

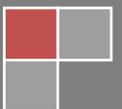
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THE TRANSATLANTIC PARTNERSHIP: IN SEARCH OF A ‘NEW’ LIBERAL ORDER

Effie Charalampaki



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Effie Charalampaki is Research Fellow at the Center for Euro-Atlantic Studies, Institute of International Relations, Athens. In 2019, her book chapter "Conceptualising European Security Post-Brexit: Turbulence, Complexity and Interdependence" will appear in the volume [*Peace, Security and Defence Cooperation in Post-Brexit Europe: Risks and Opportunities*](#).



The Transatlantic Partnership: In Search of A ‘New’ Liberal Order

Effie Charalampaki

Center for Euro-Atlantic Studies, Institute of International Relations, Athens

Email: effiecharalampaki@idis.gr

How should Americans set our priorities in a global information age? What grand strategy would allow us to steer between the “imperial overstretch” that would arise out of the role of global policeman while avoiding the mistake of thinking the country can be isolated in this global information age? The place to start is by understanding the relationship of American power to global public goods...We cannot do everything...To a large extent, international order is a public good –something everyone can consume without diminishing its availability to others.¹

The Pluralist Agenda

Transatlantic relations have been traditionally a tool for research in International Relations. In the post-Cold War period, the security, diplomatic and economic relations between the United States (US) and Europe have been the focus of numerous theoretical, geopolitical, political and cultural analyses, stemming primarily from the fact that the two partners (including Canada that is not considered in this analysis) form the basis of the Liberal International Order as the primary vehicle of the West to promote a highly globalized and interdependent world. The two transatlantic partners, via elaborate collaborative economic and security structures, such as NATO, the New Transatlantic Agenda, the Transatlantic Economic Partnership, the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) and the Berlin Plus Agreement among others have laid the foundations since 1991 for the primacy of the sole superpower in world affairs, the US, proving that the transatlantic relationship is “the most closely integrated and interdependent relationship in the world, fashioned from a shared history and culture.”² Kennedy stated in his

¹ Joseph S. Nye Jr., *The Paradox Of American Power: Why The World’s Only Superpower Can’t Go It Alone* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2002): 141-142.

² Wyn Rees, *The US-EU Security Relationship* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011): 1.

1962 speech his vision for the West in which he declared Europe as part of a “Grand Design...a partner with whom we [the US] can deal on the basis of full equality.”³

Today, the role of the European Union (EU) in advancing international cooperation and multilateralism is paramount in creating a web of complex interdependence not only with its transatlantic partners on the other side of the Atlantic, but also with other actors and powers outside the transatlantic sphere in an effort to expand the interests, visions and ideals of the West inside a highly interconnected and interdependent world that operates “at the edge of chaos:”⁴ a phase transition between order and chaos that struggles to accommodate the complexity of a multipolar, transnational system the dynamics of which force a multitude of state and non-state actors to network, connect, bargain, negotiate, ally, cooperate and conflict in their effort to survive the turbulence of our times. Traditional International Relations (IR) theory holds several propositions for understanding and analyzing the primacy of the superpower and its projection of power to the four corners of the world. However, complex interconnectedness and interdependence between the transatlantic partners requires an innovative theoretical framework that would address the transatlantic system as one symbiotic system of seemingly autonomous, independent variables that, at the same time, are extremely interdependent and interconnected. Cooperation is paramount for the survival of both the transatlantic partnership and system but also of the Liberal Order as a manifestation of the capability of the West to project its primacy to a world that is characterized today by many power centres with different equilibria. Innovative theorizing about turbulence in world affairs and complex interdependence holds the promise of providing policymakers with necessary tools to weather the storms of “uncertainty” that “tipping points” create in the transatlantic governance structures but also in the global governance security, economic and other structures. These tipping points produce obviously regional security crises, economic instability, institutional uncertainty, structural systemic risks (such as Brexit), democratic deficit, rise of extremist political and religious ideologies with political representation in governance systems, and lack of coherent and engaging leadership, in some instances, that threatens the survival of whole systems and partnerships and challenges international and regional cooperation.

