

PERSPECTIVES ON THE UNITED STATES

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## A Splintered Mirror

The World Reflects on the United States

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# Aligning for the Future

## *Assertive Unilateralism or Concert of Powers?*

**U**S foreign policy is in the midst of an unprecedented, but incomplete, diplomatic revolution. This transformation began in earnest after the attacks of September 11, 2001, and has resulted in new levels of cooperation in a worldwide war against terrorism. Yet it has also initiated a risky process that signifies a profound change in the nature of alliance systems, as well as a fundamental reassessment of relations with former

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Cold War enemies and friends.

Six interrelated factors are driving this reassessment. First, states and terrorist organizations that are willing to use tactics of asymmetrical warfare and extreme violence have emerged as new threats. Second, the post-Cold War US rapprochement with Russia has been followed by the post-September 11 emergence of Russia as a potentially close ally. Third, NATO has continued to spread into areas formerly under Soviet influence. Fourth, the revolution in military affairs and technology has given the United States clear military superiority. Fifth, the expansion of the European Union has strengthened Europe's desire to devise common foreign defense policies. Finally, a rising China is increasingly perceived as a challenge to US and Japanese interests in Asia.

On the positive side, this reassessment of US alliance options could evolve into a closer relationship between the United States, the European Union, and

Russia that pools resources in order to carefully and diplomatically manage the rise of China and the emergence of other regional powers. Management of new international threats could be accomplished through concerted approaches that identify the nature of the threat and the most appropriate method of dealing with it. One option is to foster the formation of loose confederations or regional "cooperative-collective security communities" backed by overlapping US, EU, and Russian security guarantees, which would help diverse states to cooperate despite their significant political, social, and ideological differences.

More negatively, such a reassessment could degenerate into an "America first" position that ignores the nuances of multilateral diplomacy and the complexities of joint military efforts as the United States displays a more assertive unilateralism. The latter approach, based in part on superior technological prowess, would attempt to pressure unwilling states into obeying US directives. This

approach might lead the United States to take precautionary measures and preemptive actions that could alienate key allies and eventually overextend US political will and resources, possibly leaving the country bogged down in regional quagmires.

### *The NATO-Russia Council*

Although there were belated signs of a closer NATO-Russian relationship, the September 11 attacks provided the major catalyst for the United States to move more rapidly than generally anticipated toward a full-fledged entente with Russia. At the May 2002 North Atlantic Council meeting at Reykjavik, Iceland, NATO opted to establish the NATO-Russia Council (NRC), which is intended to engage Russia more directly in the NATO decision-making process—although Russia remains unable to set the agenda or veto NATO decisions. The three new Central European members of NATO—Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary—effectively blocked steps to adopt a

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radically new mode of NATO-Russian cooperation and pressed instead for a more "evolutionary" approach. As a result, the NRC agenda is initially limited to prove to skeptics that NATO and Russia can in fact cooperate.

Despite its initial restrictions, the NRC will ultimately need to confront the global and regional ramifications of the war on terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. There are more fundamental issues at stake as well, such as the future of peacekeeping in the Balkans and the nature of military cooperation between NATO, Russia, and the European Union. The NRC will also have to tackle the problems surrounding military cooperation in Kaliningrad and the Baltic states and contemplate NATO-Russian accords regarding conventional forces and ballistic missile defenses. Preventive war and peacekeeping deployments in Eastern Europe and, increasingly, Central Asia will also be a top concern. Further-

more, the NRC may have to consider peacekeeping engagements in the Mediterranean Sea and Persian Gulf regions as well. This could require greater cooperation from the European Union. NATO will have to move away from its more traditional Cold War approach of collective defense ("all for one and one for all") and toward a new and more flexible form of cooperative-collective security by NATO, Russia, and the European Union.

### *Engaging the European Union*

Sustaining a long-term US-Russian entente in the war on terrorism will require sustaining a positive Russian relationship with an expanding NATO, as well as with an expanding European Union. This is necessary because both bodies continue to absorb former Soviet spheres of influence. The largely uncoordinated "double enlargement" risks overextension and a breakdown in consensus-building for both NATO and

the European Union. It also hazards a possible confrontation with Moscow, if not a new partition of Europe—but only if Russia's legitimate military-security and political-economic concerns are not fully taken into account within the NRC and in Russia's dealings with the European Union.

