

Post-COVID multilateralism

HOW TO SAVE HUMANITY FROM HELL?



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Executive Summary

- The crisis of multilateralism was present in the system long before Donald Trump rise to power. It has deep structural roots. It coincides with the changing division of power and influence in the world.
- The COVID-19 pandemic could have less devastating consequences if there were more transnational cooperation. However, in the beginning, countries chose to go alone, which augmented the severity of the crisis.
- To tackle global problems, we need more cooperation, not less global connection. Globalization is not a problem. The problem lies in deficiencies of management of globalization. International organizations are never more effective than the member states want them to be.
- Because of the complexity of problems and profound interdependence, multilateralism will not die. It will be different. It will be exercised by different groups of actors, by different channels and on different levels.

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Introduction

The return of power politics that undermines alliances, international institutions, multilateralism, and rules-based order has become one of the major challenges of global politics. It has been particularly highlighted during the recent COVID-19 pandemic. The virus is a globalist. It does not recognize national borders or whether it attacks the UK Prime Minister or a citizen of the least developed country. Until now, no one yet produced the vaccine. COVID has profound implications for the entire global economy and public health. It may reverse all the uplifting that the developing countries experienced over the last decades. It will impact the national political systems in unpredictable ways as they will experience slashing in jobs, production output and decreasing demand.

Within three months, the IMF has downgraded world economic prospects from 3% decline (IMF, April 2020) to 4,9% projected for this year. In comparison to the previous year trade volume can be lower 18,5% (WTO, June 2020). The COVID-19 is here to stay with humans for an unforeseeable period and will likely become a 'new normal'. Countries which seemed to contain COVID successfully, are experiencing the return of infections rate. Much of the success in reducing extreme poverty, which was achieved since the 1990s, is imperilled now.

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Never in our lifetime, the need for international cooperation was more certain. If the countries do not tackle COVID altogether, no one will stay safe. Despite this, international cooperation is still an exception, not a rule.

Multilateralism before COVID

Already before the occurrence of COVID-19 the multilateral cooperation was crumbling. The European Union had gone through a severe existential crisis that consisted of a series of sequential and overlapping crises: eurozone, migration, and security on her borders. Additionally, one of the most influential EU members, the United Kingdom, has decided to exit from the Union after more than four decades of membership.

Characteristically, the EU is the most advanced integrationist project on earth. It is an international organization like no other, having a significant level of pooling sovereignty to supranational bodies. Through subsequent treaties, it had achieved a level of polity. The EU has somehow muddled through her complex and multidimensional crisis, a fact which some observers would claim as a success. Nonetheless, in comparison to two earlier decades, when Europe introduced itself as an example for other parts of the world to follow, there was a striking contrast between aspirations and reality. For many of the EU members, “an ever closer Union” – that

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was a statement of the fundamental treaty, has ceased to be an ultimate aim. To make things even worse, one of the commonalities of the EU, democracy and the rule of law, without which the EU cannot be a community of values and conduct several joint policies, started to decay. Some countries which three decades ago democratized and later joined the EU, reversed the course and undermined their democratic political systems, independence of the judiciary, or freedom of the press.

The situation was difficult enough for the EU to focus all of her energy to tackle it. But another unexpected event of profound consequences came from the other side of Atlantic: the election of Donald Trump for the president of the United States. It happened in a time when the transatlantic cooperation was desirable more than ever to manage the fastly transforming global order.

Trump was not isolationist, as many commentators expected him to be. He was hard unilateralist, who thought of European integration as an artificial object, while the other international organizations he treated as enemies of the US ultimate sovereignty. He immediately undermined or even withdrew from several international agreements. The crisis of multilateralism had started at the very heart of the hitherto Western-led global

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order. However, it has a long history, yet before president Trump entered the political scene.

The US presidency of Barack Obama offered earlier a chance for renewal of leadership in global affairs and a controlled transition towards more polycentric world order. Although Obama was committed multilateralist, he was much more restrained regarding the US role in global affairs. After two terms of George W. Bush, which ended with the US engagement in devastating wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the most significant financial crisis since 1929, Obama was very cautious in putting the American leadership upfront. Instead, on many issues, he expected the others to take the lead.