The transatlantic partnership “naturally” creates regionally and internationally networks of state and non-state actors in order to promote mutual economic and security interests based on the common and traditional social and cultural norms that the US and Europe share with primary ideals those of freedom, democracy, human and civil rights and peace that promote multilateral structures for the better facilitation of multilevel cooperation in the international arena. The transatlantic system had internal rifts before with most characteristic that regarding the Iraq invasion, but President Trump’s rise to power seems to have caused such a systemic “turbulence” both inside the transatlantic partnership but also in the international system that the post-WWII order seems to be under assault from the very powers that built it.

³ J.F. Kennedy, "Presidential Address On The Goal Of An Atlantic Partnership" (Philadelphia, July 4, 1962).

⁴ M. Mitchell Waldrop, *Complexity: The Emerging Science At The Edge Of Order And Chaos* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 1992): 230.

Are we experiencing the “end of Atlanticism” and if we are, how does this affect security and governance structures that have to tackle problems that influence the life of every single citizen on the planet? Issues such as international trade; the rise of emergent powers such as Russia and China that challenge the survival of the Liberal Order; the future of NATO as the basis of Atlanticism; the cases of Iran and North Korea; protracted regional conflicts and grave humanitarian crises; national security issues stemming from climate change and environmental degradation; and the very Presidency of Donald Trump, among others, are “shocks” to the continuity of the transatlantic partnership since they create unprecedented uncertainty, insecurity and complex challenges for the transatlantic system that demand complex solutions regionally and globally, inside and outside the West.

The transatlantic system must create this level of resilience and stability in its internal governance structures during times of internal and external shocks that allows for the transformation of threats to opportunities for multilateral regional and international cooperation and for the emergence of those multilevel governance structures in many policy areas that promote the non-militarized resolution of disputes globally with both transatlantic partners leading by example toward this direction. The survival of the West has reached a critical juncture that demands “tiptoeing at the edge of chaos” with the transatlantic partners being endowed with the curse and the blessing at the same time of breaking the traditional conceptual jails about order and disorder, creating and negotiating institutional changes that promote alternative and more inclusive models of governance which address micro and macro level complexity in world affairs. In this regards, the transatlantic partnership must reconsider power and authority inside a global order where “the nature of force, legitimacy and authority relations have undergone meaningful redefinition...allowing for the emergence of another world alongside the state system as the basis for world order.”⁵ The survival of the Liberal Order and as a result of the West depends a great deal on creating “pluralist” governance structures that “anticipate that dynamics of decentralization will in fact come to predominate, intensifying the authority crises confronting governments, strengthening the hand of subgroups and encouraging individuals to turn away from national communities as they further narrow their conceptions of their self-interests.”⁶

Drawing on Rosenau’s propositions, pluralist governance structures “envision a diminution of the executive function of the national governments and an increase in the concern with autonomy and economic issues, leading to acceptance of low-intensity violent conflicts and high-intensity public disorders as normal routines of global and national life.”⁷ When this becomes “institutionalized” in policy structures by governance models that “conceptualize” especially the non-state entities and their agency in the global (dis)order, the Liberal Order will be adjusted from just a vehicle for expanding the American hegemony to a powerful tool for embracing, accommodating and negotiating the “decentralizing tendencies” of a highly globalized world as a result of the continuous processes of “uncoordinated fragmentation” which

⁵ James N. Rosenau, *Turbulence In World Politics: A Theory Of Change And Continuity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990): 37-38.

⁶ Ibid. 451.

