coordinating international life depends on the international culture and ethic which it supports and expresses. The United Nations Organization needs to *rise more and more*

*above the cold status of an administrative institution and to become a moral center* where all the nations of the world feel at home and develop a shared awareness of being, as it were, a ‘family of nations’[...] In an authentic family the strong do not dominate; instead the weaker members, because of their very weakness, are all the more welcomed and served. [...] *The United Nations has the historic, even momentous, task of promoting this* qualitative leap in international life by fostering values, attitudes and concrete initiatives of solidarity which prove capable of raising the level of relations between nations from the ‘organizational’ to a more ‘organic’ level, from simple ‘existence with’ others to ‘existence for’ others, in a fruitful exchange of gifts, primarily for the good of the weaker nations but even so, a clear harbinger of greater good for everyone” (italics mine). He ends on this note: “None of this should appear an unattainable utopia. Now is the time for *new hope*, which calls us to expel the paralyzing burden of cynicism from the future of politics and human life [...] Inspired by the example of all those who have taken the *risk of freedom*, can we not recommit ourselves also to taking the *risk of solidarity* and the *risk of peace*?”

In a speech given in April 2008, Benedict XVI takes up the theme of the UN as a “moral center”, stressing that the United Nations embodies “the aspiration for a greater degree of international ordering” precisely because it is inherently sensitive toward the values of universal ethics.

Roman Popes continue to insist, *opportune et inopportune* (in the positive sense given to these adverbs by Paul of Tarsus), on the United Nations’ mission for integral human promotion. The *incipit* of this irenist teaching is in the encyclical *Pacem in Terris* by John XXIII (1963). This document includes the UN, together with the Universal Declaration, among the “signs of the times”: that is, among the providential chances given us by history, whose strategic potential we must grasp in order to exploit them for the common good. In this encyclical, we read: “It is [...] our earnest wish that the United Nations Organization may be able to progressively adapt its structure and methods of operation to the magnitude and nobility of its tasks. May the day be not long delayed when every human being can find in this organization an effective safeguard of his personal rights; those rights, that is, which derive directly from his dignity as a human person, and which are therefore universal, inviolable and inalienable.”

In its moral depth and its plan-oriented tension, Obama’s UN speech ideally fits as if in filigree, into the series of “visitations” recalled above: he, too, has faith in the major world organization, which he urges to be faithful toward its mandate. He reminds us that the United Nations Charter commits each of us to reaffirm our faith in the fundamental human rights, in the dignity and value of the human being, in equal rights for men and women. Once more, he quotes a sentence that Roosevelt used in his last speech: “We have learned to be citizens of the world, members of the human community”. The rights touching on human dignity give rise to a world citizenship, to be exercised at all territorial levels, embracing different political communities which have organized themselves to live as a single human family .

Let us return to the theme of building a world order. The centrality of the United Nations harmonizes with the vision of a multilateralism based on universal principles, therefore on a strong International Human Rights Law, and on the

sharing of responsibility in governance. In concordance with this view, the last part of Obama's speech is dedicated to the future of the United Nations Organization. In a spirit of realism, he notes that the imperfections of the UN do not mean that we must abandon it; indeed, they point to the need for us to multiply our efforts to make it function well. Obama goads or, if you will, chastises the member states of the UN, in an *aut-aut*: "The United Nations can either be a place where we bicker about outdated grievances, or forge common ground; a place where we focus on what drives us apart, or what brings us together; a place where we indulge tyranny, or a source of moral authority. In short, the United Nations can be an institution that is disconnected from what matters in the lives of our citizens, or it can be indispensable in advancing the interests of the people we serve."

Obama, of course, opts for the second of the two alternatives: the UN must be a place where a common future is forged; where we all meet together; the UN is a "moral authority". *Moral authority*: the expression reflects the acknowledgment of ethics, indeed the strong ethical investiture given to the most important world public institution.

The Obama model of world order is not based on the logic of "balance of power system" or "hierarchycal system". He explicitly excludes those criteria when he argues that in an era when our destiny is common, power can no longer be a zero-sum game. No balance of power among nations can last. Let us recall that the zero-sum game - and war is precisely that is typical of power politics, hence of *Realpolitik*<sup>10</sup>. Obama's choice, hinging as it does on the paradigm of universal ethics, can only be in favor of the games with a variable outcome, or with mixed motivations, typical of negotiations processes in which the most adequate power is "soft"<sup>11</sup>.

Just what, then, is the Obama model? Referring to models of world order system once theorized by Morton A. Kaplan, the model which best fits the axiological premises expressed in his speech in Cairo and at the United Nations headquarters (i.e., his emphasis on human rights, multilateralism, centrality of the United Nations) would rather appear to be the "universal system" model, characterized by a law ordered from above and engaging all states, and by a super-national organization set up to enforce it without affecting states autonomy for ordinary affairs<sup>12</sup>.

