

# *futuribles* - no. 411 - March-April 2016

## **The Future of US Foreign Policy: What are the Presidential Election Candidates Thinking?**

*Laurence Nardon*

In November 2016 it will be up to America's voters to decide who will take over from Barack Obama in January 2017 as the next president of the USA. Before that date, at their respective primaries, the two main parties on the American political scene –the Democrats and the Republicans– will have to choose the candidate to represent them in the presidential election. In recent years, in a context heavily shaped by economic pre-occupations, foreign policy questions have been somewhat on the back-burner. Of the key issues in the campaign, it may be the case, given recent events (such as the increased number of terrorist acts carried out in the name of radical Islamism, including on American soil), that these questions come to play a crucial role once again.

After eight years in which foreign policy has had a less prominent place than under preceding administrations, how are the different contenders positioning themselves? Laurence Nardon, a specialist in US studies at the French Institute of International Relations (IFRI), has examined the question and in this article outlines the declared principles of the various candidates, both Democratic and Republican. She reminds us, in particular, of the traditional divisions in this area –interventionism/isolationism, realism/idealism, unilateralism/multilateralism– that might serve to define US foreign policy after the election of the new president.

## **The International Scene in Turmoil**

*Based on a Talk by Bertrand Badie*

After more than 300 years of an international system based on power relations between states and revolving essentially around the European "echo chamber", the situation changed radically at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the emergence of major developing countries and new types of actors, and accelerated globalization. In this distinctly more

complex context, what picture can we form of the world and international relations today, particularly in their long-term dynamics?

It was to cast light on this question that Futuribles International invited Professor Bertrand Badie to speak at a round-table event last September. This article reflects the broad outlines of that talk. It deals, among other things, with the nature of the changes that have characterized international relations in recent decades and the historic opportunities missed by the international community since 1945. It also stresses the challenges we face in this context, namely to avoid instances of national humiliation, restore dialogue between the major players on the international scene, and find all-inclusive solutions against a backdrop of solidarity. These challenges are enormous, but it is undoubtedly essential that we meet them if a calmer climate in international relations is to be promoted.

## **The Case for a Geopolitics of Education: Educational Rivalries on the International Stage**

*Hugues Moussy*

On 25 September the United Nations member states adopted a new programme of sustainable development based on 17 global objectives (the SDOs or Sustainable Development Objectives), to be achieved by 2030. Among these, the fourth objective –to guarantee access to quality education for all– has acquired great resonance as recent years have seen fierce attacks on educational provision, particularly in regions with a high presence of radical Islamist movements (Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nigeria etc.).

Education has always been a factor in progress and development; with the growth of literacy and the central role now played by knowledge in the economic and social development of nations, it is, as Hugues Moussy shows here, increasingly becoming a geopolitical issue, and one properly to be treated as such. Having reminded us of the significance of education in international rivalries (since it plays a part in both "hard" and "soft" power), this article stresses what is at

stake symbolically in the attacks on schooling perpetrated in various countries in recent years. It also examines how education stands at the heart of globalization today. This clearly shows the need to develop a geopolitics of education, aimed particularly at guaranteeing access to it and leaving us better prepared for global conflicts relating directly or indirectly to education both now and in the future.

### **Towards New Development Indicators: Issues and Challenges as Seen Through the Case of the European Union**

*Laura Brimont, Damien Demailly and Lucas Chancel*

“Wealth is unstable and passing”, wrote the Greek playwright Menander in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE, yet human beings have striven to measure it for centuries. And for many a long year they have done so using exclusively monetary and economic indicators, such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Despite regular objections to this choice of indicators, including in the pages of *Futuribles*, we had to wait until the 2000s before other elements (particularly, environmental and social factors) were taken into account by the national and international authorities in measuring the wealth and development of societies. Laura Brimont, Damien Demailly and Lucas Chancel remind us here how these new indicators emerged and the uses to which they can be put. They go on to show how they are becoming officially established at the European level and now form part of the medium-to-long-term strategies of the EU –for example, through the “Beyond GDP” initiative or the Europe 2020 strategy. They close by highlighting the issues involved in the establishment of such indicators, in symbolic terms, in terms of politico-economic harmonization and in terms of the evolution of European political priorities, while at the same time deploring a certain disconnect between the academic authorities producing these new indicators and the (political and citizen) actors who are expected to use them.