These critical shifts in Europe and the US happened in a time when the other parts of the world gained significance. The global financial crisis, which has started in the West and impacted West the most, was one of the leverages that made the global agenda even less under control. Other notable events have also provided a glimpse of decay of the hitherto existing global system. With the annexation of Crimea and the prior cut of Georgia, Russia has broken the fundamentals of territorial order in Europe but escaped more severe retaliation. The US did everything it could to stop the creation of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, of no avail. The

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US' European allies simply ignored an American argument. The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership between the US and the EU, which suppose to introduce a 'golden rule' for international trade agreements, has never come into the final round of negotiations. Similarly, the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which the US departed. The problems of multilateralism as a means to tackle globalization have spilled out onto the transatlantic sphere. When citizens of the US and Europe started to dislike globalization, and gave rise to populist politicians, in other parts of the world globalization was considered as beneficial and in positive terms (Pew Research Center, 2014).

The declining role of the West and thus lesser ability to set the global agenda coincided with the crisis of multilateralism on the structural level, which was present in the global system before Donald Trump's era. Hale, Held and Young explicitly called it 'gridlock', and explained by growing multipolarity, institutional inertia, harder problems to solve and increasing fragmentation. They argued that the "existing institutions solve some problems they were initially designed to address, but also fail to address problems which have emerged from the very global economic system they have enabled." (Hale, Held, Young, 2013, p.10). The collaborative report of the Transatlantic Academy found out that we are witnessing the emergence of a new, more fragmented and decentralized global order, in

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which multilateral institutions play only a limited role alongside regional organizations and national strategies (Flockhart et al., 2014). Other influential analysts claimed age of ‘no one’s world’ (Kupchan, 2012), ‘mini-lateralism’ (Naim, 2009), ‘zero-sum world’ (Rachman, 2011), or ‘every nation for itself’ (Bremmer, 2013).

Trump’s rise to power signified a more confrontational style of politics. His ‘America first’ policy was not, however, something exceptional for the US policy. After all, it was Barack Obama, who stated in a more gentle style: “America, it is time to focus on nation-building here at home” (Obama, 2011). The critical difference was that while Obama expected the other countries to share the burden of delivering international public goods through cooperative action, or to become ‘responsible stakeholders’, Trump is defining American interests in opposition to the other nations. He is also not afraid to enforce his policy preferences out of any multilateral framework. In his speech to the UN General Assembly he said that the “future belongs to patriots”, not globalists (Trump, 2019). Paradoxically, during the annual 2017 World Economic Forum in Davos, the Chinese leader, Xi Jinping, stood firmly as globalization defender.

In consequence, only recently the US has withdrawn from several multilateral agreements or bodies: the UNESCO, the Human Rights Council of

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the United Nations, the Paris agreement on climate change, the nuclear agreement with Iran. It refused to continue global talks held on the OECD forum on taxing the Big Tech companies, threatening that it will “respond with appropriate commensurate measures” if other countries decide to collect this tax on their own. The US has also paralyzed the core dispute settlement function of the World Trade Organization as it blocked the further nomination of judges to its appellate body. In a seek to punish China and impose additional duties on Chinese export, the US referred to the clause of national security, effectively undermining any WTO’s mediating role. Other countries may easily follow this kind of behaviour, which would put into risk the whole adjudication system based on common rules.

Other organizations of global governance system are also the object of President Trump attack on multilateralism. His transactional approach and disregard towards NATO have dramatically hurt the trust within the Alliance. The US sanctioned the International Criminal Court for its willingness to investigate crimes committed by American troops in Afghanistan and Iraq. Additionally, the US has drastically cut funds for the World Health Organization, just in time of the most dangerous global pandemic of the last 100 years.