## 5. Obama's National Security Strategy

The choice that Obama foreshadows in his speeches in June and September 2009 is confirmed and developed, we might say, institutionally, in the document issued by the White House on 27 May 2010, *National Security Strategy*<sup>13</sup>. In the

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<sup>10</sup> Referring to a "classic" work of the realist paradigm in international relations: H.J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among nations. The Struggle for Power and Peace*. New York: A. Knopf, 1978 (2nd ed.).

<sup>11</sup> J. S. Nye Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*. New York: Public Affairs, 2004.

<sup>12</sup> For a synthetic presentation of the "models" of M.A. Kaplan, see A. Papisca, M. Mascia, *Le relazioni internazionali nell'era dell'interdipendenza e dei diritti umani*. Padua: Cedam, 2004 (3rd ed.), pp. 175-181.

<sup>13</sup> See text in [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov).

introduction, which bears the President's personal signature, we read that the commitment to extend and develop relations in partnership with all the world regions "is not an end in itself". The international order we are seeking, says Obama, is one that can meet the challenges of our time, opposing extremisms and violent insurrections; that can stop the diffusion of nuclear arms, and safeguard nuclear material; that can combat climate change and sustain global growth; help countries nourish themselves and cure their illnesses; resolve and prevent conflicts while healing the wounds they leave.

Obama's National Security Strategy differs radically from the National Security Strategy of George W. Bush of 2002, updated in 2006. Obama's vision is conceived under the sign of international law and universal values: "This strategy recognizes the fundamental connection between our national security, our national competitiveness, resilience, and moral example". We refuse the idea - he says - that any durable security and prosperity can be founded without regard for the universal rights. Democracy opposes aggression and injustice, and our support for the fundamental rights is essential for American leadership; it is a resource for our strength in the world ... Our security will come not from our ability to inspire fear in other peoples, but from our capacity to speak to their hopes. This work, he continues, will be done better if we draw from the power of decency and the dignity of the American people: our troops and our diplomats, but also the private sector, our NGOs and our citizens ...

Decency, dignity, "moral example", then: conceptual categories that we could never hope to find either in the strategic doctrine of the presidents Bush, or in the parlance of the current international political discourse. In Obama's architectural vision, values are the resource of power for America, before weapons and more than weapons. Obama's insistence on the theme of law, centering around "human rights, democratic values, rule of law" - that is, around the axiological-sacred triad of legality - informs the entire document.

The logic of this partnership for legality, to be shared on a world scale, is thus put forward: an illuminated self-interest has been a fundamental resource for American leadership during our entire history, says Obama: "We want a better future for our children and grandchildren, and we believe that their lives will be better if other peoples' children and grandchildren can live in freedom and prosperity. The belief that our own interests are bound to the interests of those beyond our borders will continue to guide our engagement with nations and peoples". And "that is precisely the reason, assures Obama, we should strengthen enforcement of international law and our commitment to engage and modernize international institutions and frameworks". He emphasises that "this modernization of institutions, strengthening of international norms, and enforcement of international law is not a task for the United States alone — but together with like-minded nations, it is a task we can lead".

Isolationism and unilateralism thus seem consigned to past history. The choice goes to institutional multilateralism and the centrality of the United Nations. In recent years, says Obama, America's frustration with international institutions has sometimes led us to use the United Nations at our own convenience. Now, however, in a world of trans-national challenges, the United States will need to

invest in the international system, working from within international institutions in order to overcome their imperfections and to set in motion trans-national cooperation. The word of order: to strengthen “the legitimacy and authority of international law and institutions, especially the United Nations”. As regards in particular the United Nations, the President clearly points out: “We are enhancing our coordination with the U.N. and its agencies. We need a U.N. capable of fulfilling its founding purpose - maintaining international peace and security, promoting global cooperation, and advancing human rights. To this end, we are paying our bills. We are intensifying efforts with partners on and outside the U.N. Security Council to ensure timely, robust, and credible Council action to address threats to peace and security. We favor Security Council reform that enhances the U.N.’s overall performance, credibility, and legitimacy. Across the broader U.N. system we support reforms that promote effective and efficient leadership and management of the U.N.’s international civil service, and we are working with U.N. personnel and member states to strengthen the U.N.’s leadership and operational capacity in peacekeeping, humanitarian relief, post-disaster recovery, development assistance, and the promotion of human rights. And we are supporting new U.N. frameworks and capacities for combating transnational threats like proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, infectious disease, drug-trafficking, and counterterrorism”.

Other new points of Obama’s security strategy concern, specifically, the crucial theme of the use of military force. When the use of force is “necessary”, Obama does not exclude a priori the possibility of unilateral action “if necessary to defend our nation and our interests”, but he points out that even in this case, “we will also seek to adhere to standards that govern the use of force”....“working with such institutions as NATO and the UN Security Council”. The use of military force, then, is viewed from a perspective of defense, not one of armed intervention in the form of pre-emptive or preventive war, as advocated and put into practice by Bush. The concept of “prevention” is used by Obama, not in a generic way, but with specific reference to “terrorist attacks against the American people”, and such prevention must be pursued with instruments such as intelligence, the observance of law and the capacity for internal security. But even in the struggle against terrorism, Obama puts the accent on multilateralism, in harmony with the premise that there exist inseparable links between national and international security. We shall collaborate “bilaterally, assures Obama “regionally, and through international institutions to promote global efforts to prevent terrorist attacks”. For such cooperative multilateralism to benefit everyone, we must “invest in the capacity of strong and capable partners”. Obama’s multilateralism, then, reflects a capacity building approach and the empowerment of partners.

