

**THE WAR AGAINST TERRORISM  
AND THE TRANSFORMATION  
OF THE WORLD ORDER**

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# THE WAR AGAINST TERRORISM AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE WORLD ORDER

## WORKING PAPER No. 5 OF THE CEPS-IISS EUROPEAN SECURITY FORUM

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# FOREWORD

## KLAUS BECHER\*

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The horror of the unprecedented terrorist attacks against the World Trade Center in New York and against the Pentagon on 11 September 2001, changed the agenda of international security in many respects. It was therefore essential for the European Security Forum to address the consequences this change was having on European security in the first meeting after the events. At the time of this meeting, the military campaign against terrorism was still in its early stages in Afghanistan, with uncertainty over the duration and effectiveness of air attacks. The discussion focused on three main aspects: 1) implications for Europe's alliance with the US, 2) strategies vis-à-vis Middle Eastern countries and 3) the importance of values for the long-term success of the war.

The first speaker, David Gompert, defined the strategic task the US and others were facing as reacting to the "failure" of 11 September in a way that would keep both safety and values intact without triggering an adverse escalation of the fundamental problems that exist in the wider Middle East, or even triggering a "global civil war" as Osama bin Laden may have been hoping. This required a long-term strategy to reduce vulnerability to large-scale terrorism, mainly through improved law enforcement and intelligence efforts as well as civil and infrastructure protection. In addition, a process of reform, political openness and renewed legitimacy would be required in the Middle East to remove the roots of terrorism. Such a long-term strategy could only be pursued effectively in a multinational manner, not unilaterally by the US. The US-European link had to be at the heart of this effort, setting a role model for a more equal and more global joint approach to international security.

Alexei Arbatov underlined from a Russian viewpoint that the strike against Al Qaida in Afghanistan had become a test case for the wider war against terrorism and therefore needed to succeed. He suggested that Russia had emerged as the principal political partner for the US with a broad potential for improved cooperation. However, President Putin had to be able to show positive results lest he may be forced to turn away again from his Western course. Russia therefore would have to be involved in the planning of operations and in post-war arrangements, and receive Western support for strengthening its own defence against the new threats. In his analysis of the emerging strategic situation in and around Afghanistan, Arbatov stressed the

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dangers of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal getting out of control and the need to rebuild Afghanistan economically to replace the drug trade.

François Heisbourg provided a systematic interpretation of the extent and nature of the "epochal" strategic change since 11 September. The reality of existential terrorism had accelerated the end of the post-Cold War era. Russia had shifted closer to the West. The vulnerability of developed societies had been demonstrated, as had the problem of failed and dysfunctional states. Europeans would have to pick up more of the burden in the Balkans. In the mid- and long-term, there had to be an expectation of violent change in the Middle East. NATO's old rationale, the automatic defence of Europe by the US, was dead. NATO had gained a new role in non-Article 5 operations, but after the Kosovo campaign the US would be unlikely to ever again tolerate a parallel chain of command through NATO. All this came at a time when the EU was at a crucial point in defining its future identity, role and structure. Europe's reaction after 11 September had been schizophrenic: Instead of displaying a common position, Europe had turned to its national leaders and their bilateral links to Washington. At the same time, extraordinary new initiatives of deep European integration such as the European arrest warrant proved possible in the field of justice and home affairs, doing away with national sovereignty. In defence, however, there was no readiness for moving beyond the limitations of the Petersberg tasks and for increased spending. Finally, Mr. Heisbourg pointed to the weakness of the "coalition" in the war against terrorism. It was not a coalition at all, certainly not akin to the Gulf war coalition. Instead, the US had chosen to be alone in the lead, with some consultation. He suggested that a restatement of the values that bind the US and its worldwide allies together in the new era of existential terrorism, like the Atlantic Charter that was proclaimed by Roosevelt and Churchill in 1941, would provide both legitimacy for the joint effort and guidance for shaping the new era, especially vis-à-vis the Middle East. Authoritarian regimes such as Saudi Arabia should be put on notice that in exchange for ensuring their security they will have to abide by a set of rules that imply major change.

In the discussion, American participants underlined that the US strategy in the ongoing war against terrorism was unilateral only in respect of military operations – because this was a case of self-defence – but not as matter of principle. It was multilateral in all other respects. Those who feared that the US commitment in the wider Middle East would be ephemeral ought not underestimate the degree of change in the US mind. Americans felt they had been forced to go to war and were now prepared to reliably engage in a long-term effort.

One participant suggested what was truly new since 11 September was that for the first time a non-state actor had had a major strategic impact by exploiting a new dimension of asymmetric warfare. Other discussants pointed to the achievements and further promises of the ongoing

military transformation in US defence for coping with this kind of challenge. It was suggested that the US needed to promote a better understanding of the quality and strength of its own asymmetric war-fighting capabilities – with rapidly deployable, versatile forces with effective force protection and precision-strike capabilities – to prevent an unnecessary and damaging downscaling of political objectives vis-à-vis the terrorist challenge in spite of having both legitimacy on one’s own side and control of unprecedented military capabilities. Regarding the desirable scale of military objectives in Afghanistan, one discussant warned that conquering and holding territory and taking control of the capital would be of limited value unless one could be certain that one would eventually leave it in better shape.

On the transatlantic alliance, it was remarked that there was no equality between US and EU – especially not in military capabilities – but that there were common interests. It was noted that Europeans were disappointed over the US rejection of their offer of direct military support under Article 5, and that for political reasons the US should have been more open to such a multilateral framework. Several European participants suggested that European NATO countries needed to strengthen their military capabilities and increase outlays both for internal and external security. Also, it was felt that with the new unity of effort in the war against terrorism, ESDP would have to move into collective defence because the ‘Petersberg world’ could not be separated anymore from the ‘Article 5 world’. One speaker suggested that once European defence would face up to the military implications of the large potential security risks in the Middle East, similar military transformations as already underway in the US would be required in Europe. Then there would be a new opportunity to work together in NATO to get right.

Since 11 September, the EU – and especially the European Commission – found themselves thrown into the security realm, including issues such as critical infrastructure protection. Several participants stressed that the EU could do more in support of the war against terrorism in home and justice affairs, especially with respect to the control of illicit financial transactions. These efforts were seen as a likely impulse for institutional change and more integration in the EU.