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Thus the critical question of this paper is how to save multilateralism and develop into the pattern that is not an exception, but a habitual way of doing things? The following paragraphs examine: (a) what are the repercussions of COVID-19 pandemics for multilateral cooperation; and (b) what new approaches can be developed so to save multilateral cooperation for the good of humanity.

Decaying multilateralism faces COVID-19

The global governance system was neither ready for the pandemic nor managed to contain it. The reaction to COVID could have taken place much earlier if China was not withholding information on the infection. All the pitfalls of growing authoritarianism in China have come to the fore. The management of the crisis can remind us of some stories from Chernobyl 1986 disaster.

This situation happened in a moment of a growing trade war between the US and China, considered, by the IMF, as one of the most significant systemic risks for the world economy. It would be reasonable to expect some level of international cooperation in case of such severe global pandemics. Instead of this, we observed the blame game between the US and China, which dramatically paralyzed both the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and the G20 responses. The G20 had a meeting almost

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three months after the outbreak of COVID. The crisis has not even appeared on the UNSC agenda. The United Nations General Assembly has approved only a vague resolution that stresses support for multilateral solutions based on the UN system and the central role of WHO in coordinating a global response (UNGA, 2020).

China wanted to avoid discussion about the occurrence of the crisis. They would expose all Chinese mismanagement at the onset and could provoke legal consequences against China both from companies and states. Additionally, there was also a risk that other countries will demand setting up an international inquiry commission to investigate the COVID occurrence, which could spiral beyond China's control.

On the other side, the US was openly branding COVID as a 'Chinese virus' and demanded such wording for potential resolutions of international organizations. It effectively inhibited effective response by the multilateral organizations.

However, even in the EU, the most sophisticated integrationist project in the world, the initial reaction proved visible lack of coordination in at least three areas: public health, free-pass area of Schengen, and macroeconomic response. From the beginning countries did not coordinate measures undertaken for the protection of citizens. They differed up to the

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country. Member states did not want to share information on how ready are they to contain COVID. Each member state acted on its own. They have been seeking purchasing masks or ventilators in blind. Later, the European Commission started to coordinate, but only to some extent, as it has no powers in public health enshrined in the treaties.

One can easily imagine that EU members coordinate the closure of the borders, as it imperils not only the free movement of people, but the resilience of supply chains too. Finally, members could also have coordinated macroeconomic response as the EU owns a single market, where 85% of countries GNP is placed within the area of a common currency. Despite this, necessary coordination was not a case.

As usual, the crisis may trigger EU's integration step forward. The multi-annual financial budget has been doubled in order to face COVID's consequences (it is yet under negotiations). The EU public health policy would be much desirable, but it would require the change of treaties, contested by most of the members. As the use of new technologies became common in times of pandemics, joint regulations will also be in price. Both the EU and the US discuss the possible decoupling from China and India regarding the production of medicine and medical equipment and supply-chains of critical commodities. It is a more controversial case of

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de facto ‘deglobalization’. It omits an important question: what if the national provider of these public goods fails? Will there be enough incentives for production to be effective?

The COVID-19 pandemic was a shock both to the US and Europe. It should not be. Characteristically, East Asia was better prepared in the management of the pandemic than Europe and the US. It was not only due to harsher measures imposed on citizens and more unrestricted use of technology. Countries who experienced this kind of crisis in the past could use the knowledge that they had.

Historically there were at least 15 large pandemics with a minimum of 100 000 deaths (Table 1).

Pandemic	Start	End	Deaths
Black Death	1331	1353	75 000 000
Italian Plague	1623	1632	280 000
Great Plague of Seville	1647	1652	2 000 000
Great Plague of London	1665	1666	100 000
Great Plague of Marseille	1720	1722	100 000
First Cholera Pandemic	1816	1826	100 000
Second Cholera Pandemic	1829	1851	100 000
Russia Cholera Pandemic	1852	1860	1 000 000

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Global Flu Pandemic	1889	1890	1 000 000
Sixth Cholera Pandemic	1899	1923	800 000
Encephalitis Lethargica Pandemic	1915	1926	1 500 000
Spanish Flu	1918	1920	100 000 000
Asian Flu	1957	1958	2 000 000
Hong Kong Flu	1968	1969	1 000 000
H1N1 Pandemic	2009	2010	203 000

Source: Jorda, Singh, Taylor, 2020, p. 14.

