



TOWARDS NEW GENERATION PARTNERSHIPS

*AN OPPORTUNITY FOR EU-MERCOSUR
COOPERATION*



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Homo sapiens has a vast and complex history on this planet—spanning over hundreds of thousands of years. We emerged as local tribes and, suddenly—considering the timescale of the universe—we became a global species.

We've witnessed the rise and fall of empires, adapted to industrial revolutions, endured catastrophic world wars, observed the mass extinction of species, developed amazing technologies, suffered widespread epidemics, and created diverse sociopolitical movements, among many other things that are part of our historical legacy. Our journey has been marked by both love and hate, hope and despair. Through it all—the good and the bad—we are still here.

Today, our civilization –or what is left of that– is once again **navigating deeply turbulent times**. We face a time of discord and fragmentation, growing warfare and violence, an environmental crisis, the disruption of global production chains, uncertain technological impacts, and many other interconnected phenomena that interpell our existence. These not only impact the world that we live in directly but also challenge our ability to comprehend what is happening—and, as a result, our capacity to act wisely.

All of this is unfolding in a context where long-established world power structures are unraveling, and new ones are taking form. This global shift in power dynamics involves both state and non-state actors, nations, and local communities.

We are transitioning from a unipolar moment—defined by the economic, cultural, and military dominance of the United States—**into a multipolar order** that remains undefined and uncertain in structure.

This emerging order, as it is not yet determined, **remains under determination**. It is something we—as a civilization—must actively shape for the better. If we don't, we risk allowing it to evolve into something even more dysfunctional or dangerous.

So, alongside all the massive problems, challenges, and injustices we face in this historical moment, there also lies a **window of opportunity for positive change**. A chance, amid the breakdown, and thanks to the improvements in knowledge, technology and lessons of the past, to become a better civilization—to do things differently and better.

Bridging for a better world...

To create and consolidate a better world—for everyone on the planet and for future generations—we need to build bridges. Bridges between regions, between cultures, between technologies, between organizations, and above all, between ourselves.

Fortunately, we are a species that builds bridges. We've been building them for a long time. Even in our darkest moments of destruction and division, in the end, we kept building bridges.

Building bridges means creating connection—both physical and conceptual. That includes roads, communication technologies, knowledge, emotions, language, culture, commerce, empathy, grief, and the many other elements that make up the full spectrum of our existence.

In essence, **building bridges is about building cooperation**—with others—toward something new and better. Our present and future, if we are to ensure survival on this planet and well-being for thriving lives, demand that we build cooperation. That means forging partnerships, alliances, and emergent social configurations that go beyond what is already here.

Yet, while we build bridges, we also have a tendency to build walls—not always for defense, but for exclusion, discrimination, the reinforcement of outdated identities, or simply out of fear of those who are different.

Sadly, we are entering a time of building more walls than bridges—a **period marked by fragmentation, isolationism, fear, and supremacy**. Often, this happens out of a desire to preserve a privileged place, driven by the naive belief that some “self” is the center of the universe—when clearly, it is not.

The universe has existed long before us, and it will continue long after us. We are merely the current manifestation of a particular species on a small blue planet, floating in the vastness of space.

If we wish to remain here, and living lives worth living, **we must build more bridges**—not naive walls. These bridges, if built, will give us the capacity to become better—healthier, more knowledgeable, and able to explore and understand the

universe we're a part of. If not, if we continue to build naively walls, we will suffer, perish, and even self-destruct.

Building the bridges we need, **new-generation bridges**: requires time, knowledge, responsibility, planning, goodwill, and above all, the ability to re-understand ourselves.

These bridges can emerge with hopeful collaboration—among people, organizations, institutions, and cultures, across regions, and through diverse initiatives. Each of us has a role to play, with the resources we have, and among the circumstances we're in, we all share the responsibility to contribute to building these bridges.

Towards new generation bridges

To propose new conceptions and ideas, first of all, there's the need—to the extent that is possible—to understand where we come from, where we are, and where we are going due current circumstances.

Globalization processes are nothing new: they date back to the moment people first decided to migrate—first on foot, then with wheeled transport, followed by ships, planes, and now even spacecraft. We expanded by land, then sea, and later air. What began as local migration in Africa eventually reached the entire planet. Sometimes driven by curiosity, need, fear, greed, or simply chance.

Now, hundreds of thousands of years since our species emerged, **we have become an interconnected global species**—a product of countless waves of globalization.

Through these processes, we merged cultures, wiped others, learned new things, and forgot some others. We left behind centuries of history, lost cultures, fallen nations and empires, natural catastrophes, extinct species, and depleted ecosystems. Yet new things also emerged: technologies, political ideologies, monuments, wonders, and much more that forms part of the vast legacy of Homo sapiens.

And now, in the present, we once again face **the end of an era**—marked by great accomplishments, but also by deep failures and disappointments. Perhaps it's a

unique era, like every other has been in its own way, placing us before **unprecedented challenges**.

Challenges that, more than ever, due to the sheer scale of what we've created, the impact that we have done and the immense power of the technologies we've developed, place us in global jeopardy—something that rarely, if ever, occurred in the past.