Some discussants proposed that to win respect in a Middle East context it was essential to avoid any impression of weakness and to employ overwhelming force even if this was not ‘politically correct’. One Russian participant commented that overwhelming force had not been a successful, stabilising strategy in Chechnya. Others felt that it would also undermine support in Western societies. It was accepted that in response to the virtually open-ended threat of Al Qaida terrorism to kill Americans wherever, the concept of proportionality would indeed allow very intense levels of force. However, efficacy and political sustainability were likely to put the focus on special operations forces, not just in the case of the US.

The war against terrorism was also seen to have a public relations aspect as an effort to win the hearts and minds of people both at home and vis-à-vis the Islamic world. The latter, as one participant remarked, did not just consist of foreign countries but was also present in European cities. It was observed that most of the Muslim world was apparently still in a state of denial and was not facing the question why Islamic societies had produced this extreme form of terrorism. While there was a recognition that improved welfare and education in those countries would be desirable, most participants felt that it was above all the deficit of democracy and its underlying values that was causing the problem in societies where dissent was only possible through violence and under the cloak of religion.

Several speakers thought it was necessary to define rules for dealing with authoritarian regimes in the wider Middle East that were supportive of the fight against terrorism or were otherwise helpful, such as Saudi Arabia for energy supply security. One speaker wryly commented that this was a case of A.O.S. – all options suck. A realistic view, it was claimed, would recognise that Islamic societies were not ready for the imposition of democratic values, and any such attempt would risk provoking the wrong results. Others blamed such a narrow realist approach for the present problems and stressed that it was conceptually insufficient for coping with the challenges of relations with Islam. Several speakers underlined that the community of democratic societies would not possibly have the required staying power for sustained joined efforts if the population were not driven by idealism and shared values. No part of the world was off limits for universal values. There was no reason to assume that Islam and democracy couldn't coexist. As elsewhere, the rise of the middle classes with their economic, political and legal demands would likely lead to democratic change. One participant reminded discussants to be inclusive in this context and not to speak of "Western" values as this would undermine the anti-Islamist efforts in secularised, moderate Muslim societies.

At the end of the meeting, there was – on the one hand – a feeling that the still uncertain, unfolding events in the war in Afghanistan would determine the future course of many of the issues discussed. On the other hand, there was agreement that since the attacks of 11 September old rules and priorities had clearly changed, as reflected in the determined, impressively well-focused actions taken by governments on the national and international level since then. In many respects, however, it remained unclear which systemic and institutional consequences the new era would generate. It was clear, though, that the quality of political interaction and cooperation between North America and Europe, including Russia, would be one of the crucial factors that would shape this new era.

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**1. The end of the post-Cold War era**

If the Gulf War of 1990-91 was a “defining moment” – one in which countries had to take sides – 11 September 2001 was much more, a “transforming moment”: not only was there an obligation to stand up and be counted, but with the advent of hyperterrorism, the post-Cold War era itself came to an abrupt end. Before discussing the implications of this “transforming moment”, two preliminary remarks are in order.

The first is that there is more that we do *not* know about the post-September 11 world than there are areas of firm knowledge; we may know that the world is being transformed, but we do not know what the world is being transformed *into*. The complex interaction between traditional nation-states / failed states and non-state actors (from humanitarian NGOs at one end of the spectrum to the hyperterrorist multinational Al Qaeda at the other) will eventually produce a redistribution of rules and roles, the nature of which is as difficult to divine than it would have been for a European of 1618 to predict the content of the Treaties of Westphalia closing the Thirty Years War in 1648-49. In the current era of globalisation, we know that the Westphalian order is being fundamentally redefined; and September 11 opens a new and spectacular phase of that redefinition: but we cannot know what the ultimate result will be. Simply, it would be more than surprising if state sovereignty, as defined in 1648-49 survived more or less unscathed, and if the states continued to be characterised by their “triple monopoly” on the coining of money, the rendering of justice and the use of armed force. Any European or, in very different circumstances, any African, will recognise the strength of the trend away from that definition of the state’s core business.

Unfortunately, one of the few things that the attacks of September 11 and the follow-on events have irrefutably taught us about the future world order is that groups of human beings are both willing and able to visit acts of mass destruction on humankind for purposes other than those classified as political in the Clausewitzian sense.

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The second remark is that on the eve of September 11, there were numerous signs that the post-Cold War era (1990-2001) was drawing to an end. What September 11 has done is to close that epoch with a horrid bang rather than in soft and easy stages. And the very brutality of the close will make the new era rather different from what it would otherwise have been. To summarise, on the eve of September 11, the end of the post-Cold War era was approaching notably through the following trends:

- Globalisation, with its empowerment of cross-border non-state actors operating in highly interdependent and vulnerable post-industrial societies.
- The multiplication of both failed states (mostly in Africa but also in Asia, with Afghanistan standing out) and dysfunctional states (most clearly the dictatorships of the Greater Middle East, increasingly incapable of rising to the political, social and economic challenges of globalisation).
- America's unilateralist drift, moving towards institutional practices and foreign policy profiles akin to those corresponding to the first 150 years of the US Republic, a trend described by Bob Zoellick in his article in the Autumn/Winter 1999 issue of *Survival*. In the defence arena, the experience of the Kosovo war, the new US unilateralism and European conduct were leading to a situation of de facto division of labour between the US and Europe, eroding the traditional NATO ethos of risk-sharing.
- The beginning of a Russian attempt to modernise *with* the West, rather than against the West in a latter-day version of a multi-polar union of "proletarian nations". By the summer of 2001, this trend included the tentative mention of the possibility of Russia joining NATO by President Putin and Chancellor Schröder.
- The European Union's progress towards a make-or-break situation, with an unsustainable contradiction between the advent of the euro, the enlargement towards the new democracies and the absence of meaningful institutional political reform.

September 11 has accelerated some of these changes while recasting others in a new light.

## **2. The acceleration of history**

In the "accelerating" category, I will single out from a European perspective, the following:

- the death of old NATO,
- "crunch-point Europe",
- the Russian rendez-vous with the event and

- the Middle East implosion.