The knowledge about the past pandemics and what to do in such cases should be a common global repository. It is the primary task of international multilateral organizations to promote this and avoid repetition of mistakes. Why the WHO failed so miserably? Because international organizations are not better than states want them to be.

The case of the WHO is very typical and representative for other international organizations. Member states regularly cut its budget, refused proposed changes, and enlarged WHO agenda and tasks (Kickbusch, Reddy, 2015). There was also no agreement among them regarding priorities for the WHO. In consequence we observed ongoing fragmentation of the global health system (Fidler 2016; Brown, Held, 2017). For example, the UNAIDS program aimed to address HIV/AIDS problem was created not

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inside, but out of WHO. Similarly, the Global Fund which builds partnership to fight AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria.

The WHO key problem was reporting under the so-called International Health Regulations, which introduces, among others, state's obligation in case of infectious disease. In times of COVID countries however introduced emergency laws and did not seek any international organization's approval or help, sometimes even not informing the WHO on time or at all. There was also a lack of protocols that would guarantee vaccine access for all nations. A 'vaccine nationalism' has appeared and brought geopolitical rivalry to the global public health crisis (FT, 15.05.2020).

The disastrous response to the recent Ebola crisis in West Africa (2014-15) did not cause any severe shake-up in global health governance. The COVID-19 gives a glimpse of how bad might be the next pandemic and what are potential preventive responses. All the previous pandemics differed to each other, but all came as a surprise, which should not be the case. If there were enough resources invested in the research and on developing the vaccine for SARS or MERS, the critical infrastructure for immunity against COVID would be achieved much faster. In consequence of lack of vaccine, the global response was all measures, short of medical.

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With hindsight, the world's response to the pandemic did not trigger more cooperation than the reaction to global influenza 100 years ago, which infected one-third of the population and killed between 50 and 100 million (the estimates widely differ). COVID-19 is another case not in favour of breaking the system, and create more deglobalized solutions. Nationalization of responses will be counterproductive, assuming that we want to continue with open routes for people and trade. **The problem is not about globalization. It is rather about deficiencies in its management** (Weiss, 2013). We need to fix the system to work. **The response to interdependence should not be less connection, but more cooperation.**

Multilateralism after COVID-19

There are two fundamental questions regarding the future of global cooperation:

- on the structural level: what shape will the global order take in the coming years, with what consequences for multilateralism?;
- on the policy level: how to **defend** and **develop** transnational cooperation so it can **deliver**? We can call it the challenge of **3D multilateralism**

First, the weak leadership of the West, and the US unilateralism, does not mean the end of multilateralism yet. The major powers, their interests and

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strategies may change. But the global problems are here to stay. National policies will simply appear to be ineffective in solving them.

In almost all policy areas we need more, not less, collective, multilateral action. Technology played a key role in response to COVID. It has a dramatic impact on almost every aspect of our life during the pandemic. It was also the key to sustaining economic activity in many sectors. However, 60% of global population has still no access to computers and internet. Women, mostly from emerging markets and developing economies, are particularly disadvantaged in that category. There are 250 million women less online than men (Dabla-Norris, Gaspar, Kochhar, 2020, p. 25).

These critical areas do not fall from headlines, additional proof of their desirability. The rules on humanitarian action and engagement, managing migrations, contamination of climate disaster and resulting transformation of economic models, cooperation on pandemics and infectious diseases, regulation of new technologies and rules for the internet, financial stability and international taxation, safeguarding the resilience of global and regional value chains – just to name a few. But the constellation of actors who push for these solutions could be different than today. The coalition of like-minded or “responsible” states is not a bad option for multilateral

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solutions (more on the concept: Jain, 2013). It may remind “minilateral” or “club” coalitions on a single issue (Patrick, 2019). Especially taking into account that delivery of transnational public goods often needs just a group of willing states or actors. Not always all of them must contribute.