⁷ Ibid. 452.

will become the basis of the new “pluralist” agenda of the West.⁸ This will help the Western leaders to develop an “adaptive response” in order “to manage the complexity and dynamism confronted by their systems” with their numerous overlapping micro elements and macro networks, which eventually will lead to the “deliberate devolution of authority and responsibility”⁹ onto network governance subsystems that are coordinated with Western bureaucratic centers but maintain a considerable degree of autonomy to tolerate disorder and even diffuse it in the global system if need be. This clearly is a proposition for governance of networked politics that fully take into consideration, embrace, incorporate and use the capabilities, characteristics and dynamisms of non-state actors and the processes they create at the micro and macro levels. It is the only strategy that will ensure the survival of the Liberal Order in a world of emergent orders by other powers but also its dominance over the others and its diffusion into normative structures that are difficult to penetrate by the West. A Liberal Order that exploits the tensions between continuity and change and is powerful enough to force state and non-state actors to engage and cooperate without none of them subordinating the other.¹⁰

Liberal Order In Distress

The West has formed the foundations of an international order, the Liberal Order, that emerged after 1941 that has promoted a highly globalized and interdependent world.¹¹ The processes of globalization, meaning the interaction and integration between peoples, companies and governments across the globe that has created this high interconnectedness and interdependence casting state borders porous and challenging state sovereignty, is actually anchored in the Liberal Order. The Liberal Order is the grand project of the West to democratize the non-Western parts of the globe and transmit its visions of governance and normative practices both at the micro and macro levels of human existence. It has evolved since its inception to a norms-based system with a set of rules that are anchored in the global order by political, economic and security multilateral structures the foundations of which were laid by the US and Europe. The order is sustained by liberal democratic states that, in essence, are developing and expanding “open markets, international institutions, a cooperative security democratic community, progressive change, collective problem solving, shared sovereignty and the rule of law.”¹²

In this regard, the Liberal Order has evolved after the end of the Cold War to a normative super structure within the global order that encompasses cooperative structures which transcend state boundaries, embracing multilateralism in order to coordinate national interests and policies

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid. 453.

¹¹ The Liberal Order was essentially created by the Atlantic Charter in August 14, 1941 when Prime Minister Winston Churchill and President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed a declaration of 8 principles in order to define a common vision for the postwar world. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_16912.htm

¹² G. John Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis and Transformations of the American World Order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011): 2.

while giving to the weak and disadvantaged of the international system, nation-states or people, a voice and power to influence great powers' decision and policy making processes.¹³ Drawing on Ikenberry's pivotal collective work on the origins, nature and transformation of the liberal order, two main conclusions are reached: 1) The Liberal Order has three fundamental natures with overlapping set of rules that define the Western World and transform and challenge non-Western parts of the world, creating a transnational normative culture which establishes the primacy of the West and the hegemonic presence of the USA in the global order: the nature of the security order, the nature of the economic order and the nature of the human rights order.¹⁴ 2) The Liberal Order cannot survive without the continuous engagement of the US for the sole reason that "American hegemony underlies the liberal order, whose reach has largely coincided with the extension of US power."¹⁵ The US is the only guarantor that has "sufficient power to promote the order, defend its institutions and enforce its rules."¹⁶ Even though the USA is sharing this task with its allies and its rivals in many instances, it remains the central pole of the order "regardless of whether US pre-eminence has been sternly challenged (as during the Cold War), uncontested (as during the unipolar moment that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union) or simply resisted (as in the nascent multipolar system)."¹⁷ The Liberal Order, hence, has been the primary example of how a material and ideational structure with its normative culture can dominate all other structures despite cultural differences in the global order via interactions and processes both at the micro and macro levels of the international system regardless if these structures participate or not in the liberal order. Due to the threefold nature of the Liberal Order - economic, security, human rights/rule of law, i.e., capitalism via global markets connectivity, American hegemony, liberal democratic regimes and international cooperation/multilateralism, it is obvious that the very survival of the Order relies upon the reciprocal commitment to the alliances that have sustained the order for 77 years with their strength and resolution to tackle global problems with a shared, transnational agenda. The promotion of international cooperation via successful multilateral structures and the processes that emanate from them is the axis of the Liberal Order. Only one alliance can achieve this task successfully: the transatlantic alliance.