These are not exclusive of other acceleration processes notably in the economic sphere (e.g. the aggravation of the global economic slowdown).

a) Announcing *the death of NATO* obviously contains an element of exaggeration, if only because the Atlantic Alliance will continue to exist and, indeed, quite possibly prosper. But in several respects, the “old” NATO has truly been killed off:

- Given the experience of the Kosovo air war, many observers considered that NATO would never again be allowed by the US to run a major military operation in which the US would be bearing the bulk of the burden. These views were reinforced by Wesley Clark’s book. The competition between the national US chain-of-command and the NATO chain-of-command plus the difficulties of running a war in a committee of 19: these factors have convinced the Americans that whenever possible, something simpler would be in order. For those who were not convinced of this before September 11, the “don’t call us, we’ll call you” conclusion of the September 27 NATO Defence Ministerial may have come as a shock. Nowadays, NATO is running Macedonian-style peacekeeping operations, which are the sort of thing which used to be done by the UN.
- In the same way that the Kosovo air campaign was NATO’s first and last major war, Article V may have been meaningfully invoked for the first and the last time on September 12. The Europeans did well, vis-à-vis the US, to call upon Article V: this initiative may prove to be of durable help in avoiding a post-“Enduring Freedom” US lapse into withdrawal. But all of us – the Europeans, the Americans – also ensured that Article V means “pick and choose”, creating no more than the presumption (not the obligation) of active military assistance.
- Finally, US commitments after September 11 will naturally enough lead to a greater European share in the Balkans burden, presumably with assured access to NATO assets. One of the ironies of history is that the access issue has been posed in practical terms for the first time since the 1996 Berlin Summit with its “separable but not separate” principle, to the advantage of the US, not to the Europeans.

As was fitting, Washington secured unstinting access to NATO assets (notably the transfer of NATO AWACS to US airspace, releasing USAF AWACS to the Indian Ocean). The Europeans will presumably benefit from this precedent. *En attendant*, the trend towards a US-

European division of labour is confirmed, to the detriment of the risk-sharing ethos of “old” NATO.

In summary, NATO is no longer a defence organisation, but a security and defence services institution. In itself, this is not negative: indeed, enlargement to the Baltics and possibly to Russia, should be made politically more palatable by such an evolution. The accession of the Baltics to the new NATO can no longer be construed by Moscow as a threat; and Russia’s accession may be more acceptable to China under the new circumstances.

But let us not forget: this is truly a different NATO; the old one is dead.

b) “*Crunch-point Europe*” needs comparatively less explaining, since well before September 11th it was clear, after the debacle of the intergovernmental conference in Nice last year, that the institutional status quo would be unsustainable – that the 2004 convention would be crucial. However, September 11th has dramatised the situation further, although it has not clarified it:

- On the one hand, in the fight against hyperterrorism, the EU dimension has proven to be a major asset vis-à-vis actions confined to nation states: the decisions taken by the EU on 20-21 September (and notably the European arrest warrant) have proven, even to the most dyed-in-the-wool eurosceptics, the relevance of transfers of sovereignty including in an area as “Westphalian” as the exercise of judicial authority.
- On the other hand, nation states, not the EU institutions, have been emotionally and politically in the lead in the reactions to events of September 11. Furthermore, those national reactions were not tightly coordinated during the first two months after the attacks: Tony Blair, Gerhard Schröder and the Chirac-Jospin diarchy did not generally operate in tandem. The three-way meeting on October 19 in the margins of the Ghent Council only served to underscore the split between EU members. The somewhat broader meeting in London on November 4 (six EU countries represented plus the Belgian EU presidency and the CFSP High Commissioner) didn’t really help to correct the impression.

c) *The Russian rendez-vous* with the West has been particularly spectacular and has deservedly drawn much comment which I need not elaborate upon. I will only make one observation here. President Putin has clearly taken a real political risk in helping open the door of Central Asia to the US (Americans, as the crafters of the Monroe Doctrine, should have little trouble understanding that Moscow’s green light was of material importance in securing the cooperation of the states of Central Asia). It is to be hoped that the US will

reciprocate, particularly on the issue of the ABM Treaty: for Moscow, it is essential that a treaty framework continues to exist in the field of strategic nuclear arms control on both offensive and defensive systems. The Russians can accept missile defence; but they can hardly take on board a non-legally binding “new framework” as defined by President Bush in his NDU speech of 1 May 2001. Given the Europeans’ agreement with Russia on the importance of legally binding commitments, an American refusal to compromise on this issue could have serious transatlantic consequences.

d) *The Middle East implosion.* The Greater Middle East is one of few parts of the world where there has been essentially no political, economic and social change during the last thirty or forty years with the limited, and hardly encouraging exception of the Islamic Revolution in Iran (1979). The progress of globalisation is making this time-warp ever less sustainable. There are many reasons for this situation, most of which spring from the region itself. However, the West also has a major responsibility. The US, through its cynical support of Saudi Arabia, one of the most regressive and benighted states on this planet; Europe, through its own brand of so-called *realpolitik*, has not been shy in its support of some of the world’s most repressive regimes. Human rights and democracy were somehow left off the scope in the area extending from the Sahara to the Indus.

Central and Eastern Europe, East Asia, Latin America, even Africa, have been treated in a less cynical and counterproductive manner. We are now reaping the return on our investment. Osama Bin Laden refers himself to the ideological-religious roots of the Wahhabi regime to denounce the “hypocrites” in power in Saudi Arabia. He has based his platform – and appeal – on the West’s consistent – and until now – successful attempts to maintain the status quo in the region: French intervention saved the House of Saud in 1979, the US and Western forces did so more visibly in 1990-91. We were spared from dealing with the consequences of the fall of an Arab version of the Soviet Union (Saudi Arabia is an artefact created in the 1920s on the ideological basis of militant Wahhabism). We now have to cope with Wahhabi hyperterrorism and may yet have to pick up the pieces of imploding Saudi/Soviet Arabia.