It is in the very area of security that Obama calls on civil society: “our international order must recognize the increasing influence of individuals in today’s world. There must be opportunities for civil society to thrive within nations and to forge connections among them. And there must be opportunities for individuals and the private sector to play a major role in addressing common challenges—whether supporting a nuclear fuel bank, promoting global health, fostering entrepreneurship, or exposing violations of universal rights. In the 21st century, the

ability of individuals and nongovernment actors to play a positive role in shaping the international environment represents a distinct opportunity for the United States". And, "we will maintain our strong support for civil society groups and those individuals who stand up for universal rights".

Keep in mind that the theme of civil society involvement, like others we have mentioned, is infrequent in documents dealing with the strategies of "high politics". With this precision: "the United States is pursuing a dual-track approach in which we seek to improve government-to-government relations and use this dialogue to advance human rights, while engaging civil society and peaceful political opposition, and encouraging U.S. nongovernmental actors to do the same. More substantive government-to-government relations can create permissive conditions for civil society to operate and for more extensive people-to-people exchanges. Finally, "We are working to build support for democracy, rule of law, and human rights by working with other governments, nongovernmental organizations, and multilateral fora. The United States is committed to working to shape and strengthen existing institutions that are not delivering on their potential, such as the United Nations Human Rights Council. We are working within the broader U.N. system and through regional mechanisms to strengthen human rights monitoring and enforcement mechanisms, so that individuals and countries are held accountable for their violation of international human rights norms". In this context of institutional multilateralism, Obama opens to something that was inconceivable in the past decade: "Although the United States is not at present a party to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), and will always protect U.S. personnel, we are engaging with State Parties to the Rome Statute on issues of concern and are supporting the ICC's prosecution of those cases that advance U.S. interests and values, consistent with the requirements of U.S. law".

## **6. And the European Union?**

What resonance has Obama's doctrine had, on the European seaboard? It has not enjoyed the reception it deserved. The big newspapers gave more visibility to the Obama's Nobel Peace Prize, criticizing it for coming prematurely, without understanding that this lofty honor was meant to illustrate to the world the dramatic entry of a counter-current peace-making orientation, as expressed in the Cairo and New York speeches. In short, it is awards the courage to announce an articulated, wide-ranging pathway guided by what we might call "positive discontinuity".

On the political level, an implicit response by the EU, of different depth and tone, may be contained in the speech given by José Manuel Barroso on 26 March 2010 at the Brussels Forum 2010, entitled, "A new Atlanticism for the 21st century"<sup>14</sup>. The President of the European Commission asks: What kind of transatlantic partnership do we want for the 21st century? He answers that we need a "new Atlanticism", understood as a partnership which is "special" in that it is "natural", and therefore different both with respect to the "multipolar" approach

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<sup>14</sup> See text at [www.europa-eu-un.org](http://www.europa-eu-un.org).

(which relativizes transatlantic relations), and to that of “traditional Atlanticism”. It is special and natural because it is founded on the sharing of values which are fundamental in defining our interests: that is, “state of law, individual rights, democracy, solidarity, the value of all human beings...” Values are important, says Barroso. They are not abstract ideas: they are the foundation of our constitutional orders. They guide our political conduct. They justify our political reforms. They shape our political discourse, and must guide our foreign policy.

This sharing of the axiological bedrock with the other Atlantic seaboard is reinforced by data concerning the “transatlantic economy”, which Barroso defines as the “bedrock” of the partnership: 50% of global GNP, 40% of world commerce, 800 million consumers, three quarters of the foreign investments in the USA (1.2 billion billion dollars) come from Europe.

According to Barroso, the United States and Europe are “great drivers of globalization” who can and must contribute to ensuring the leadership demanded by globalization. That is why the two sides of the Atlantic need to “think global and act transatlantic”. This eloquent motto recalls the more popular “think globally, act locally” which for decades has been used in the world of non-government organizations and trans-national volunteer groups. The task of this global leadership, Barroso says, is essentially to reform the “architecture of international cooperation” and create a common transatlantic security zone.

But it is precisely in the architecture of governance and the need to reform current global and financial governance, that we note a differing sensibility. Obama talks in terms of institutional multilateralism centered around the United Nations, while Barroso sees a need for reform “particularly in the context of the G20, where we need to finish the job we started”.

Barroso’s speech includes no reference to any reform of the United Nations, as a task to be shared within the transatlantic partnership.