The last globalization

It's difficult to assign exact dates to historical periods, as they are interwoven processes without clear beginnings or endings. However, for the sake of simplicity, there is broad consensus that the era we are currently living in—now seemingly in its final phase—was defined by the transformation from the bipolar world order of the Cold War to the unipolar dominance that emerged following the fall of the Berlin Wall and the eventual dissolution of the Soviet Union.

This era of globalization—often referred to as *“the end of history”*, invoking Francis Fukuyama's concept, or as *neoliberal globalization* by others—was marked by a **near-universal belief in free markets and capitalism**. The accompanying policy package became the normative benchmark that all were expected to follow—or even adopt by force.

It established a framework where trade was not only central to the relationships between individuals but also between nations. Under this vision—tied to open borders, “free movement” of people, and the ideals of cosmopolitanism—it was believed that global well-being would improve, potentially leading to a liberal, market-centered utopia as the ultimate model for humanity.

This period also **brought about profound structural transformations**: the rise of the service sector as a core component of the economy; the digital revolution; a rapidly expanding global population; the emergence of massive commercial shipping vessels; and an explosion in international trade. Simultaneously, new countries emerged as major powers; corporations became transnational actors; industries were offshored; labor unions weakened; public sectors shrank; ecosystems were degraded; and countless species and habitats were damaged. Many deep historical dynamics were reshaped by this phase of globalization.

Alliances and partnerships in this era shifted from Cold War-style geopolitical alignments to **commerce-centered, transnational collaborations**—such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), and, to some extent, MERCOSUR. These were underpinned by institutions like the World Trade Organization (WTO), acting as a vendor of global trade norms. Throughout, the United States—and its vast military presence—acted as the “guarantor” of international commerce.

Now, we appear to be in the **waning stage of this global era**. Aside from a few remaining true believers in the US-led neoliberal order, most no longer trust in the promise that doing more of the same—as we’ve done for the past 30 years—will yield better outcomes.

The ending of an era

At this moment, we find ourselves in a **transitional phase**. The wave of globalization that defined recent decades is fading, and something new is emerging—though we still don’t fully understand what that is.

It’s also difficult to pinpoint exactly when this phase of globalization will—or did—end. However, several major global events signal possible historical breaks: the 2008 financial crisis, Brexit, the election of Donald Trump, the COVID-19 pandemic, and now Trump’s return to power. While at the same time the consolidation of other global powers that defy the hegemony of “the west”—like China, India, Russia, Indonesia, BRICS+, the growth of the global south, and many other emergent regional powers and dynamics.

This phase is characterized by disrupted supply chains, closed borders, rising conflict, re-localization of production, increasing tariffs and “protectionist” policies, and a race to dominate emerging technologies like artificial intelligence. Political instability is surfacing even in places previously seen as stable, and alliances are increasingly **shaped around security** concerns rather than purely commercial interests.

Issues like environmental destruction, inequality, human rights, prosperity, and democracy—once at least were partially prioritized—seem to be losing prominence. We’ve shifted our attention to immediate threats, and on the fear that something worse could happen at any moment.

Instability and unpredictability have become the norm. Short-term thinking is the rule, security is the prevailing framework, geostrategic competition is the main concern, and hope has been reduced to luck.

Meanwhile, we find ourselves in a present that not only poses enormous challenges, but also offers great opportunities: to understand what is happening, and to rethink how we can do things better on a civilizational scale. This requires a dedicated effort to properly understand the recent past, and to propose new forms of global engagement—**new bridges** that draw from past experiences while incorporating innovative frameworks and actions aimed at building a new generation of partnerships and alliances.

New generation partnerships

To overcome the current period of discord and fragmentation—largely caused by the negative consequences of the last wave of globalization and the international partnerships it entailed—we need to envision new forms and frameworks for future collaboration.

These **New Generation Partnerships (NGPs)** should learn from past mistakes while building on what worked well. In this sense, they should aim to become a structural component of a renewed, positive global order and a reimagined globalization process—one that offers a real opportunity to move beyond the emerging chaotic global landscape that seems to define this post-neoliberal phase.

A new globalization

A new globalization capable of consolidating a truly positive global order **must rethink many aspects** that the previous wave of globalization either ignored or mishandled—both in terms of methodology and content.

From a methodological perspective—that is, how globalization is conceptualized—this new process must be **decentralized, multilateral, and even supranational**, aligning with the emerging multipolar reality of the global system. In contrast to the previous global order, which was largely a *top-down* imposition by the United States—who shaped rules primarily to their own advantage while neglecting other voices—this new phase should be grounded in **convergence**

through multiplicity and consensus through genuine dialogue. Moreover, globalization must become glocal—integrating the local with the global, and vice versa.

When it comes to the content areas and themes, this new globalization must move **beyond the market-centric worldview** of the previous era, along with the assumptions and power structures it was built upon. It must be **post-neoliberal**.

In a post-neoliberal framework, we acknowledge that international trade is not a simple win-win dynamic. While it brings benefits, it also generates problems and responsibilities. The **dilemmas of trade** are numerous: security concerns, production delocalization, forced migration, environmental degradation, regional asymmetries, cultural tensions—these are all issues that a renewed globalization must take seriously and be structurally equipped to address.