Change in the Middle East is as inevitable as it has been in Latin America, East Asia and the ex-Soviet empire, areas in which comparatively principled, value-based, policies by the West from the mid-1970s onwards have favoured transformation which have been generally peaceful (with Yugoslavia and Chechnya standing out as the exceptions, not the rule). Unfortunately, we have no such basis to work on in the Middle East. However, it is not too

late to start: the EU and the US can, and should, make it clear, hopefully together, that we expect that the rules enshrined in the UN Declaration of Human Rights – which these countries have signed – will eventually prevail, that these states should expect to come under substantial pressure not to remain the spawning grounds of repression, hate and, ultimately, hyperterrorism. A value-based declaration of principles from the West would be an act of enlightened self-interest. Admittedly, this is easier said than done; but done it must be if we want to have at least the embryo of a chance that change in the Middle East will not be exceedingly radical in the long term (extremism being probably inescapable in the short term). We simply cannot base our policy on the assumption that the status quo, and particularly the Saudi status quo, will continue to prevail.

This assumption that wrenching change will occur in the Middle East has defence implications. The Europeans, like the Americans, may well have to cope militarily with upheaval in the region in the short to medium term. This is a change from the pre-September 11 situation in which concerns about the Middle East were focused on the conduct, or misconduct, of Iran and Iraq, rather than on systemic change. If this new reading is correct, the Europeans need to break with the post-Cold War “peace dividend” era: defence spending needs to increase. In particular, Europe’s rapid reaction capability, which has been tailored for Balkans-type contingencies, should be upgraded both in terms of its missions (Petersberg rules as currently defined are too narrow) and its capacities (notably in terms of lift and C4ISR). This will cost money, as will the improvement of European force readiness levels. Without additional defence spending, Europe will simply not be able to provide significant forces alongside US forces in the Middle East, with a satisfactory level of interoperability.

Coping with the evolution of the Middle East is an issue in which the perils of US-European – or of intra-EU – divergence would be particularly damaging. This consideration leads to the last point.

### **3. From US superpower to fortress America?**

Many observers have jumped to the conclusion that post-September 11 coalition-building is a sure sign that the US will now commit itself to an engaged, multilateral, posture on the world stage, breaking with the first months of the Bush administration. Such a multilateral outcome would be desirable for the world, which can hardly be managed without the active engagement of its militarily and economically strongest member. However, it would be premature to assume that such an evolution is inevitable. First of all, much can go wrong in

the conduct of the war against hyperterrorism. It is also all too easy to conjure up scenarios in which the US draws into itself, for instance after a US-Europe split resulting from a unilateral US initiative to broaden the war to Iraq or Yemen on the basis of not entirely convincing evidence. Second, and without having to generate scenarios, the fact is that the current anti-terrorist array is not a coalition comparable to that which functioned during the Gulf war. Many US partners, including Saudi Arabia, are already on the verge of neutrality (see inter alia Saudi official statements on the war in Afghanistan and government-sponsored funding drives for the victims of the “American” war); and traditional European allies, for a variety of reasons, are peripheral to the war effort (their contribution, and this remark includes the UK, to the war is much less than during the Gulf war).

This is entirely understandable given the nature of the aggression and of the corresponding anti-terrorist operation: but such a state of affairs does not clearly promise a more multilateral post-war world.

Third, and most importantly in the long run, we don't know what conclusions the US people will draw after the war. The level of aggression the US has been subjected to is in part at least a consequence of the role it is seen to play in world and regional affairs as a superpower: thus, Bin Laden's 1998 fatwa centres on the US-Saudi nexus. The temptation may well arise that a 1920s-style policy, not of isolationism (that came with the Depression) but of non-alliance, would be less onerous than the high-profile permanent security and defence commitment of the US in Europe, Asia and the Middle East. In effect, the US would renounce the burden of its superpower status. As a European, I would dread such a prospect. But we've been there before, and one cannot pretend it can't happen again. And let it not be forgotten, the US share of world GDP in the 1920s was just about what it is today (some 23 to 24%); it is simply not true to say that the US doesn't have a Fortress America option: with robust spending for its homeland defence, the US could cope quite as well as it did during the 1920s.

The existence of such an option makes it all the more important for the Europeans to act in a manner that increases the likelihood of the US remaining engaged: a multilateralist outcome is not a given. Its probability is in no small measure a function of European policies.

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ALEXEI G. ARBATOV\***

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The tragic events of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 should have started the new era of world politics and US national security strategy. Indeed, perceptions of the new changed order of international security priorities for the civilised world, the sympathy towards the victims of the massacre and the condemnation of the barbaric act were overwhelming. Also impressive was the degree of cooperation in the antiterrorist operation against Osama bin Laden and the Taliban, built in the shortest possible time between the West, led by the United States, and Russia, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Central Asian states (foremost Uzbekistan and Tajikistan), with political support by China, India and Iran.

Two months later after “Black September”, however, the weaknesses of the coalition and deficiencies of the operation are becoming more and more evident, as well as the confusion and inconsistency of the United States and other major players in adopting a new security strategy and still less in implementing it.

**1. Legal and political framework of antiterrorism policy**

As with any ad hoc coalition, the present one is quite fragile and is not based on a clear common definition of the threat or a common understanding of joint interests and the means of fighting for them. There is no accepted universal definition of “international terrorism” in international law, nor any UN-approved or other multilateral convention on countering it, which might be compared to definitions of “aggression”, “self-defence”, “peacekeeping” or “peace-enforcement”.

Luckily, the subject of retaliation is the Taliban, based on the territory of war-ravaged Afghanistan, not recognised internationally, discredited by its extremist policies and barbaric behaviour, and not closely affiliated with any great world or regional power (except Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, which are relatively easily managed by Washington). Hence uniting against it was rather easy. The case would be very different were the obvious base of the terrorists Iran, Iraq, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Turkey or Pakistan. Or were the target of such a

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horrendous act a West European country, Russia or Japan. Repeated US indications of its plans to hit other suspected regimes already strain the coalition and may split it if such plans are implemented.

Lacking a recognised definition of “international terrorism”, its “harbouring states” and legitimate targets and means of retaliation, American arbitrary choice of scapegoats among the states disliked by Washington anyway is raising the question about the legitimacy of hitting other states suspected of supporting terrorist organisations, but friendly to the United States (e.g. Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Albania, Jordan, etc.).