To remain on the European side of the Atlantic, instead, we see an interesting new aspect in the advent of Mr. Herman Van Rompuy, the first permanent President of the European Union, in compliance with the Lisbon Treaty, ratified on December 1, 2009. Van Rompuy’s entry onto the stage of international high politics occurred quietly, contrary to the media hoopla surrounding the entry—or rather the irruption—of Obama. However, there are also signs, for those capable of reading them, which indicate a commonality of deep universalistic sensibility between the two. Van Rompuy introduces himself with a masterly lesson, “Du personnalisme à l’action politique”<sup>15</sup>. The first section carries the provocative title, “Pas de Realpolitik sans Idealpolitik”, and opens a wide-ranging reflection on values. States Van Rompuy: “In politics we are often dealing with numbers rather than dreams, with facts rather than ideas.[...] but the political man is also a human being, and the human being is more than a calculating being”. This contrasts with the opinion of the English politician George Canning, who in the 18th century stressed: “Measures, not men”.

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<sup>15</sup> The lecture was given in Brussels on 7 December 2009 in the context of the “Grandes Conférences Catholiques”, a structured tribune in existence since 1931. Text in *La Croix*, 30 June 2010.

On the contrary, states Van Rompuy, “people are moved not by measures, but by values, by meaning [...] Politics is a struggle for power, certainly, but it is also action at the service of mankind, meant to gain occasions of happiness for it.” We must seek to create a balance between political realism and ethical idealism, favoring the ethics of responsibility in a person-centered view of the human being, of society and of politics, aware that “the most sorely neglected value at this moment is responsibility”.

The European Union President’s lesson then proceeds to refer explicitly to two fundamental works by Jacques Maritain: *Integral Humanism* and *Man and State*, within a framework of world-wide governance. Observes Van Rompuy: “political action on a national level remains essential, but by itself it is not sufficient; for “man must become capable of embracing the globalized world. Precisely because a man cannot be identified entirely with a nation or a people or a culture or a class, human relations have no sealed frontiers beyond which one would find only “foreigners” [...] On the contrary, our bonds on the local level strengthen us so that we can participate fully in the cosmopolitan community [...] In a globalized world, the perimeter of farthest bonds is expanding ceaselessly [...]. There are two aspirations inherent in man: the desire to be and become himself (the will and right to self-realization) and the desire to belong to a group (the need for social cohesion) [...] In order to satisfy these two aspirations, we must find a new human dimension in the growing world-wide community.” This points to the growing importance of the subsidiarity principle: in invoking it, we justify “the need for movement both downward and toward the higher levels”. Van Rompuy asks: “How can we confront all the major problems—the financial and economic crisis, the climatic crisis, crime, migratory movements—without a European and international dimension?”

In Van Rompuy’s opinion, the philosophy of integral humanism calls upon the principles of equality and solidarity, and therefore, social justice: “People are not the same, but as people they are equal [...] The equitable division of goods that takes into account people’s needs corrects a division functioning on the basis of merit”. Starting from this ontological premise, President Van Rompuy emphasizes the need to look to politics, to make politics in constant tension in order to transcend it: “Personalism starts out with the idea that respect for human dignity is not satisfied only by the growth of economic well-being and health (in confronting illness, disabilities and old age). The organization of such a society gives meaning to political action; however, man as such desires that his life have meaning as well.” Man finds this meaning in “commitment for something external to him: a transcendence [...] love is the greatest transcendent force, love in its multiple forms [...] happiness is the result of a life full of meaning.” Therefore, “from the top of the pyramid, above politics and the economy and everything that fills man’s life on earth, the spiritual meaning of man is soaring. And this spiritual meaning of humanism in its essence - to humanize the world by way of freedom, responsibility and solidarity - must nourish our entire personal and social life, with a heart, a spirit, a sense of hope”. The President of the European Union, in stressing that such a vision applies, as well, “for these times, considered difficult”, concludes his



lecture by quoting Saint Augustine: "We are the times. Let us try to be good and the times will be good".

Van Rompuy further illustrates his vocation toward educated politics in the more explicitly political speech given at the Collège d'Europe in Bruges on 25 February 2010, entitled "The Challenges for Europe in a Changing World"<sup>16</sup>. He begins by citing the names of the founding fathers of a united Europe: Jean Monnet, Paul-Henry Spaak, Konrad Adenauer, and Charles De Gaulle, mentioned for having led the French resistance movement from London. Like Obama, Van Rompuy grasps on the strong images: an analogy we might call axiological. The President states that the best way to honor the fathers is not to quote their beautiful sentences, but to ask ourselves how we can act in order to defend our interests and promote our values, aware that our "greatest challenge" today is how to relate, as Europe, to the rest of the world.