NATO is moving toward a larger membership of perhaps as many as 26 states, after a formal enlargement to 19 members in 1999. The fact that a majority of the new applicants represent consumers and not producers of security raises the possibility that, should it actually be drawn to defend these states, NATO might suffer overextension. This pattern of enlargement also risks a breakdown in NATO's political consensus. The "war by committee" during the Kosovo conflict political revealed strains within the then 19-member alliance; given its experience in Kosovo, Washington was reluctant to engage its allies, except the United Kingdom, during the war in Afghanistan.

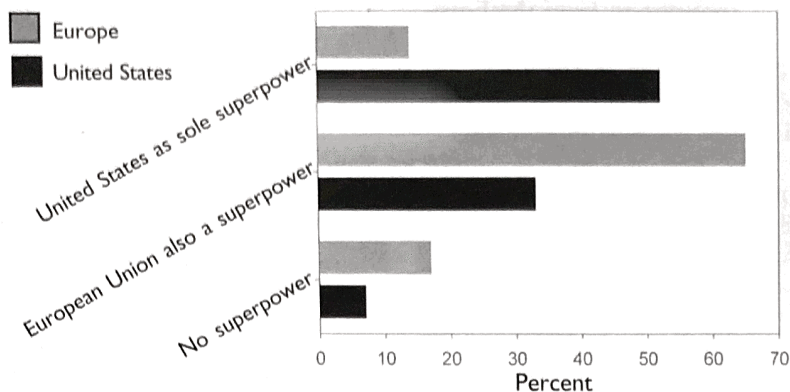
**Russian protestors burn a US flag while holding a portrait of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein during a demonstration to protest US air strikes against Iraq.**





## HEGEMONY OR HARMONY

Should the European Union become a superpower?



The figure above summarizes the views of US and European citizens regarding the global power structure.

Worldviews Report 2002

Although the European Union plans to enlarge its membership to many of the same states that NATO is considering, the very different strategic cultures, aims, and ambitions of NATO and the European Union make cooperation between the organizations very difficult, particularly given EU efforts

recent national election—and by the continuing US demands for exemption from International Criminal Court jurisdiction will make it difficult to implement and sustain a more concerted NATO-EU strategy, as well as a more autonomous security and defense policy among the EU states themselves.

### The more reluctantly the United States uses NATO as a vehicle for cases like the war in Afghanistan, the more Europeans will fear that the United States will not back their security in time of need.

to achieve common European foreign and defense policies. Disputes between the United States and the European Union over agriculture (specifically the importation of genetically modified organisms and beef), steel, and capital punishment tend to aggravate disputes over security issues. The possible inclusion of Cyprus in the European Union represents a source of tension with NATO member Turkey, which has applied for EU membership but has not yet been approved. Further disputes caused by general opposition to US policy—as demonstrated in Germany's

An additional background factor to debates over sharing power and responsibility is the fact that revolutionary advances in US military technology threaten to make the European defense component of NATO irrelevant. This will be true unless the European Union (with US backing) develops a technologically adequate Rapid Deployment Force as well as an intelligence system that would permit a more proportional measure of European autonomy and power sharing.

At the same time, however, the more reluctantly the United States uses

NATO as a vehicle for cases like the war in Afghanistan, the more the Europeans will fear that the United States will not back their security in times of need. This concern could eventually drive Europe to develop new defense capabilities. It could also mean that the new Eastern European members of NATO, which joined largely to gain NATO's Article V security guarantees, will be impelled to look to the European Union for security support unless more cooperative and overlapping security supports can be developed between NATO, the European Union, and Russia.

One possible option is to develop a more flexible model of cooperative-collective security involving an essentially three-tiered alliance. In the first tier, the nuclear powers—comprised of the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and Russia—would engage in strategic nuclear cooperation and provide overlapping security guarantees for Euro-Atlantic states and their partners. In the second tier, coalitions of willing states would back up members with conventional forces. In the third tier, as many

interested states as possible would engage in preventive war deployments and peacekeeping missions wherever needed.

