



Bringing Europe's Leaders Together

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## **Biden's America must reach out to other world powers**

*The next US Administration should not try to restore American hegemony, writes Professor Margarita Mathiopoulos.*

As Harvard political scientist Graham Allison rightly pointed out in his latest Foreign Affairs article "The New Spheres of Influence", America must come to the realisation that sharing the globe with other great powers is essential to securing world peace and stability. This is timely advice for Joe Biden who will become the next President of the United States following the November election.

In his article, Allison complains that since 1991, with the end of the Soviet Union and emergence of the US as the only economically, militarily and geopolitically dominant world power, most American politicians' acceptance of other countries' spheres of influence has diminished. It was expected in Washington that the world would more or less abide by the American rules of the game; otherwise one would pay a price, from crippling sanctions to regime change. Today, this unipolarity is over, the Pax Americana perished in the flames of Afghanistan and Iraq, and with it the illusion that other nations take their assigned place in an international order led by the US. It is time for America to accept that there are other spheres of influence.

China and Russia have been complaining for years about the US-dominated world order and are demanding fundamental reform of an international architecture that is less imperial and more pluralistic. And they are demanding consideration of their different visions of what a global governance mechanism in the 21st century might look like. As long as Moscow and Beijing did not have the strategic relevance and power on the world stage, their complaints were neither heard or taken seriously. But that was yesterday. Today, they articulate self-confidently and with ambition, especially Beijing, what they are not prepared to accept: rules imposed on them by the US or the EU.

In November 2019, Henry Kissinger was in Beijing for the 40th anniversary of the establishment of US-Chinese diplomatic relations. His remarks on political, trade policy and military differences between the US and China at a Bloomberg Forum were drastic. He warned that both sides would have to settle their conflicts otherwise a catastrophe would ensue that would be far worse than the two world wars of the 20th century. One side could not dominate the other, and both sides would have to get used to it. We must therefore move from Western dominance to peaceful coexistence.

The first step that Joe Biden should take once he becomes US President is to invite his two counterparts Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin to a trilateral dialogue in the White House to talk about a new security architecture. As nuclear powers, they have a responsibility to secure international peace and stability in a post-Cold War order. This shared responsibility could be sealed by a new *trilateral agenda of a new type of great power relations*. In order to achieve this, the Big Three should resort to a diplomatic format that was very successful during the Cold War: the CSCE Mechanism, now known as the OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe).

At the same time, if the Big Three plan to discuss current sensitive issues such as human rights, the militarisation of the South Chinese Sea, 5G network technology, the annexation of Crimea, Assad's regime, Erdogan's Russian arms procurement, the future of Taiwan, and other concerns, these efforts will be short-lived. The use of the non-ideological baskets of the former CSCE dialogue is a good way of separating the issues at stake.

Peaceful coexistence does not mean that the Western community abandons its liberal values or that we would live in a *Westlessness* world. Our values are universal. Freedom, democracy, human rights and plurality of opinions has been in our DNA for the last 2000 years. But we will not have peaceful coexistence if we continue to impose them on others.

As far as Europe is concerned, it must strive to become a fully fledged global power. The EU in particular has been beset for years with financial crises, Brexit, transatlantic dissonances, and is struggling to achieve strategic autonomy in the face of great power competition. As Norbert Röttgen, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee in the German Bundestag and one of the front-runners for the CDU Chairmanship, sums it up: "As Europeans, we must answer the question of who and what we want to be in a world in which order is increasingly dissolving, which is becoming more unpredictable and in which a US-Chinese major conflict is looming. We must make the historically successful European internal project an external project. If we do not, we run the risk of becoming irrelevant."

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