After January 20, 2017, instead of the Western Liberal Order dominating a turbulent world desperately in need of order, the Order is seemingly dominated by structural turbulence at its core that threatens its very survival, creating chaos out of order inside the transatlantic partnership and in the global order. The emergence of non-state actors, some of them with no legitimacy but with the power to challenge state sovereignty and authority; the rise of emerging powers such as China and India and revisionist powers such as Russia and Iran; the continuous instability in the highly interconnected global financial markets; climate change and

¹³ See Robert O. Keohane, "Multilateralism: An agenda for Research," *International Journal* 45, no.4 (Autumn 1990): 731-764.

¹⁴ Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan*.

¹⁵ G. John Ikenberry, *Liberal Order and Imperial Ambition*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006); Riccardo Alcaro, "The Liberal Order and its Contestations. A Conceptual Framework," *The International Spectator* 53, no.1 (2018): 1-10: 5.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

environmental degradation; mass migration, forced human displacement and uncontrollable refugee flows; cyber conflict and hybrid warfare; transnational terrorist and criminal networks; the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) and regional problems with a spillover effect that emanate from weak and failing states constitute non-traditional security threats in the 21st century. Traditional (state-centric) and non-traditional threats emanating from non-state actors and networks challenge not only the American primacy in the world, but also the very foundations of the transatlantic alliance, the multilateral institutions that are the product of this alliance, the promotion of international cooperation and the very survival of the Liberal Order.

As a result, the foundations of the whole Western construction are shaking. We are witnessing slowly the collapse of the Western rules-based system, that anchored the importance of “democratization” in the international order, and its replacement by the normative structures of revisionist powers such as China and Russia that do not uphold the standards of liberal democracy: human rights, civil rights, political freedoms for all people, civil liberties and so forth, in other words the “social contract” of the Enlightenment on which liberal democracy is based. These revisionist powers seek to establish their hegemony by using conveniently aspects of the Liberal Order, specifically the liberal economic nature of the Order, posing, this way, serious threats to the ability of the Western leverage to transform and expand the Liberal Order beyond the West.

The result is a “chaotic” global system that affects both the micro and macro levels of human existence in every corner of the world. A new global reality is emerging that is characterized by the multipolarity of the international system but also by dynamic randomness that causes this state of “chaos.” The decline of American power and of the West subsequently; an unprecedented acceleration of the processes of globalization due to the aggressive technological advancements that collapse time and space so that the global becomes local and the local becomes global automatically; an exponential increase of interconnectedness and interdependence between the agents of the micro and macro structures; and a decline, as a result, of the nation-state’s sovereignty and authority sustain the emergence of a multilevel world order with multilevel connectivity which creates high degrees of “complexity” so that “change” and “uncertainty” become variables that the transatlantic governance structures must take into consideration. This, in its turn, results in the underproduction of domestic and foreign policies that ensure continuity, which essentially gives to nation-states and to individuals this sense of instability and insecurity that threaten the global status quo.

Rapid, uncontrollable change (due to its randomness which is a characteristic of chaotic systems) and constant political, economic and security uncertainty cannot be mitigated effectively anymore, not even by the acute use of expansive force, as was the case with the two World Wars, because the costs outweigh the gains as most cost-benefit analyses of war indicate in this transnational environment. Militarized warfare cannot and should not be a policy tool to control, stop or bring “change” in order to maintain power preponderance, preserve the status quo but also, if need be, satisfy national interests under a Realpolitik modus operandi. In this day and age, an “intelligent” hegemon realizes that it is a conspicuous folly for his survival not to

employ and actually enforce on the international system other policy tools, such as multilateralism, cooperation, alliance building, and negotiating methods in order to preserve the status quo and even transform it to his advantage due to the nature of the global order that is transnational, complex and also seemingly “chaotic” with highly interdependent societies -Nye, Pape, Paul, Hensel, McLaughlin-Mitchell, Goertz, Diehl, Rosenau and other notable scholars have elaborated extensively on these policy preferences such as soft power, international cooperation and interdependence, complex deterrence, soft balancing, democratic peace and so forth.