One of the major challenges is to forge normative agreement around new pressing issues on the global agenda: cyberspace, climate change, new technologies. Countries will have to spend more time on understanding the problems better and on building common definitions.

The global leadership does not have to come from the West necessarily. China now pays 12% of the UN budget, while at the beginning of this century it paid 1%. Chinese are running 4 out of 15 UN’s specialized agencies, while the US runs just one. Traditionally, the countries of G7 provided most of the leadership on global health through innovation, collective coordination and financial power (Brown, Held, p. 178). Today it is changing. The BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) influence on global health policy and over the WHO is already well documented (Harmer, Buse, 2014; Gautier et al., 2014). These countries can even jointly introduce an alternative to the Western voice on public health (Bax, 2014; Bond, Garcia 2015), different kind of development assistance

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in that area (Chan, 2011; Cabral, Russo, Weinstock, 2014), and ensure access to medicines out of traditional markets (Yu, 2008).

The post-COVID global order will be even more diffused and polycentric than it is today. The UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres underlines that “we are in a world in which global challenges are more and more integrated, and the responses are more and more fragmented, and if this is not reversed, it is a recipe for disaster” (Guterres, 2019).

However, fragmentation does not have to lead to the end of multilateralism. It may mean different ways of cooperation instead: different levels (more regional), patterns (more multi-stakeholder), and constellations of actors (decreasing role of the West in coalition-building).

The regional solutions can deliver at least some of the responses. Of course, across the world regions differ in their pace of integration. It is both in terms of pooling/delegation of competences towards supranational institutions and the level of cooperation/integration (Lenz, Marks, 2016). Nonetheless, a massive proliferation of regional organizations in almost every area of global governance does not necessarily mean fragmentation. In Africa, for example, we observe a fascinating moment of creation of the African Continental Free Trade Area. It incorporated several ideas taken from the history of the European Union. Some solutions introduced

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in the ACFTA are even more advanced than in the case of the EU. Regionalism should not be a matter of concern. Regional organizations form the bedrock of the UN system, and they should take the primary responsibility for solving problems due to their proximity and specification of solutions.

The shape of the future global order is very interestingly introduced by Flockhart, under the brand of a ‘multi-order world’. She argues that we should look at the coming world order as a constellation of several different orders nested in the framework of the global system (Flockhart, 2016, p. 3). However, it is different than the previous international systems because “the primary dynamics are likely to be within and between different orders, rather than between multiple sovereign states” (Ibid., p. 23). The difference with traditionally understood multi-polar order lies in ‘second-order nature’ of the emerging system, i.e. its composing elements are clusters of states, not states merely. It is also distinct from the system composed of regions or ‘regional world’.

In fact, transition to the new system can be a dangerous moment. “We no longer live in a bipolar or unipolar world, but we are not yet in a multipolar world. We are in a kind of chaotic situation of transition”, Guterres

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claimed. Even his appeal for a global ceasefire in time of the fight against COVID, was largely ignored.

Historically, every transition process of global order was pernicious. But the multipolar or polycentric world, towards which we are heading, does not have to be more dangerous than it is today. The declining Western dominance can trigger more demand for multilateralism and cooperation. It is particularly needed in the face of complex and advanced interdependence, from which the rising powers benefited so strongly.

Due to the perception of the seriousness of the situation, Europe has decided to push for more “strategic autonomy” vis-à-vis the US and the strategy of containment regarding crumbling multilateralism. The June 2019 European Council officially and unanimously approved the “EU action to strengthen rules-based multilateralism.” It aims to uphold the fundamental international norms and agreements, reform the existing institutions and cover new policy themes with a set of rules and regimes. It has become an official strategy for the whole EU.

