

NATO and the EU*

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The book is a compilation of 16 articles of chapters written by 14 different analysts and academics from the USA and Europe including Russia. The editor has contributed three chapters. Most of the contributions were written for a conference, sponsored by the American University of Paris and North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), held at the French Senate on 07 December 2001 on the subject of 'New World, New Europe, New Threats: NATO and the European Union (EU) in the New Millennium'. The conference was held soon after the 11 September 2001 attacks and the book was compiled when the Afghanistan War was raging but before the 2003 Iraq War. However, the book was completed only after the US declaration of victory in May 2003. The book examines the different views on the politico-military ramifications of the 11 September 2001 attacks and the war in Iraq. The undercurrents of the different authors' national policies and diplomacy are often discernible in their writings. Thus, though there is no real disagreement amongst the authors, some differences in shades of opinion were probably inevitable. The articles essentially deal with the subjects as they impact the USA.

The post Cold War era was heralded by the collapse of the Soviet Union. Over time the geo-strategic equations have altered quite considerably. The notable events have been the rise of China, and the enlargement of both NATO and the EU. At the same time, together with globalisation, the scourge of terrorism has engulfed most parts of the world. Conflicts and wars continue unabated and tensions have increased. The 11 September 2001 attacks gave an impetus to the pan Islamic cause and the term 'political Islam' is gaining currency.

Terrorism is a near constant refrain throughout the book. It is mentioned in passing that state terrorism as practised by the Soviet Union, Nazi Germany, Khmer Rouge and so on were far worse than anti-state terrorism by individuals and groups who are either non state actors or are supported by some other state(s). It is argued that the 'war on terrorism' will succeed only if all states and political groups eschew violence as a legitimate option. Given the blatant continuing exploitation of the weak by the strong, it is highly unlikely that terrorism can be

*NATO and the European Union: New World, New Europe New Threats. Edited by Hall Gardner (London: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2004), 324p., Price not indicated, ISBN 0 7546 3801 4

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contained leave alone eliminated. One author states that the US is often referred to as the biggest terrorist state that tries to 'demonise' its opponents as opposed to addressing their political, sociological and economic concerns. Such an approach stimulates weapons of mass destruction (WMD) proliferation and puts paid to possible negotiations and dialogues as has happened earlier in South Africa, North Ireland and so on. The perception that double standards are used is also destabilising. Pre-emption is often confused with humanitarian intervention. Nuclear proliferation is both vociferously challenged but also ignored if it is in selfish interests to do so. The examples of Iraq, Iran, North Korea, and Libya on one hand, and Israel on the other are illuminating enough. Another author says that a war on terrorism is a war without borders that could undermine the system of nation states and state sovereignty. The ability of Western democracies to deal with asymmetric warfare involving attacks on their military, social, political and psychological weaknesses is open to question. It is opined that possibly a regional approach is needed to subdue tensions resulting from state and non state terrorism. The naked threat of action should be replaced with a strategy of involving diplomacy and multilateral security commitments.

The 11 September 2001 attacks propelled the USA to reassess their national interests. Russia was befriended, and Russian relationship with NATO encouraged. The improvements in US-Russian relations and the May 2002 Russia-NATO accord alerted Europe to a possible 'double containment'. China also felt that the US-Russia entente coupled with the already good relations between USA and both Japan and Taiwan was intended to encircle China. The growing US presence in Central Asia was of concern to both Russia and China. The game of power politics was truly but not dangerously enjoined.

The Afghanistan War had United Nations, NATO and EU support. In fact, NATO invoked Article V of its charter that deals with 'collective defence'. However, there were serious differences of opinion with regard to the attack on Iraq. Much of Europe was against the US 'neocons' belief that 'US is exceptional if not above international law and must assert leadership'. Russia and China are also against this unilateralist approach. Be that as it may, the US continued to exercise power with the 'coalition of the willing'. The anthrax attacks in the US and the general aura of lurking danger led to the US Patriot Act that gave unprecedented intrusive powers to the state. In spite of this, the areas of possible threats has continued to increase. It is indeed a moot point as to the extent to which the US can engage such threats all over the world before it is over extended diplomatically, economically, and militarily. Also, to what extent would such attempts to guard US national interests, as

perceived by the US, erode the proverbial basic freedom of US citizens; and the age old US battle cry in favour of freedom and liberty throughout the world. Such questions are analysed in the book but only to a limited extent. Greater emphasis is given to suggestions regarding changing geopolitical realities.

The recommendations of different authors include the need for Europe, NATO and the US to refashion relationships to meet the new threats; the requirement for US to balance its own interests with transatlantic security; the requirement of Europe to aim for better Russia-EU links over Russia-NATO relationship; possible inclusion of Russia into NATO; and US-Russia collective security arrangement in Central Asia.

One author has also stated that the US's interests could be challenged by a 'new polycentric geo-economic order' that will include Europe and Asia. Also, continued unilateralism of the US could force Russia, China, Japan and Europe to form rival alliances. Hence, a concerted and sustained relationship of the aforementioned powers is a geo-strategic necessity.

Interestingly, another author has opined that a new Cold War could start with US and India on one side, and Pakistan and China on the other, and the critical border could run straight through Jammu and Kashmir! It would be an understatement to say that the argument is both debatable and highly conjectural.