The Bruges speech, too, reveals a humanist; on that occasion he quotes a sentence by Shakespeare, useful as a metaphor for the workings of a political project: "There is a tide in the affairs of men". Van Rompuy notes that "we live in the midst of historical currents. On the geopolitical ocean, one must know the tides in order to steer a course, to change direction, to bring one's ship safely back to port". He then lists several currents, in the form of signs which Europe must heed, particularly in order to oppose the fashion of "declinism": that is, of considering the decline of Europe or of the entire West as something irreversible. Van Rompuy attempts to explain this mood, arguing that the first stage of globalization, the economic one has ended; now a second stage has begun: the political one. He sums up his analysis in these terms: "as long as globalization was seen mainly as an economic process, it appeared as we could all win. In the new, political phase of globalization, this changes...Whereas prosperity is spreading, power is shifting. People in Europe are starting to feel it". People "are anxious, says Van Rompuy, not of losing power, but of losing their jobs, of declining welfare, as a consequence of a global competition"

He offers a message of hope based on values and, at the same time – realistically - on concrete action. "There is no reason at all, he says, to think that only the forces of necessity are at work. We still have a choice... Europe has a choice. The world is changing, and we must get ready for the change. History is on the move"

We must find a political response... Economic governance can be strong only if foreign policy is united. What Van Rompuy calls "*gouvernement économique*" must above all prompt better coordination among political forces aiming at structural reform, both of the macro-economy and of the micro-economy. The result of our economic efforts, he states, will also determine our place in the world; indeed, economic growth can make us strong. This condition is necessary, but not sufficient. In order to deal with global change, we need a second element: we must also be "united". To be so, however, we need a strategic vision capable of responding to questions such as: "Where do we go? Who are our partners? Where do we want to be in ten or twenty years time ahead?". Van Rompuy's

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<sup>16</sup> Text at [www.coleurop.be](http://www.coleurop.be).

answer is that we must establish a shared sense of direction, starting from the premise that “building a market is different from being a *power*”. To paraphrase his thought further, one thing is the market, while another thing is true policy. The challenge for Europe, then, is steep: we must channel the current of globalization... united even in diversity. Van Rompuy’s pragmatism is partly influenced by functionalist thought, which theorizes the process of supra-national integration as a chain, a series of links progressing step by step. In fact, he believes that today the economic dimension of international affairs is the one which leads more fluently than others towards a “common position” and a common policy which involve other dimensions as well. As regards the partners with whom we can navigate in the “geo-political ocean”, Van Rompuy indicates several: the United States, Canada, Russia, China, Japan, India, and Brazil, with a preference for the United States as the most appropriate partner in many areas. The attachment of our American friends to good transatlantic relations, he says, is destined to become stronger still in years to come.

The Bruges speech by the first permanent President of the EU ends with the metaphor of a geo-political ocean navigated by a convoy of 27 ships, the same number as the member states of the Union. The convoy, says Van Rompuy, is seeking out its route amid the geo-political waves. Each of the 27 ships has its own flag together with the flag of the European Union: “The wind makes them drift apart some of the time, gets them to sail in the same direction at other times...some have great manoeuvrability, others are more robust, some smaller, some larger; some at the margins, others in between. What you don’t see is what the 27 captains know very well: under the waterline, their ships, like the 27 EU governments, are all connected, economically and monetarily. They cannot sail away from the others just like that... This European convoy does not have one single captain. Recently it acquired a permanent President ,...to find a consensus about where to go...to reestablish a sense of strategic direction”. Van Rompuy concludes on a note of hope, decidedly a virtue active in its orientation toward planning. He is convinced that Europeans are capable of sailing through the breakers, calming the storms and carrying forward our beloved convoy through the currents. This choice, he says, is near to hand: it is up to us to make it.

## **7. Meeting Obama’s challenge**

In Van Rompuy’s first lesson, there is a sentence stressing the moral and teleological tension that, in his opinion, must inform political action. Happiness, he says, is the result of a life full of meaning. We might paraphrase Van Rompuy’s thought here: we might say that *plenitudo vitae* finds expression in the civil and political community as *plenitudo iuris* and *plenitudo civitatis*: in a human-centered fullness of law together with fullness of citizenship. A legal system enters into fullness of normative meaning, and therefore *positively enacted* and not merely *imposed* law, when it is based on the acknowledgement and guarantee of fundamental human rights. Starting with the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration, the international system has entered this phase as well. The European Union as a whole began to enter it especially with the treaties of Maastricht, in 1992, and Amsterdam, in 1997; it progressed more decidedly with

the Charter of fundamental rights in 2000 and the Lisbon Treaty, which went into effect on December 1, 2009. As mentioned before, *plenitudo iuris* foresees *plenitudo civitatis*, I mean a fullness of citizenship implying universal, plural citizenship, and therefore democratic, pluralistic inclusion in the community in which one lives. Consequently traditional state-national citizenship, *tra rationale* of which is *ad alios excludendos*, needs to be re-defined *ad omnes includendos*. The only parameter for its formal recognition is that of *ius humanae dignitatis*, which has primacy over and indeed transcends the discriminatory *ius sanguinis*.