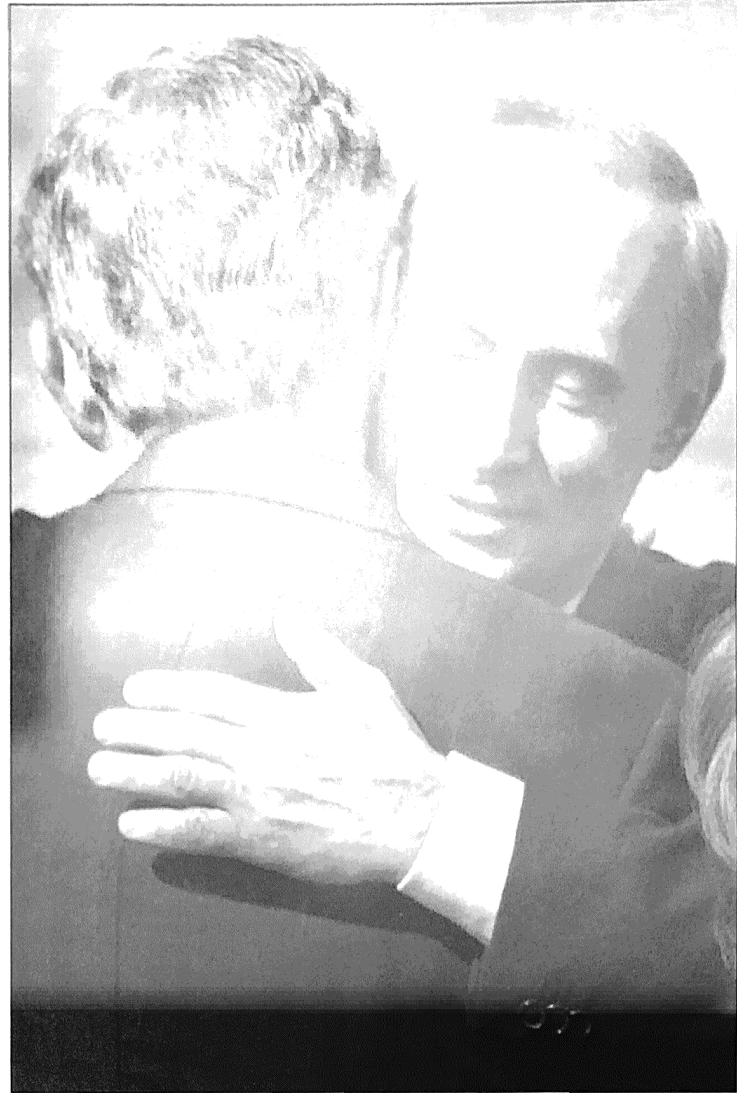
The success of a revamped NATO requires increasingly open and cooperative relations with both the European Union and Russia. In order to better synchronize the potential ramifications of their largely uncoordinated double enlargement, NATO and the European Union must foster the security, political, economic, and institutional links that will assure that Russia (and other non-NATO, non-

EU states) remain on board. Instead of attempting to expand a system of security in which one size fits all—as NATO has tended to do thus far—NATO, along with the European Union and Russia, should consider creating a number of regional cooperative-collective security communities in order to better cope with radically changing geostrategic and political-economic circumstances.

Regional cooperative-collective security communities (built through the mechanism of the Partnership for Peace) would be integrated with the armed forces of each of the states of a particular region and would, in turn, receive social development and nation-building assistance from the United States and the European Union if necessary. Formerly neutral EU members Sweden and Austria, for example, would be key to building a confederation between NATO, the European Union, and Russia in their respective regions. The deployment of joint preventive war forces could be initiated in the Baltic States, for instance, as a means to confirm overlapping security guarantees by the three entities. Here, however, NATO, the European Union, and Russia would need to resolve the crucial question of Kaliningrad so as to solidify Russia's positive relationship with the European Union. The question of visas through EU-Schengen territory for Kaliningrad residents, Russian military transit rights to Kaliningrad through European territory, and the reformulation of the outdated 1989 Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty for new NATO members (as requested by Russia) represent some of the key issues. Moscow, which has sought to maintain a tighter grip on the enclave, has feared that Kaliningrad would be militarily and economically isolated by NATO-EU double enlargement, which could give rise to a possible secessionist movement.

A new strategic alliance between NATO, the European Union, and Russia would accordingly involve the for-

**Russian President Vladimir Putin embraces US President George Bush outside the Russian Museum in St. Petersburg on the final day of Bush's May 2002 visit.**



mulation and implementation of overlapping security guarantees combined with the deployment of multinational preventive war or peacekeeping forces. Cooperative-collective security communities would have to cope with potential and actual conflicts—including problems of immigration, drug smuggling, and social, political, and ethnic tensions—throughout the Euro-Atlantic region. Such security communities would focus on areas that could draw a number of states into regional quagmires in the effort to sustain a general peace and to check terrorist actions.