A selective attitude towards terrorist organisations and their paramilitary forces, as well as towards the states harbouring them, based only on American political preferences, cannot provide a long-term foundation for the international anti-terrorist coalition or its allied strategy. On the contrary, such policies may turn the fight against terrorism from a major uniting international factor into a great new point of international discord, leading to a confrontation between great world and regional powers and even straining the Western alliance itself.

## **2. Implementation of the antiterrorist operation in Afghanistan**

Washington should be given credit for making an effort to secure authorisation by the UN Security Council for conducting its operation, in contrast to its earlier disregard for the United Nations. The two adopted resolutions provide some legal framework for the use of force, although opinions differ as to how long and on what scale this war would stay within the bounds of legitimacy. Nonetheless in planning and implementing the military operation the United States is keeping to its tradition of unilateralism of the 1990s – at best consulting its NATO allies and informing Russia, but not doing any joint planning or coalition war-fighting.

This may partially be explained by the fear of intelligence leaks, but mainly, no doubt, by US determination to retain maximum freedom of action in using its overwhelming power, selecting targets and countries for attack and conducting negotiations with whatever counterparts on conditions of Washington’s preference.

This is why, aside from Great Britain and few other allies, US partners and Russia are not in a hurry to join the fighting, confining their support to political declarations and some indirect material cooperative actions. Moreover there is a growing concern in some West European states, Russia, China, India and Iran about the practical goals of the US operation and its



diplomacy in the post-war settlement in Afghanistan. This is already seriously detracting from the military effectiveness of the operation.

Bin Laden's formations and other terrorist organisations in Afghanistan cannot be routed out without destroying the Taliban army and political leadership. The Taliban, in contrast to Slobodan Milosevich or Saddam Hussein, cannot be brought to its knees by high-altitude air bombardment or cruise missiles alone – if only for a lack of cost-efficient targets in Afghanistan and total disregard for civilian casualties by the Taliban. It may only be defeated on the ground by large-scale offensive combat operations, which neither of the major powers is willing to contemplate for obvious reasons. The only remaining alternative is to arm, train and advise the Northern Alliance to do the job with close air support of the anti-terrorist coalition and with the help of its selective special (commando) actions on the ground. Aircraft carriers in the Arabian Sea or military bases in the Persian Gulf area are too far away to permit effective implementing of such a campaign.

Conducting massive and prolonged military actions from Pakistan is impossible because of the fragility of its domestic situation and the threat of fundamentalist uprisings and extremists gaining access to nuclear weapons.

India is not a viable option either for geographical and terrain reasons, as well as because of the threat of destabilising Kashmir and disenchanting Pakistan and other Muslim nations. Iran is an even less likely candidate as a base, in light to the United States' failure to take any serious initiative in recent times to improve relations with this country and to overcome past grievances. Moreover, neither Pakistan nor Turkey would be happy about such rapprochement.

Hence the only base for US (or US-British) combat operations would be Central Asia – primarily Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. That would have to deeply involve Russia both politically and militarily. The transit of supplies would have to go through Russia's air space and ground communications (and that of Kazakhstan, since Turkmenistan is neutral).

Besides, Uzbekistan's relations with Tajikistan are very tense at present, as are the relations among respective ethnic groups in the Northern Alliance. It would not be wise for the United States to rely fully on Uzbekistan, since this would estrange Tajikistan and Tajiks in Afghanistan, while Uzbek units of the Northern Alliance (commanded by general Rashid Dustum) are militarily quite weak and relatively few in numbers.

### **3. The Russian position, domestic views and concerns**

Moscow has repeatedly hinted at its willingness to give Washington broader support, beyond sharing intelligence, providing an air corridor for shipments of humanitarian cargo, participating in rescue operations and supplying arms to the Northern Alliance.

Russian leadership has probably gone as far as possible in cooperating with the West and much further than could be expected from President Putin, judging by his previous cautious middle-of-the-road policy, based on a bureaucratic consensus (e.g. his positions on the national anthem and symbols, land reform, budget policy, military reform, etc.). The majority of Russian public opinion, parliament, mass media and military bureaucracy do not support his line on the antiterrorist campaign, although there has been little open opposition to Vladimir Putin due to the general curtailment of any political opposition to the Russian President since the middle of the year 2000 (last presidential elections in Russia).

Part of this internal opposition to cooperation with the United States is due to long-accumulated mistrust of and hostility towards US unilateral policies and force deployments during the 1990s (NATO expansion, military action against Yugoslavia, arbitrary strikes at Iraq, rejection of the ABM Treaty, START-2 and follow-on strategic agreements, CTB Treaty, etc.). In many cases US policy towards Russia has been deliberately formulated in an arrogant and insulting manner. Thus, an obvious question is: Why should Russia now help the Americans?

Another reason is the unwillingness of a large part of the Russian political elite and strategic community to go for much closer cooperation, much less some kind of alliance with the West – owing to its domestic and foreign policy implications.

Finally, there is a widespread fear in the society of becoming involved in another quagmire of a counterinsurgency war after their bitter experiences in Afghanistan in 1979-89, two bloody and largely futile campaigns in Chechnya in 1994-96 and 1999-2001, as well as a fear of terrorist attacks on Russian civilians. A popular concern is that the United States would eventually pull out and abandon Russia to deal with the disturbed hornets nest.

Hence, Putin's cooperative strategy is tolerated for the time being, but should there be a major mishap or significant US unilateral and arbitrary action, the pressure inside Russia would be enormous for a radical policy reversal.

#### **4. US policies in and around Afghanistan**

It's possible to speculate that Russian leadership, despite strong domestic opposition, would be ready, under certain circumstances to provide robust military advice and direct air cover to anti-Taliban forces, as well as coordinate air and missile strikes against the Taliban with the United States. These main conditions could be: Russian participation in US political and military planning; some sort of US (Western) security guarantee and promise of assistance to Russia in case it becomes a target of terrorist retaliation; and Western sharing of the financial burden of Russian aid to the Northern Alliance and other war efforts.