### **The French Defence Sector: The Current Situation and the Future**

*Georges Daw*

In a national economic context that has been more than gloomy since the crisis of 2007-08, the defence sector in France has been

an exception to the rule: between 2010 and 2015, the annual volume of orders for French armaments has virtually tripled, rising from around 5 billion to almost 15 billion euros. Though highly controlled by the government, French arms exports have “rocketed”, profiting from a particularly tense international context. As Georges Daw shows in this assessment, the defence sector is doing rather well in France, even if the country’s defence budget is often difficult to balance. A wide range of –economic, scientific and political– issues are in play here, particularly at the European level. But many questions are also raised, given the growing international tensions and the increase in violence from terrorist groups that use weapons which have, in the main, been sold through lawful channels at one point or another. Above and beyond the economic interests inherent in the defence sector that are brought out in this article, it suggests more long-term thinking is now needed on how the balance of forces between France and the end-users of the arms it sells might possibly be changed.

### **Prediction: a Simple Question of Probabilities? On Philip Tetlock and Dan Gardner’s Superforecasting: The Art and Science of Prediction**

*Charles du Granrut*

The anticipation of major events and, more generally, the making of optimally accurate predictions represent permanent challenges for decision-makers in both the political and economic fields. Various techniques and models exist for achieving this, having been developed over a great many years. And yet the occurrence in recent times of events that virtually no one had predicted –such as the 9/11 attacks– has lent fresh impetus to research in this area. The book by Philip Tetlock and Dan Gardner presented in this article by Charles du Granrut is part of this movement of new research on forecasting. Based on a programme called “The Good Judgment Project”, and on the results of a forecasting tournament organized by an agency within the US intelligence services (the main lessons of which it outlines), it enables us to identify the profiles and methods of the best forecasters –the so-called superforecasters– and proposes a number of rules for refining the quality of forecasts to the greatest possible degree. Charles du Granrut summarizes the essential points here, while

stressing some of the limitations relating, among other things, to the field being studied (geopolitics), the short time-horizon and the relatively simple wording of the propositions considered (which call only for binary answers).

### **Against Global Anarchy, Democracy**

*Robert Toulemon*

Having overcome the two bloodiest totalitarianisms in its history, Nazism and the Soviet dictatorship, Europe –and the West more broadly– seemed in a position in the early 1990s to promote a new international order based on fundamental rights and human freedoms. Unfortunately, as Robert Toulemon stresses here, what has ensued has been a form of global anarchy, manifesting itself in ways that affect most countries in the world directly or indirectly.

Yet, democracy and the defence of human freedoms are objectives that seem increasingly attuned to the desires of the great majority of the world's peoples. In fact, it is the failure of the Western powers –beginning with the EU– to agree on this agenda and gear themselves to its advancement that has proved crucial. Hence the call formulated here by Robert Toulemon for these values to be asserted and for the construction of a “global democratic order” that could express itself in a genuine foreign and European security policy worthy of the name –and also in a transformation of the Atlantic alliance into an entity that is more political than geographical. This is a call for a “cultural revolution” and for a renewal of multilateralism that could, as Toulemon argues, seize

on the challenge of climate change to be its new testing ground.

### **Can Europe Always Count on NATO?**

*Jean-François Drevet*

For almost half a century NATO, which was set up in 1949 after the Second World War to provide security for the European continent and thwart the expansionist impulses of the USSR, played a protective role that was essentially underwritten by the USA. However, since the end of the Cold War and in the context of strategic changes by the USA (particularly the desire to rebalance its foreign policy effort towards Asia), the way the Atlantic Alliance is currently organized has become problematic. As Jean-François Drevet shows in this article, the expansion of the Alliance to include recent and future members of the EU (most of which have a real demand for security, but are not able to produce even minimal security themselves), increased tension over borders (Ukraine, the Mediterranean seaboard etc.) and internal dissent (particularly over the solidarity to be shown towards Turkey whose recent actions, particularly towards Russia, have embarrassed its partners) all raise the question of what the actual role of NATO in the defence of its members will be.

Given current developments, an eventual US disengagement from NATO cannot be ruled out, potentially leaving the European Union to face its problems unaided. If that were to happen, the EU would be left seriously unprotected. Hence the increasingly evident need to reopen the frequently revisited but stalled issue of a European defence structure. ■

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Its objective is to provide its readers with a better understanding of contemporary societies dynamics, those facts, ideas and trends shaping their medium and long term possible futures.

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