



Robert Triffin International



Conference in Lisbon on 6-7 May 2024
co-organized by the Academia das Ciências de Lisboa (ACL), Banco de Portugal (BdP) and the Robert Triffin International Association (RTI)
with the support of the Fonds Gutt (Université Libre de Bruxelles) and the Centro Studi sul Federalismo (CSF)

80 years after Bretton Woods, Relaunching Multilateralism through Regional Monetary Unions

2024 marks the 80th anniversary of the Bretton Woods conference, where the foundations of a new international economic and monetary order were laid down. After the formal collapse of its fixed-rates regime between 1971 and 1973, a *de facto* hegemony of the US dollar substituted its *de jure* hegemony, dominated by increasing global imbalances and greater vulnerability of the world economy, due to the *in-built destabilizer* that characterizes each international monetary system relying on a national currency to provide global liquidity, known as the *Triffin dilemma*.

Since the Great Financial Crisis, the G20 Finance, created in the 1990s at the BIS, gathers G7, BRICS and several other members, who rotate in the presidency, has met at leaders level. It includes the European Union, now joined by the African Union - allowing a more equitable, multilateral economic governance system. But the last few years have also brought more fragmentation and shortening of global value chains (with de-risking, reshoring, nearshoring, and friend-shoring) and attempts to fence off negative transnational externalities deriving from various sources of interdependence (even with autarchic and neocolonial responses). Worse yet the pandemic and military conflicts reinforce the need for increased supranational public goods or reduced negative public bads.

Both demand a follow up to the International Conference on Financing for Development (Monterrey, Mexico, 18-22 March 2002), which included the World Bank, the IMF and the WTO, unfortunately without results. Current wars notwithstanding, there is a renewed interest towards regional trade integration and monetary unions. Such unavoidable economic and monetary interdependence and the continental dimension of most actors now playing in the global arena call for better regional integration as a compromise between the shortening of global value chains and the need for open economies. Restoring a path towards a more equitable global multilateralization and a reformed international monetary system is now as urgent as it was in the 1970s, when most of the relevant players were in the G7, whose meetings were attended by the European Commission (at the behest, it should be recalled, of the UK).

The conference complements the collective endeavor of RTI of writing and publishing a book on the same themes. By joining forces with Banco de Portugal and ACL, the natural focus is on the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries (CPLP) such that each institution provides a venue for debate on the models for regional integration, in the perspective of improving global economic and monetary governance.

Tentative research and policy questions addressed.

- What lessons can be learned from European and African integration, both successes and failures?
- How does this understanding evolve in time and what major watersheds can be highlighted in different regions, along the lines of regional financial safety nets such as the Chiang Mai Initiative.
- What lessons have been learned so far from the regional or subregional initiatives of economic and/or monetary union or cooperation in Africa, Latin America and Asia?
- Could the project of introduction of Central Bank Digital Currencies that could become interoperable pave the way for regional payments unions and, subsequently, for regional monetary integration?
- Did the promoters of regional integration include the safeguard of global multilateralism as part of their objectives? Could regional economic and monetary integration provide a path to safeguarding and relaunching global multilateralization and reform of the international monetary system?

Introductory papers would be prepared for the sessions and would provide the basis for reactions of the panelists. For each panel, there would be a moderator putting questions to the panelists and moderating the debates among them and with the public.