This would virtually amount to an allied relationship. Neither Washington nor its NATO allies, however, seem ready for such a breakthrough. They fear implications of this new relationship for other Western interests: i.e. NATO extension, BMD/ABM Treaty problems, Russian foreign debt, the war in Chechnya, rivalry over the Caspian oil shelf, etc. This would also mean that Washington would reach a consensus with Moscow on the post-war settlement in Afghanistan (taking into account the interests of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan as well), which may take a lot of effort to bring Pakistan on board, straining relations with this principal American partner in the region.

Moreover, determined to exterminate bin Laden and his main organisation al-Qaida, Washington still has reservations about fully destroying the Taliban (which is inseparable from either al-Qaida or the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan) out of concerns about the post-war settlement and peace-reconstruction in Afghanistan, as well as about relative influences of external powers on Kabul. This inconsistency makes it easier for the Taliban and al-Qaida to withstand US-British air raids and to bargain for eventual compromise.

The three main dangers exist with respect to the current operation:

1. Destabilisation of Pakistan and Islamic extremists' access to nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles.
2. Splitting of the anti-terrorist coalition due to further unilateral military actions or behind-the-scenes talks by Washington, or due to excessive collateral damage of air strikes that is otherwise inefficient in crippling the Taliban.
3. US military failure and curtailment of the campaign, after which the Taliban attacks to the north across the borders of Tajikistan or Uzbekistan. This would make Russia fight on the ground without any guarantee of US protection, participation or serious assistance.

As of now, the way in which the coalition led by the US, is acting suggests that it is neither prepared to meet any of these contingencies, nor capable of decisively defeating the Taliban in its current war campaign.

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The war against the Taliban is only partially affecting and damaging international terrorism. Due to the dynamics of political developments since September 11th, however, the anti-Taliban campaign has become a symbol and a litmus test of the capability of the civilised world to deal with the new and horrible threats of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. A victory over the Taliban and bin Laden would provide a chance to press further with a joint and comprehensive anti-terrorist strategy to cope with this danger. A failure of the coalition would precipitate an expanding international chaos and escalating violence which a civilised democratic world will not be able to survive.

The United States, Russia and some other countries may come out of this war either in a much closer relationship to go on and continue to suppress terrorism elsewhere – or in a more conflictual relationship, which would strengthen the forces behind terrorism. Despite some impressive initial progress, as time goes by, the coalition is losing momentum and making insufficient efforts to move ahead and build on its strengths to reinforce mutual trust and cooperation. What can be done to change this?

In the short term, the United States should abandon its unilateral mode of operation and involve Russia in the decision-making process on defining political and strategic goals of the operation in Central Asia, as well as military planning and, if need be, joint combat actions. The world has really changed since September 11<sup>th</sup>: Russia has suddenly become the main potential American partner in the most important US security issue – much more important in fact than all NATO members or other US formal allies. This reality must be recognised both in terms of practical policy-making in Washington and in formal agreements being negotiated. Indeed, if Russia is to become more deeply involved in this war, it would need US (or Western) security guarantees analogous to North Atlantic Treaty Article V, at least with respect to the present operation in Afghanistan – in case Russia or its citizens, troops or assets become the victim of a terrorist attack, as presently threatened by Islamic extremists.

The cowardly and unrealistic idea of distinguishing the Taliban from other terrorist organisations or of distinguishing between “bad” and “good” Talibs should be abandoned as well. Taliban political regime and army must be destroyed, while alternative moderate Pushtu

organisation should be created as an alternative to the Taliban and as a participant in the peaceful settlement of Afghanistan in the future.

Washington and Moscow must closely cooperate to bring together Tashkent and Dushanbe and their respective proxies in Afghanistan, as well as to arm and train them for counteroffensive operations to defeat the Taliban army on the ground. The two great powers should cooperate in establishing the necessary infrastructure in Central Asia in order to provide the Northern Alliance with close air support (possibly joint US-Russian-British) and other forms of military assistance.

It is necessary to prepare for the possible destabilisation of Pakistan, primarily by planning to evacuate or destroy its nuclear weapons, ballistic missiles and research-production-testing facilities.

Washington should urgently attempt to improve its relations with Iran and India (in both of which Russia could give it assistance), as alternative partners in Central and Southern Asia, in the event that Pakistan is destabilised.

The mid- and long-term policy should aim at elaborating and adopting a legal framework for defining “international terrorism” and elaborating ways of dealing with it. Possibly a permanent UN structure to monitor this problem would be useful, as well as regional organisations in NATO, EU, CIS, etc. If there is an international convention on this subject, it must be ratified by all states, while those opposing it should be subjects to international sanctions.

Traditional alliances and bilateral relations should be revised on the basis of our understanding of who is harbouring and funding international terrorists. Terrorists must not enjoy immunity obtained as a result of great power or allied protection.

More aid and assistance in economic development has to be provided to post-war Afghanistan and other countries of this kind to fight poverty and ignorance, which are fuelling extremism, and to give the population other ways to earn a living other than the drug business. The democratic evolution of the most advanced Islamic nations is also desirable, if it does not opening the way to power for fundamentalist parties. As valuable as it is, however, this goal should not be seen as a sine qua non for fighting terrorism. Terrorism has numerous motives and sources and should be decisively and directly fought – without reservations or apologies related to poverty and oppression as its fuelling factors. The examples of terrorism in Spain (the Basque separatists) and British Ulster, where the level of affluence and democracy is far

beyond any imaginable prospect of terrorism-plagued Islamic nations, should be a constant reminder of this caveat.

The regimes governing the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems must be made much more stringent and unbiased as to their application to some states. India and Pakistan should be pressured to join the CTB, provided that the United States ratifies this treaty.

Russia and the United States should agree to deep cuts in their strategic offensive weapons (down to 1000 warheads or less), while introducing amendments to the ABM Treaty to permit extensive testing of new technologies for possible future joint deployment. In the meantime, the two powers and their allies could start developing theatre anti-missile defence system to protect Europe (including Russia), Asian Russian territory and US allies in the Far East. Other countries may be invited to join the project if they eliminate their missiles of medium and shorter range (as defined by the INF Treaty).

This may seem a tall order indeed, but such steps cannot be seen as excessive if the notion of a new “post-September era” of international security is anything more than a pompous political declaration.