Furthermore, on the initiative of France and Germany, during the September 2019 UN General Assembly session, the “Alliance for Multilateralism” was launched. The Alliance should be a loose and flexible network, having no formal membership, where states can access or exit up to

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the policy or task. It wishes to prove that multilateralism is still the best option as a way of governance of global problems. It argues that we should push for the reform of international institutions to adjust them to a new reality, defend minimum standards and introduce some new ones in areas where they are absent. Initially, there were six areas for collaboration: strengthening international humanitarian law, advancing trust and security in cyberspace, defending freedom of the press and combating misinformation, redefining climate change as a security threat, advancing women's rights, regulating lethal, autonomous weapons system.

In contradiction to the UN and G20, during the COVID pandemic, the “Alliance for Multilateralism” introduced a specific position (Joint Declaration..., 2020). for a coordinated global response under the leadership of WHO, that would overcome several challenges:

- health challenge: strengthening health systems globally, fair and just distribution and universal access to treatment and vaccine;
- financial challenge: adequate financing of efforts against pandemics, special emphasis on those who are the most vulnerable;
- information challenge: fighting disinformation;
- prevention challenge: long-term strategic response and prevention against the next pandemic, ‘one health’ global approach, and adequate institutional setting for policy coordination;

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- economic challenge: fighting with trade disruption, minimizing global supply and demand shocks.

The EU also was very active on international fora, organizing coronavirus global response pledging conference and mobilizing additional financial resources (almost 36 bln EUR) for the developing countries.

New coalitions for multilateral solution are desirable option. But to achieve anything, the world also needs new frameworks of thinking about collaborative action. The ideas of sovereignty and power should be redefined.

An old understanding of sovereignty can be still considered as the most important obstacle to promote cooperation on global public goods. In the very first moment reaction to COVID countries have followed their national patterns of acting. As COVID is a globalist, solutions do not lay inside national borders. State action alone will not replace global attempt to discover the vaccine or keep robust supply-chains of medical equipment.

Multilateralism cannot be considered as a threat to state sovereignty. It offers a chance to tackle transnational problems, which cannot be solved by single countries. Very often it is also a chance to realize the sovereignty of states more effectively, though beyond their own national level. The

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multilateral cooperation is horizontal, not vertical. It reflects the fact that there is no global government and there will not be any. Accession to international agreements is voluntary. ‘Bringing control back to people’, one of the myths behind the Brexit decision, is a symbol not only of political cinisism, but of total misunderstanding of reality.

Profound interdependence has changed also understanding of power. Slaughter has proposed a new understanding of this phenomenon that would be suitable for vertical reality. She makes a distinction between ‘power over’ – which signifies traditional definition, and ‘power with’. The later can be exercised only in relation with others and is “the power of many to do together what no one can do alone.” (Slaughter, 2017, p. 173). This understanding is well connected to the multistakeholder approach.

COVID pandemic has proved that there is an ample space for non-governmental actors to contribute to solving global problems and be part of multilateral solutions. In Africa, for example, the private sector leads the fight against the pandemic, while the governments appeared to be a weak link (Financial Times, 19.06.2020). The Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CePi), is a foundation created in 2017 that which provides financing to develop a vaccine against emerging infec-

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tious diseases. It is sponsored by both public donors, including consortium of states (for example Germany, Japan, Norway), and private foundations (like Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Wellcome Trust). Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI), UNITAID, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria have also played important roles on different occasions.

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation become such an important actor in global health policy, that –as some argue – it creates ‘Gates demand’. It is an action driven by the Foundation priorities, which are not necessarily traditional strategic functional and normative factors (Fidler, 2016, p. 241). The Foundation pressed the WHO to enlarge its agenda towards combating selected diseases, instead of strengthening the resilience of national health capacities. It happened, without the allocation of adequate resources (Patrick, 2020).

The coming 75th anniversary of the United Nations offers a new momentum for a more strategic discussion on multilateralism. The five permanent members of the Security Council will hold a meeting on the presidential level. Several questions should be thoroughly discussed: (a) what elements of the current international system should be kept and which should be changed?; (b) how to reform the existing institutional

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order to adjust it to the 21st century?; (c) what rules should be created for new policy areas that need global regulation? How to achieve broader normative consensus on fundamental issues?