The new global reality is characterized by micro and macro systems that, in their effort to survive the turbulence and cope with uncertainty and change, bifurcate to many smaller subsystems that coexist both at the micro and macro levels, creating processes and interactions between their networks and agents that produce chaos and disorder. This forces the micro and macro systems, their internal subsystems, the new subsystems that spring due to bifurcation processes in the overlapping space of micro and macro structures with state and non-state actors entering and exiting simultaneous all levels to live or perish “at the edge of chaos.” “Survival” for all state and non-state entities, hence, becomes of paramount importance as if the new global reality is a paradox promulgated by a Suzanne Collins’ novel. This multilevel global order constitutes a whole that is not the sum of its parts.

The new global order subsequently is characterized by constant processes of emergence and co-evolution that demand methods, policies, cooperation and partnerships that exploit “complexity” and/or use “chaos” to their advantage in order to bring “transformation” at will that ensures “survival,” “emergence” and “evolution/progress.” How can the Liberal Order survive this “turbulence” and find order inside and outside of its system by diffusing chaos along the internal organs of its micro and macro structures?¹⁸ What is its place inside this multilevel, multidimensional global order inside which redistribution of power from the established and traditional power centers creates decentralization conditions that need management to minimize their costs? The answer is: “transformation.”

¹⁸ Drawing on James N. Rosenau’s Turbulence Theory, the micro and macro structures of the Liberal Order constitute, very briefly, the individual nation-states of the liberal order as well as nation-states that are NATO partners or belong to the European neighborhood policy and economic partnerships without being members of the liberal order per se because they affect the decision making processes of multilevel governance; the EU as one structure that is certainly not the sum of its parts; the institutions of the EU organizationally, NATO as a security structure of the Atlantic order, the communities of informed citizens who organize to aggregate their shared interests more effectively, and so forth. The micro and macro agents of these structures, that essentially form subsystems of their own both in the liberal order and the global order are the individuals/citizens; non-governmental organizations (NGOs); politico-economic movements such as the pro-Brexit movement; the rise of far right parties and governments in the EU as well as leaders that re-introduce isolationism in foreign and transnational processes on both sides of the Atlantic; social movements such as anti-immigration movements on both sides of the Atlantic; the business communities with their links to networks of multinationals that occupy space both in the global order and the liberal order, breaking the barrier of the domestic-international frontier; irredentist and separatist movements inside the EU and so forth. See James N. Rosenau’s *Turbulence in World Politics: A Theory of Change and Continuity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990).

Conclusion

The Western Liberal Order will survive “complexity” and “chaos” only if it manages to use change and uncertainty and if it understands and copes with multilevel complexity in order to transform threats to opportunities. The heart and mind of the Liberal Order is the transatlantic partnership. The transatlantic partnership is a symbiotic system of nonlinear relationships. It is symbiotic because all transatlantic partners live in close association with the same, shared rules-based political, economic and security structures, forming mutually beneficial relationships in order to aggregate their interests. The relationships inside and outside the transatlantic partnership are nonlinear because they are a challenge to control; there exists substantial “randomness” in behaviors and interactions and there are different “amplifiers” pertaining to different policy issues with an amplitude of inputs that do not equal the strength of outputs’ oscillation, knocking the whole system out of the equilibrium of initial conditions. The global order is characterized by extreme heterogeneity full of additives and, as a result, controlling outputs becomes a problem which leads to random, unpredictable outcomes and behavior, i.e., “chaos.” The 20th of January, 2017 was a “tipping point,” a “disturbance” to the transatlantic system primarily, that introduced to the world order a great amplifier from the internal organs of the transatlantic system. This constitutes a prime example of how a micro agent, a leader, can become an unpredictable force of change, disruption of the status quo and an agent of uncertainty and chaos for both micro and macro structures in the entire global order.

* Article based on my chapter “America, Europe, Trump: Transatlantic Cooperation In An Era Of Turbulence and Chaos” from the forthcoming book “Governance Challenges” (Edward Elgar Publishing) that is edited and published by ISA-IDSS.

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