# THE WAR AGAINST TERRORISM AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE WORLD ORDER: AN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE

DAVID C. GOMPERT\*

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September 11 did not so much change the world as show that the world had changed but our means of managing it had not. For the United States – superpower, Great Satan, victim – the awakening means renewed multilateralism *plus* unabashed assertiveness. It will spawn new US strategies based on far more than military power *plus* unhesitant use of force when the nation is threatened. For Europeans, closest and ablest of all US allies, the situation means higher expectations and, if and as capabilities and actions match those expectations, more clout. For the United States and Europe, it both demands and opens the path to a more equal and more global partnership, beginning with but not limited to countering terrorism.

## 1. Dangers and Illusions

As of that day, our darkest fears about the new era seem to be coming true all at once: elusive terrorists bent on mass murder by suicide and germ attacks; anti-American frenzy in the Muslim world; a humanitarian crisis of biblical scale; an imploding failed state (whose chief export, besides terror, is hard drugs); war in a region where at least five countries – India, Pakistan, China, Israel and Russia – have nuclear weapons; the risk that world oil markets will yet be disrupted. In the face of this, we have learned that national and international institutions devised for a bygone order are inadequate to deal with the new disorder, despite the ample warning we had to update them.

Illusions have ended. For Europeans who had not noticed, insecurity has “globalised”. An attack on Manhattan, inspired from a cave in Afghanistan and planned in Hamburg and Kuala Lumpur, has torn the fabric of Western life, triggered combat in Central Asia, caused unrest from Nigeria to Indonesia, and fed tension between Pakistan and India. Awareness of global insecurity has already affected the outlooks and actions of US allies. They have offered, in NATO, to take military action outside of Europe in response to an attack outside of Europe. Unfortunately, the forces needed for distant and demanding operations cannot be built

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overnight. Yet, European defence budgets will likely shift upward as European defense strategies shift outward. The United States could reinforce this by accepting even modest allied offers to fight in Afghanistan.

If Europeans are more aware that security is global, Americans are more aware that global security requires cooperation. The broader the strategy, beyond military force, the greater that requirement. Because the financial, intelligence, criminal and civil protective components of counter-terrorism exceed both the borders and the reach of the superpower, a unilateral campaign will fail, and serious Americans know it.

## **2. The Future of American Multilateralism**

It is too soon to judge whether renewed US multilateralism is broad and lasting – accepted even when the particulars are not ideal, or just a la carte. The upright stance of the UN Security Council and, as usual, the Secretary General, and US responses toward the UN, give reason to hope. US interest in a UN role in post-Taliban Afghanistan suggests a more creative, though still self-interested, US policy toward the world body.

Will this shifting sentiment reverse US positions on specific conventions: Kyoto, CTBT, ABM Treaty, international code of justice? Not likely. But it could make the United States more inclined to address multilaterally such difficult problems as climate change and renewable energy, nuclear offensive and defensive force limitations, and global law enforcement. Insofar as new openings appear, US negotiating partners would do better to engage US positions on their merits than to ask Washington simply to eat hat and sign.

## **3. End of Sanctuary; End of Innocence**

The other American illusion to end is, of course, that of sanctuary. Not since the Civil War – Spotsylvania, to be exact – have so many Americans been slain on a single day, and never this many civilians. That terrorists struck the United States is neither new nor strategically significant. That the first mass-destructive terrorist attack should be on the superpower is. It brings home to its citizens the drawbacks of being chiefly responsible for the security of dangerous regions and ungrateful regimes, of being addressee for every grievance, of being hated for reasons neither the hated nor the haters truly comprehend.

With 4000 still buried at the base of the World Trade Center, Americans react with bewilderment and fury to anti-US rallies choreographed by religious militants in countries that their country has supported. The thanklessness of providing security in the Middle East is



accepted; but the claim that the United States “had it coming” is not. It cannot be excluded that anxiety mixed with anger will cause the United States to want out of the front lines of global security, especially in the Middle East. Americans were already more ambivalent than others may think about leading and policing the world.

Though there is no sign yet of political backlash, no voice for retreat, it is early. Still, because US security responsibilities intersect American economic interests, a strategic pull-back is very unlikely, barring failure in the struggle against terrorism (see below). Foreign actions have a greater-than-usual effect on US politics and policies; so far, the net effect is good. The declaration by allies that an attack on America is an attack on all had a big impact and will not be forgotten. The cohesion of the wider coalition is also politically important, signifying that the US cannot yet need not tackle this problem solo.

#### **4. Homeland Defense**

An obvious question is whether the loss of sanctuary could alter US defence priorities, with protection of US territory displacing or at least competing with projection of power. This is illogical and unlikely: Homeland defence is overwhelmingly a civil, not military, responsibility. What military support is needed will come from the reserves, not power projection forces – the latter being less suitable than the former. Moreover, it would be a strategic blunder, which the United States will not make, to signal that a threat against US territory could divert intervention forces. In any case, homeland defence and power projection is two sides of the same coin: on one side, US *ability* to defend its interests, friends and peace; on the other, US *resolve*.

As for counter-terrorist military operations, this mission underscores the need to transform and improve the versatility of US forces. While current circumstances politically preclude cutting even old, slow, heavy US force structure, look for that to begin – cautiously – after hostilities end.

September 11 has sharpened, not settled, the question of NMD. A consensus could emerge in favour of unhurried development of a multi-layered capability. (Warning: this may be the author’s wishful thinking). A Russian OK to revise the ABM Treaty, and a consequent easing of allied concerns, could take the edge off opposition in Congress.

## 5. Catching up with Globalisation

Beyond military affairs, the new insecurity demands that institutions and policies be updated in view of globalisation. This should entail collaboration in many transnational fields, motivated by but not limited to counter-terrorism:

- World financial systems and markets have proved surprisingly shock-resistant.
- Transportation systems and markets have not.
- Transnational law enforcement is weak.
- Intelligence sharing is blocked by suspicions among former foes and even old friends.
- Global cyberspace is a potential combat zone.
- Disease control and food systems are vulnerable and unready for malicious acts.
- Energy markets, facilities and flows are too.