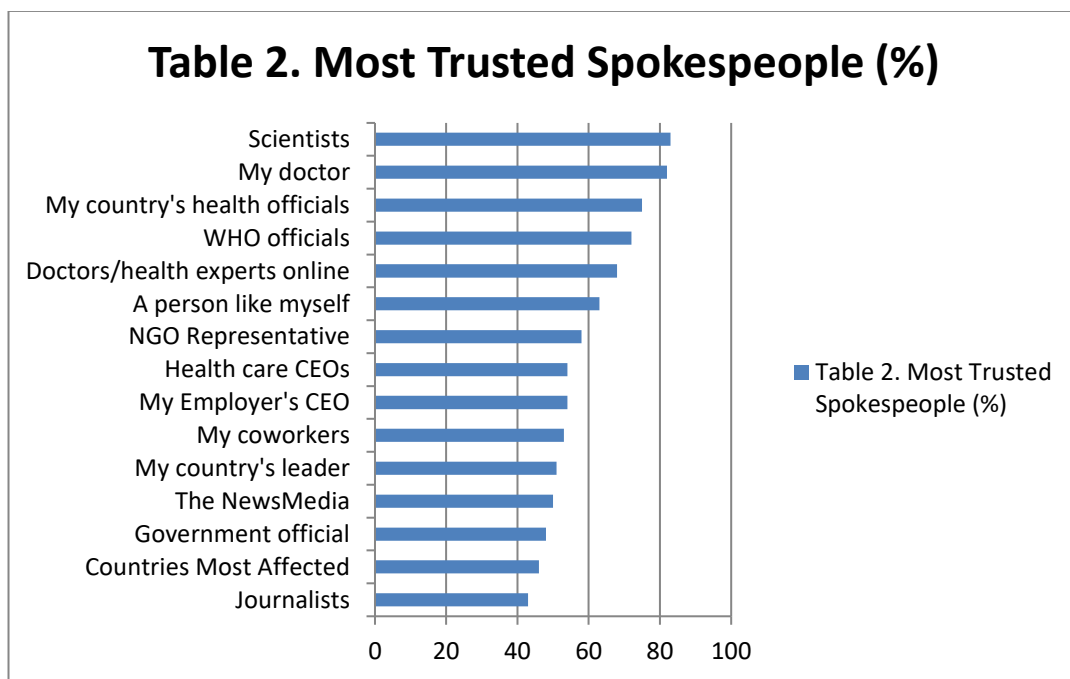
Maybe it is time to depoliticize thinking about international public goods? Transnational cooperative action is more likely if it is exercised on the technical/expert level (Eichengreen, 2011). Fukuyama observed that management of the pandemic promoted expertise and reliance on facts. Populist emotions were in disadvantage. Expert communities and public health officials have started to deepen their connections actively (Fukuyama, 2020). Additionally, as recent public opinion polls show, there is a growing demand on expertise across the world. 74% of people agree that there is a lot of fake news and misinformation regarding pandemic, while 85% is convinced that we should hear more scientists, less politicians (Edelman Trust Barometer, 2020).

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Source: Edelman Trust Barometer, 2020.

Furthermore, international organization are generally more trusted by citizens than national governments. This is both the case of the EU (Eurobarometr) and the UN (Edelman Trust Barometer, Pew Research). Despite all the gloom prediction on the future of multilateralism, the reality is not pre-determined. Populists who were in government dramatically failed with their management of response to COVID. This may be a persuasive argument for policy based on evidence and more rational argu-

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ments in the debate. Global health policy attached to geopolitical dimension can make humans worse off. Multilateralism is not a panacea to transnational problems. It is just a way of doing things. Without reformed international institutions, adequate resources and the will of member countries to push forward for joint solutions, little can be achieved. COVID-19 has opened a window of opportunity for a more cooperative world. The coming UN General Assembly may be the last chance to jump into it.

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