### *The Question of China*

A more truly concerted relationship involving the United States, the European Union, Russia, and Japan will be needed to manage China's rise to major power status in the coming century and to strengthen diplomatic and security cooperation with regard to rising regional threats and terrorist organizations.

US global strategy since the Nixon-Kissinger era had largely sought to build China as a strategic counterweight to the Soviet Union. The Soviet collapse, however, combined with the rise of China as a significant regional power and Beijing's refusal to give up its claims to unify with Taiwan, by force if necessary, have led the United States to reassess its strategy and to shift away from its quasi-alliance with China and toward an entente with Russia.

This new entente has, in turn, raised the suspicions of the Chinese leadership, which fears "encirclement" by NATO, Russia, and Japan, even as Washington deploys forces in Afghanistan and the former Soviet states of Central Asia. Together with a "strategic dialogue" between the United States, Japan, and Australia, the United States has backed Japan's efforts to enhance its military capabilities and naval outreach to the Indian Ocean. The United States has likewise threatened to support Taiwan with ballistic missile defenses despite



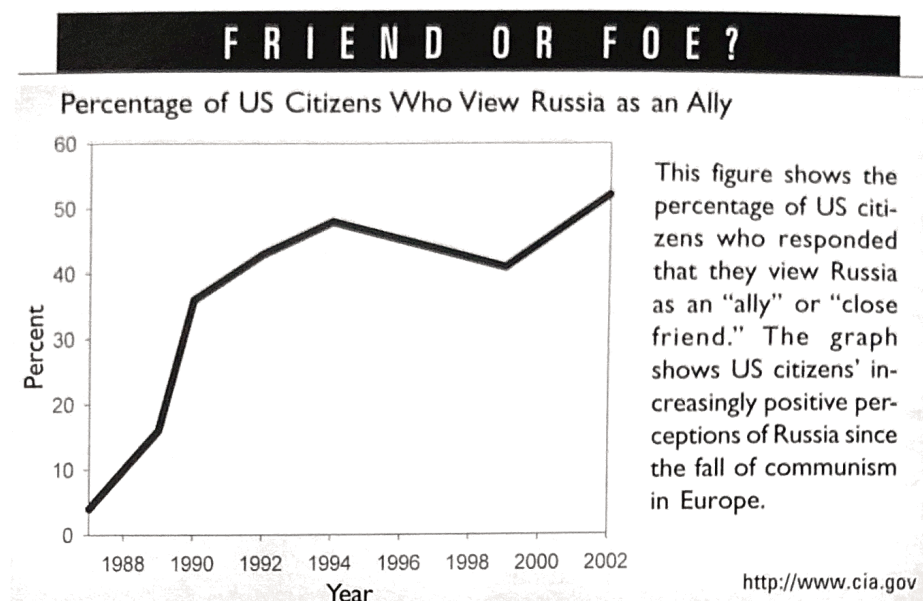
the “ambiguous” nature of US security guarantees for Taipei. Largely in an effort to deter Washington from coming to the assistance of Taiwan, Beijing has threatened, in response, to significantly augment its naval, air, and missile capabilities.

At the same time, despite the US rapprochement with Russia, Moscow has continued to supply Beijing with sophisticated weaponry and dual-use technology, largely for commercial reasons but also as strategic leverage to pressure the United States into paying even closer attention to Russian interests. A threatened Sino-Russo-Eurasian alliance cannot easily be dismissed as a bogeyman; such a counter-alliance could emerge in the not-so-distant future as Chinese power capabilities continue to rise—particularly if Russia ultimately does find itself isolated from the new Europe following the “double enlargement” of NATO and the European Union.

This is why it is imperative for the United States and the European Union to wean Russia away from its support for Chinese military capabilities—in part by arguing that such sales could ultimately backfire against Russia itself—in addition to fostering a Sino-Japanese rapprochement. Concurrent US, EU, and Russian diplomatic pressure on both Beijing and Taipei to look toward a “confederal” solution may be another way to defuse tensions.

### *Alliances Against Terror*

A deeper and concerted multilateral approach involving NATO, the European Union, and Russia could more effectively engage in the war against terrorism. Although the primary actors in Afghanistan were the United States and United Kingdom—not NATO as a whole, despite the invocation of NATO’s Article V security guarantee for the first time in NATO history—the important logistical and intelligence contribution of the allies, as well as that of other states, cannot be



entirely ignored. The United States has turned against the Taliban (backed by China, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan) and supported the Northern Alliance (backed by Russia, India, and Iran). In effect, the new post-September 11 US-Russian entente, while attempting to manage India-Pakistan tensions, has tended to pit oil-producing rivals Russia and Saudi Arabia against one another, while at the same time Moscow and Washington have not necessarily seen eye to eye with regard to the “new threats.”