Furthermore, neoliberal globalization was underpinned by a vast array of institutions and systems—including the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the SWIFT system, the World Trade Organization, various commercial agreements, established corporate models, and many others that align with this order. While some of these entities have had functional value, they have also produced significant negative outcomes—something well understood by many non-Western nations, who are now actively developing alternatives. Many of these institutions, moreover, have become nearly obsolete due to technological advances and emerging organizational paradigms. What we now need is to **re-think, re-shape or even replace those old ones**, towards others that are **truly global institutions with local grounding, better models of business, and renewed frameworks for international and interregional cooperation.**

Post-neoliberalism also entails expanding the lens of globalization beyond economics, to embrace a more **holistic understanding of global interconnectedness**. This includes domains like culture, peace, security, sustainability, intergenerational equity, well-being, functional democratic institutions, and many other vital aspects that previous globalization processes ignored—or chose not to address.

It also requires a **post-anthropocentric worldview**. Homo sapiens is not the center of the universe—nor even of this planet. A new globalization must **place the environment at the center**, not only for our own survival but for the millions of

other species we share this planet with—and whose existence we are jeopardizing. Equally, we must embrace a **transgenerational perspective**, recognizing that we are not isolated in the present moment. We are the product of those who came before us, and we have a responsibility to ensure that future generations can thrive. **Long-term thinking and a commitment to the common good** must become central concepts of a new globalization.

In summary, this new globalization must be integral, humane, political, sustainable, and transgenerational.

Towards new generation partnerships

A key pillar of the new globalization we must build—alongside reimagined global institutions, culture, and economic structures—is the development of **New Generation Partnerships** capable of establishing **New Generation Bridges**.

These partnerships should embody the core principles of this new globalization and give rise to concrete, functional structures that actively contribute to shaping a positive global order.

They should be grounded in the recognition **that cooperation, interrelation, and integration must extend far beyond the commercial sphere**. This includes fostering shared culture, mutual discovery, collective security, joint political frameworks and institutions, interconnected innovation ecosystems, integrated academic networks, and many other facets of social and institutional life.

Moreover, these partnerships should confront the **adverse effects of commerce**: entrenched inequalities, production chains delocalization, environmental degradation, concerns of labor and broader human rights. International commerce is not inherently virtuous or always mutually beneficial—it brings challenges that, after decades of accumulated evidence, can no longer be overlooked.

New Generation Partnerships must also be **post-international**. This means transcending traditional bilateral, nation-to-nation relations and embracing local, multilateral, supranational, or even global approaches. These can be forged between blocs, regions, or entire continents, offering deeper commitment, greater efficiency, and enhanced capacity to address the shortcomings of outdated cooperation models.

This vision recognizes that commerce is neither above nor prior to other forms of interconnection—it is integral to them and deeply interwoven within.

| Traditional partnerships | New generation partnerships |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| market-commerce centric | integral, multidimensional |
| bi-lateral, top-down “multilateralism” | local, regional, global, multilateral |
| short-term gain approach | long-term approach, intergenerational |
| intra-agreement exclusivity | wider-civilization embedded |

These New Generation Partnerships should be conceived in integration and alignment with **reimagined global institutions, global cultures, and economic structures**— recognizing that they alone cannot address the vast global dilemmas, challenges, and opportunities we face. In this sense, they must be embedded within and anchored to broader planetary thinking, institutions, and systems.

The EU-Mercosur Partnership as an opportunity

In this increasingly fractured global context—marked by discord, fragmentation, barriers, and walls—the EU-Mercosur partnership, along with the efforts and possibilities behind it, stands as one of the **few remaining wide initiatives actively working to build bridges**.

It represents not only an opportunity to sustain much-needed globally minded perspectives, but also a chance to **rethink how partnerships are formed**. It invites us to reflect on the failures and shortcomings of the last wave of globalization and the partnerships it produced, in order to reframe the very concept of inter-regional cooperation. This means innovating in ways that respond not only to the needs of both regions, but also to the broader needs of civilization.

Reframing partnerships requires **moving beyond the neoliberal model**—enhancing structures that reach far beyond commerce, while addressing the inequalities and negative externalities that trade often generates.

This involves that both blocks compromise towards incorporating a long-term perspective and embracing bi-regional cultural integration, responsible migration

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policies, the reduction of asymmetries, environmental protection, mutual assistance in defense and security, and the safeguarding of labor and human rights. It means **framing the partnership as something greater**—something that transcends economic agreements and aims to contribute meaningfully to the progress of civilization.

This moment of dialogue, negotiation, and the potential consolidation of shared bi-regional frameworks presents a powerful opportunity—not only for Europe, Mercosur and Latin America, **but for the world itself**. It can serve as a model that demonstrates bridge-building is not only possible in these times of discord, but also positive and necessary.

It is time to rethink, reframe, and react to the downward spiral we are facing—one that, if left unaddressed, will lead to **far worse outcomes for everyone on this planet**. But within every crisis lies an **opportunity**: a chance to do better, to reimagine how we live and organize, and ultimately, to leave a better world for future generations.