The criterion of wisdom hallowed by tradition is based on attention and respect for the dignity of "all members of the human family and of their equal, inalienable rights", as the Universal Declaration proclaimed in 1948, and on the assumption of responsibility in serving them. Both the President of the United States and the President of the European Union use it.

Of course, Obama's charisma towers even visibly. Van Rompuy's charisma, made up of curiosity and love for the deep philosophical, spiritual and poetic truths, is less visible; it still remains to be discovered. It might manifest itself as the urge to prepare and enlist, on the European side of the Atlantic, those elites and political networks of elites united in the awareness that they share the mission to embody, within the space of global governance and on various levels, the axio-practical teleology of a personalistic, communitarian humanism. I mean to say that if we know how to read it, there is a signal indicating a wide-ranging educative design; a teaching which is not ephemeral, since it is teaching by example, but positive and strategic in orientation, capable of nourishing the (new) political culture required for a "good multilevel governance".

As he himself takes care to point out, Obama is certainly an idealist, but not "naive"; he is an "axio-practical" figure capable of uniting values, goals and action; in short, a strategist expert in political and institutional politics.

In carrying forward his visionary plan, Obama must first of all take into account the American civil society, still deeply divided over the great issues of domestic more than international politics. This situation seems highly paradoxical if we consider the complexity of the globalization processes currently evolving; it is less paradoxical if we keep in mind the isolationist syndrome which characterized American political history until a few decades ago and which, in different forms and contexts, pops up every now and then. In the present situation we can find, despite the undeniable differences, some analogies with the circumstances that led to the premature expulsion of Michail Gorbachev from world affairs. As is well known, his strategy of *glasnost* and *perestroika* had made him unpopular, and even widely disliked within his homeland. On the international scene, instead, he found favor with public opinion, but not - except for rare exceptions - with the Western governments. For what was then the USSR, already in a phase of implosion, Gorbachev foresaw a non-traumatic transition toward the market economy and the rule of law. As regards the world order, he saw it in terms of centrality for the United Nations, with the enactment of the collective security system in compliance not only with Chapter 6 of the UN Charter, but also with the more demanding Chapter 7. This fact shows up in his speeches to the General Assembly, in particular the draft resolution on the establishment of a general system of

international security, sponsored in 1986 by ten socialist countries, headed by Hungary; the plan meant to restore authority to the UN for preventing and resolving conflicts and for respecting human rights (Doc. A/41/191, 14 August 1986). The document examines the structural changes then in act (a “complex world, full of contradictions but interdependent”), which requires “the restructuring of international relations based on cooperation and concertation”, as well as on their own “democratization”. According to the document, the “new” security is indivisible, and cannot help but be “universal and equal for all”, to the point of requiring a “general system of international security including not only the political and military sectors, but also the economic and humanitarian ones. In today’s situation, states the document, no state, no matter how strong, can hope to defend itself “only by military means”. We were then on the verge of 1989. The West pretended to ignore that warning, the resolution remained in the planning stage, and Gorbachev was pushed out, politically, during the G7 summit in London in 1991<sup>17</sup>.

Coming to present time, the two-fold summit of G8 and G20, held in Canada at the end of June 2010, does not fully confirm the approval that Obama had garnered in Washington concerning nuclear security. In Toronto discussion was over the way to confront the world economic crisis in a structural key. Obama’s vision foresees a governance of the world economy according to criteria of social justice: guided, then, by multilateral institutions capable of intervening in various sectors of the economy, including the sector of financial transactions. The European leaders, headed by Chancellor Merkel, seem to hold differing opinions, in defense of a “strongly competitive social market economy”, as declared in Article 2 of the European Union’s Lisbon Treaty; stress put on “strongly” risks to be detrimental of “social”, ignoring the fact that in order to be genuinely competitive, everyone must be given the possibility to compete. History reminds us that positions taken by the two sides of the Atlantic have reversed with respect to 1945, during the Bretton Woods negotiations, when the English delegation, guided by Lord Keynes, who favored public intervention in the world economy, had to give in to the all-out defense of the market economy, led by the American delegation.

It is only right to point out here that Obama’s vision today harmonizes with the encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*, which organically articulates a project for a new world economic (and political) order based on the principles of universal ethics, including human rights and subsidiarity.

### **8. The UN, the choice of preference**

In learning from the lessons of history, the European Union today must be able to see a strong sign of the times. In inviting Europeans to be more united - that is, to speak with a single voice - Obama implies that he needs this in order to carry forward his plan for world peace through dialogue and example. He needs Europe as a powerful “civil actor” favoring the use of “soft power”.

On its own part, the European Union has every interest in accepting the challenge of Obama and helping him to construct a world order according to the model of a universal system. We must accept the request to “lead by example”

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<sup>17</sup> See interesting reflections in P.I. Hajnal, “From G7 to G8: Evolution, Role and Documentation of a Unique Institution”, in Columbia International Affairs Online, April 1998.

together, within the world space of multilevel governance. The added value of support by the EU could to some degree compensate for the 'minus factor' affecting the domestic support enjoyed by the President after the first two years of his mandate.