While the United States has condemned the “axis of evil”—North Korea, Iran, and, most strongly, Iraq—Moscow tends to see Shia Iran as counterbalancing Saudi-supported Sunni pan-Islamic movements. Russia has repeatedly argued that Iraq’s acquisition of weapons of mass destruction can be dealt with diplomatically through the United Nations. And although North Korea is highly unstable, Moscow has argued that it is not a military threat. Sustained Russian ties with the latter three states (as well as its even more significant military-technological ties with China) have accordingly begun to strain the new-found cooperation with the United States.

At the same time, despite their own

conflicts, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, and other Arab states have opposed what is perceived as an even stronger US tilt toward its ally Israel; the United States, for its part, has increasingly questioned the aims of Saudi Arabia. Saudi support for Sunni pan-Islamic movements has been intended simultaneously to oppose Russian interests, counter Iran and pro-Iranian Shia pan-Islamic movements, and deflect the attention of pan-Islamic movements away from Riyadh itself, toward Israel and, indirectly, the United States.

In this respect, Iran represented the key threat in the 1980s until the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. By 2002, Iraq had again become the focus. However, the question of Iran has not disappeared, and the revolutionary pan-Islamic movement that largely originated in Saudi Arabia continues to pose dangers. The dilemma lies in the numerous and divergent forms of pan-Islamic terrorist movements backed by states, private financiers, mafias, and fund-raising “charities” that are in conflict with each other as well as with Israel.

From this perspective, it is dubious that the seemingly spiraling cycle of terror and counter-terror can come to some conclusion without a political settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which helps fuel the propaganda of pan-Islamic

and other terrorist organizations. Here, concerted US-EU-Russian and UN "quartet" diplomacy, coupled with the firm promise of international security guarantees to both Israel and a new Palestinian state, which would cooperate closely with the former in a very loose confederal arrangement, could help the two sides reach a mutually acceptable settlement protected by NATO, EU, and Russian peacekeepers. A new Middle East peace could be based upon a modified version of the Saudi plan proposed at the March 2002 Beirut summit, in which the Arab states would formally recognize the state of Israel in exchange for the latter's withdrawal to an area approximating its 1967 borders, combined with compromises over the right of the Palestinian diaspora to return and other complex disputes.

The complex web of strategic relationships in the Persian Gulf indicates that the war against terrorism cannot be won by focusing on one culprit alone but must be considered in its systemic geopolitical context. The Bush administration nevertheless adopted a new

pre-emptive strategy, concentrating on Iraq without first articulating any clear and feasible diplomatic resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Adopting aspects of the Saudi-Arab peace plan could have helped bolster the popular legitimacy of many Arab states in their own confrontation with Islamic terrorism.

### *A Rising Tide*

History is replete with examples of alliances that break apart in the midst of a war that was initially fought against a presumed common enemy. There is an increasing risk that the United States could adopt a more unilateral, preclusive, and precautionary approach to the war on terrorism, based to a large extent on its military and technological supremacy. Nonetheless, weaknesses and gaps in that presumed superiority could still be challenged through tactics of asymmetrical warfare, as demonstrated on September 11.

As the leading world power, the United States is tempted to act unilaterally without the willing commitment of its allies, a policy that endangers the

alliance and also undermines the new-found NATO-Russian entente. US tendencies toward unilateral actions tend to overlook consideration for the infrastructure, logistical support, diplomatic and economic assistance, and multinational peacekeeping provided by its allies. The failure of US leadership to forge a deep and truly concerted relationship with NATO, the European Union, and Russia could result in the degeneration of the global system into an increasingly violent anarchy in which both major and rising regional powers alike begin to take more assertive unilateral actions.

If the United States chooses not to work in close concert with Russia and the European Union, it risks being drawn alone into local conflicts throughout the world, exceeding its political will and resources. Such a development would be the latest proof of Francis Bacon's maxim: "The great accessions and unions of kingdoms do likewise stir up wars; for when a state grows to an overpower, it is like a great flood, that will be sure to overflow." ■

**A Chinese couple walks past a missile on display at the Chinese Military Museum in Beijing.**