Thus, as we destroy al Qaeda and co., we must construct policies, institutions and norms to secure globalisation – the way post-war order was planned as earlier wars were being won. This is not as simple, or as impossible, as creating some monolithic supranational governance. It means a variety of international means, with varied purposes and effects on sovereignty. For the United States, famously wary of foreign entanglements, it means sacrificing control in order to advance US interests. US policies in international trade agreements and financial oversight suggest that it is quite capable of such compromises.

Well after al Qaeda has been torn up, open societies will remain vulnerable to all sorts of harm, including terrorism. This is an unavoidable consequence of five facts of life:

(1) the integration of the infrastructures, links, and systems of the world economy; (2) the fact that our societies and the exchanges among them are based on trust; (3) the inexorable spread of potentially deadly technologies and skills; (4) the prohibitive price, in treasure and freedom, of total security; and (5) complexity.

Better, and shared, intelligence is the most cost-effective way to combat large-scale terrorism, which depends on networks, skills, money, time to plan, and safe haven – each of which increases the chance of detection. But even with better intelligence, we will be vulnerable. Even if we were to constrict personal freedoms, privacy, trust, and convenience beyond acceptable limits, we will be vulnerable. Even with improved international cooperation, we

will be vulnerable. And even if we were to devote greater national defence resources and forces to homeland defence, we will be vulnerable.

To some extent, we must and can live with this, provided our intelligence enables us to prevent large attacks. But we must also kill the roots. We are in a race between a growth in our vulnerability and efforts to destroy the basis of large-scale terrorism. To be clear, “destroying the basis” does not mean meeting terrorists' demands, which would only hurt security (in the Middle East, for example). Rather, it means spreading democracy, thus giving hope and recourse to those masses upon whose disaffection terrorists feed.

## **6. New Middle East Politics**

In this light, we surely must see that political business-as-usual in the Middle East is not compatible with long-term security, including our own. While other once-dangerous, undemocratic regions have progressed in the past decade or two, the Middle East remains dysfunctional and a thus a source of continuing peril.

Placing blame for September 11 on US policy toward the Arab-Israeli conflict misses two important points: First, a promising peace process will incite at least as much anger as the absence of one; after all, al Queda's platform hardly endorses Arab peace agreements with Israel. Intifadas are about winning just peace; jihads are about killing infidels.

Second, it is the wider, deeper politics of the greater Middle East, for which *many* bear responsibility, that has created a climate conducive to despair and rage. We have turned a blind eye to illegitimate, hypocritical, and malfeasant elites that dread democracy as much as they dread fundamentalism. Let's name names: Saudi Arabia, Gulf sheikdoms, Pakistan, with Egypt and several North African regimes in a second echelon of illegitimacy. The problem is not that our values pollute the Middle East but rather that those values have had no chance to penetrate the closed politics, education, and media policed by the “moderate” hereditary regimes that we protect.

The West has played Middle East politics so counter-strategically that we are now in a position where we are afraid to attack Iraq for fear of offending the very people Iraq has threatened and could again. Even though we know that Iraq is becoming more dangerous to the region and to us, we are stuck because of the political failings of clients whose politics we have backed. Having ignored the illegitimacy of our so-called friends, we seem to have no alternative but to back them still. The time never seems to be right to insist on reform as the

price for, and key to, long-term security. The USA is especially guilty of favouring – indeed, embracing – the devil it knows. But Europeans, oil companies, banks and others have been active accomplices.

Extricating ourselves from this predicament will not be easy. But the United States and Europe need to make a clear strategic decision: either these regimes change or we will not save them. Moral justifications aside, the *security* risks of not making such a decision are too high. It is not clear that we have the foresight and courage to make such a decision or the skill to implement it without unleashing revolution instead of reform. But if we do not insist on political accountability from our Middle East clients coming out of this crisis, it will be harder to do so next time.

Crucial to this is the need to reduce dependence on oil. Not just imported oil: oil. It is shocking, when one thinks about it, that we depend vitally on a source of energy that lies beyond our control, sits mainly beneath the most unstable corner of the Earth, is managed by actors with unsteady hands and unhelpful interests, requires us to be prepared to fight large and increasingly dangerous wars, and is bad for the environment to boot. The need to begin the shift to renewables is apparent. Failure to do so will perpetuate a political order that is bad for the people of the Middle East, bad for us, and sure to produce future crises. On this, US-EU co-leadership is indispensable.

## **7. The Worst Case**

There is an alternative to the scenario of destroying the al Quedas of the world and creating a new order. At the moment, it is not under consideration. And it is unlikely in any case to be chosen. However, if the military operations fail, if the coalition splinters, and if global terrorism, Middle East turmoil, and large-scale homeland attacks persist, there could be a strategic retreat. Americans could head for the ramparts of fortress America. Europeans could revert to the regional self-absorption from which they are now emerging. Both could make homeland defence the preoccupation of their military forces. Both could write off the Middle East. The United States could shed the international responsibilities that have made it a target, and Europeans could decline to accept any responsibilities lest they become one.

Globalisation, already assaulted at Seattle and Turin, might falter. Private forces of economic integration are strong; however, the essential commitment of states to remove obstacles to integration is less strong. If globalisation sputters, what about the hopes of economic growth for us and of development for the poorer societies? What about the entry of China into the

community of responsible nations? Are we going to throw the progress of the last twenty years into reverse gear? This is why we cannot fail.

### **8. The Centrality of the US-EU Relationship**

“Not failing” means maintaining and deepening a strategic coalition. At the coalition’s centre must be a stronger US-EU partnership. US-European cooperation is relevant to every facet of counter-terrorism. Together, the United States and EU possess most of the economic, technological, military and diplomatic resources for globalising security. Compared to the US-EU relationship, all others pale. This is the one we must get right.

To get it right, Europeans and Americans will both have to overcome some deep doubts: in the American case, whether Europeans are willing and able; in the European case whether Americans will hear and heed their voices, including an increasingly unified and distinct voice. The last eight weeks are moderately promising.

## TOPICS OF ESF MEETINGS

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- The Macedonian Crisis and Balkan Security
- NATO Enlargement
- The EU's Rapid Reaction Capability
- Combatting Terrorism and the Transformation of the World Order

2002

- Russia's Security Policy and EU-Russian Relations (14 January 2002)
- Europe's Role in the Greater Middle East (11 March 2002)
- What US role in Europe? (13 May 2002)
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