Of course, in order to complete this task, the EU must present itself as united primarily in the person of its permanent President, so that his role in external relations will prevail not only over the roles of the semestral-term President and the High Representative, but also of the President of the European Commission. In the current historical situation, the most credible interlocutor with the President of the United States is President Van Rompuy, for two fundamental reasons: the sharing of a vision strongly shaped by ethic values, and the fact that Van Rompuy, unlike the former Prime Minister of Portugal, is extraneous to events linked to Bush's "preventive war" and yerarchical world order vision. I mean to say that, in the current situation, the independent variable "personal quality" has become highly relevant.

Starting out from these premises, the EU must take Obama at his word and, so to speak, "throw back" the ball to him, by defining, in a strategic perspective, the contents of a political agenda for a renewed transatlantic partnership. Several suggestions follow.

The great strategy of a vital partnership between the EU and the USA in the context of institutional multilateralism, must grow by sharing a design for world order. That design must hinge on relaunching international law, and be centered around the United Nations, both as norm-maker and as a presidium of multidimensional collective security, according to the canons of "human security".

For the UN to function well, highest priority must be given to infrastructure. Before reforming the UN existing bodies or creating new ones - Obama speaks of "modernization" - we must finally enact all the measures foreseen by the United Nations Charter. Indeed, the 2005 report by the General Secretary "In a larger freedom", stresses the Charter's relevance and full validity today.

The effective "moral authority" of the UN advocated by Obama is based on the concretely operative link between the objectives set forth in Article 1 and the principles enshrined by Article 2<sup>18</sup>, that is, on the Security Council capacity to exercise the functions provided by the Charter, including those of Chapter 7: in particular Article 42, which foresees that the Security Council can take action to use of military force. The UN should be made from the humiliating, dangerous block imposed on it by Article 106, which is still in force, even though it is the 17th "transitory norm"<sup>19</sup>. In the area of collective security, the EU must give an example

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<sup>18</sup> Article 1 states that the goals of the United Nations are to maintain peace and international security, develop friendly relations, further international cooperation in solving international problems, and coordinate countries' activities aimed at reaching these common goals. Article 2 establishes that the UN and its members must act according to the following principles: sovereign equality among states, fulfilling obligations in good faith, the duty to resolve peacefully international controversies, and the prohibition against using force in international relations.

<sup>19</sup> Article 106, a scandalous one, reads: "While awaiting the special agreements foreseen by Article 43 which would enable the Security Council, according to its own judgment, to exercise its functions in compliance with Article 42, the States signing the Declaration of the Four Powers, ratified in

by deciding to stipulate with the Security Council, the agreements foreseen by Article 43, thus providing the UN with a permanent military contingent for rapid deployment (for instance the already existent “eurocorps” and “battlegroups”)<sup>20</sup>.

The enforcement of international norms by peaceful means cannot but follow the procedures indicated by Article 33 of the United Nations Charter and, above all, it is guided by the functioning of international judiciary institutions: from the International Court of Justice to the International Criminal Court; from the European Court of Human Rights to analogous inter-American and African Courts. As we have seen, Obama starts to open the door to the International Criminal Court, and this, too, is an absolutely new outcome. The EU must express its satisfaction, and help Obama take the decisive step of acceding to the 1998 Statute of Rome.

Obama has successfully embraced the task of accelerating the process toward nuclear disarmament. Europe must commit itself not only to returning this process to the institutional sphere proper to it, that is, the United Nations system of specialized agencies, including AIEA; it must also pretend that other types of weapons be subject to the process, including so-called “small arms”. In remembering that controlling disarmament is among the functions of the Security Council, the EU must insist that both the commerce of weapons and their production be subject to the supra-national authority and control of the United Nations.

Obama speaks of an economy of justice; Van Rompuy states that it is necessary to govern the macro-economy and the micro-economy: both share the idea that politics must guide the economy, and not vice versa. In this perspective, the coordinating body of referral, legitimate according to current international law, is ECOSOC, more than the G8 or the G20, which foster and cultivate the syndrome of an opposing altar with respect to the UN and to institutional multilateralism.

Within this scheme for world order, which requires a preferential choice in favor of the United Nations, the theme of international and transnational democracy emerges. As Obama repeats in his “National Security Strategy”, democracy must not be “exported”, but “spread” through dialogue and cooperation: “In keeping with the focus on the foundation of our strength and influence, we are promoting universal values abroad by living them at home, and *will not seek to impose these values through force*. Instead, we are working to strengthen international norms on behalf of human rights”(italics added). The ‘modernization’ of which Obama speaks regarding the functioning of international institutions must be understood as their democratization. An important premise is that the democratization of the UN can function as a catalyst for the internal democratization of single countries, and the criterion of “one country one vote”, which reflects the principle of the sovereign equality of states, must be completed by the criterion of representative democracy by establishing a Parliamentary Assembly of the United Nations, similarly to what

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Moscow on 30 October 1943, together with France, and in conformity with the requirements of paragraph 5 of that Declaration, shall consult among themselves and, when circumstances require, with other members of the United Nations, concerning that common action necessary for maintaining peace and international security”.

<sup>20</sup> See A. Papisca, “The ‘Conventional Way’ for the Reform of the United Nations: Lessons from the European Integration Process”, in *Pace diritti umani/Peace human rights*, 2004, 1, pp. 125-132.

already occurs in important regional international organizations. In fact, there are now Parliamentary Assemblies in the Council of Europe, the OSCE and NATO, the Panafrican Parliament operating within the system of the African Union, the Latin-American Parliament, or Parlatino.

In order to effectively launch the reform-modernisation of the UN, the President of the EU might well propose joining the President of the United States and, hopefully, other regional organizations, in promoting a “Global Convention” with participation not only by national governments, but also by organizations of the civil society and local governments, following the example of “European Conventions” activated to elaborate the EU Charter of fundamental rights and the so-called Constitutional Treaty, modified in the form of the Treaty of Lisbon which substitutes it<sup>21</sup>.

### **9. Educated and educating leadership, an antidote to the determinisms of *Realpolitik***

Commitment for the effectiveness of International human rights law, international jurisdiction, system of collective security, democracy of and in international institutions, intercultural dialogue, the use of “soft power”: this is the identity card of a partnership and a political agenda meant to overcome the transatlantic schism.

The “sources” I have used are speeches of two leaders, not facts; but the words said by the President of the superpower and the President of the EU are in themselves a fact, considering the radical break which they express. In particular Barack Obama carries a daunting burden on his shoulders, one of anxious expectations in the world, and, as before pointed out, of open hostility in large social areas at home.

During the last century, there have been periods when positive charisma was less solitary: think of the second world war, with Roosevelt, Churchill, Pius XII; but also think of the beginning of the sixties, with John F. Kennedy, Dag Hammarskjold, John XXIII, even Khrushchev; and the eighties, with John Paul II and Gorbachev.

In citing F.D. Roosevelt, President Obama has publicly confessed what line of world order “architects” he is joining in carrying out his mission. My thought returns, here, to an analogous “confession” made in 1979 by another great proponent of a just and peaceful world order: John Paul II. At the beginning of his first speech to the diplomatic corps accredited at the Holy See, he said: “poor means” are strictly bound up with the primacy of the spiritual. They are sure signs of the presence of the Spirit in the history of mankind. Many contemporaries seem to manifest particular comprehension for this scale of values: let it suffice to recall, to speak only of non-Catholics, Mahatma Gandhi, Dag Hammarskjold, the reverend Martin Luther King. Christ remains forever the highest expression of this poverty of means

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<sup>21</sup> See my essay, “Leadership di qualità per il nuovo ordine internazionale”, in F. Grisi (ed.), *Papa Wojtyła, una certezza* (including essays by I. De Feo, E. Paratore, S. Quinzio, S Cotta). Roma: Dino Editore, 1980, pp. 142-158.

in which the primacy of the Spirit is revealed: the plenitude of the spirituality of which man is capable, with the grace of God, and to which he is called"<sup>22</sup>.

In the case of Obama, it would seem strange, and even a bit hypocritical, to speak of "poor means", if one thinks of the arsenals available to the President of the superpower. However, though with all due caution and with the correct sense of proportion, we can affirm that Obama's insistence on dialogue, on cooperation, on disarmament, on the universal values of human dignity and peace, on sharing, on co-responsibility, leads us to believe that he favors means which are "other". Means which are different from the infinitely heavier ones used in the usual practice of international high politics.

I do not know how many quality leaders Obama can count on today to join his mission. The spirit of wisdom and service toward the common good blows where and when it will... Earlier, we remembered that Max Weber distinguishes between charismatic-innovative leaders and bureaucratic-stabilizing leaders. Today it is not a question of inventing nor of innovating, but of taking up the path cut by the Charter of the United Nations: a pathway interrupted by bipolarism and blocked by twenty years of easy war and trans-national terrorism. The value of Obama's charisma does not lie in invention, but mainly in the courage to break with an irresponsible management of world affairs, in order finally to respond to the challenge of 1989, and to become believable, "leading by example".

Obama can find companions for his climb, non, certainly, among the leaders that met with Bush in the Azores to help him wage preventive war, nor among other leaders that think in antiquated ways linked to the tired patterns of Realpolitik; but in leaders who understand the meaning of genuinely universal values; who speak of civil society, institutions, human dignity, dialogue, solidarity, legality and, just as important, who are believable when they do so.

Obama has had the courage to say words and open windows that, as we have stressed, show a radical break with the dark times of the recent past of America and the world. Now it will be the duty of others, first of all those governing Europe, to show courage in giving him a hand; in reading the signs of the times; in assuming the responsibility to open their minds and their hearts to an era of educated politics and renewed humanism. Van Rompuy seems to meet these requirements.

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<sup>22</sup> Speech to the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See, 12 January 1979.