



Post 9/11: The European Dimension

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The swift and heartfelt solidarity with the United States demonstrated by the European allies after the terrorist attacks on New York and the Pentagon on September 11 came as a valuable restorative to a faltering transatlantic relationship. The military, diplomatic, and emotional usefulness of foreign friends was brought home to a Bush administration that had repeatedly shown a preference for unilateral responses to international developments. This warm rush of transatlantic solidarity may not outweigh the longer term trend of American preoccupation with Asia and Latin America, nor overcome the cumulative tensions of trade disputes and cultural differences. Nor is it clear that the Bush administration will be persuaded to change its attitude toward the Kyoto protocol on global warming, the International Criminal Court, a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty, or any of the other irritants to U.S.-European relations in recent years. But the crisis has already sparked or accelerated some important shifts in international relations that may well prove problematic for the Atlantic alliance.

The European Union

Under the spur of crisis, the European Union proved a weak reed. Expectations in Brussels that the European allies would increasingly choose to act through the European Union rather than NATO, or through bilateral relations with the United States, were swiftly confounded. The EU took a back seat as NATO and Europe's national capitals took the lead. The new readiness of the German government to commit military

forces outside Europe represents an important change in policy for the richest of the European powers. Optimists in Brussels hope that this means that the European Union may in future be able to deploy its influence more forcefully, and to become an increasingly independent strategic actor. But it does not look that way now.

One remarkable feature of international response to the September 11 attacks, given the controversy aroused by the EU's plan to create its own 60,000-strong rapid reaction force (RRF) that would be separate from NATO, was how little role the EU played as a military or even diplomatic institution. The RRF, along with its scheduled support fleet of 15 warships and 150 warplanes, was very far from ready, even had there been a clear mission or an American request for its help. In fact, the RRF was more of a political symbol of Europe's unity and eventual ambitions than a real force. In the month after the September 11 attack, the London-based International Institute of Strategic Studies published a report warning that the RRF was "unlikely" even to be assembled, let alone trained or fit for deployment, by the target date of 2003. For all the diplomatic rhetoric about the RRF, European governments were reluctant to fund it. Germany's defense budget fell in 2001 to 1.5 percent of GDP, considerably less than half the proportion spent in the United States.

Except for acting as a forum for the European heads of government to meet and issue solemn statements of solidarity, and in its usual role as a source of humanitarian aid, the EU played a modest role in the

war on terrorism. Javier Solana, the former NATO secretary general who had been appointed the first EU official to coordinate its promised “Common Foreign and Security Policy,” sought useful work among the various diplomatic subplots. He widened the dialogue with (a surprisingly helpful) Iran, tried to ease the simultaneous Israeli-Palestinian crisis, and pushed the EU Commission to help Pakistan by slashing EU textile tariffs and easing debt repayment terms. Even here, Europe’s national politicians took the diplomatic lead. British prime minister Tony Blair and German chancellor Gerhard Schröder visited India and Pakistan to urge calm on two jumpy and nuclear-armed neighbors. Blair also went to the Middle East, and British foreign secretary Jack Straw and German foreign minister Joschka Fischer mounted high-profile visits to Tehran.

These diplomatic errands were better and often more swiftly done by nation-states than by the EU. And the sniping at Britain’s Tony Blair for his forthrightness on pressing the American cause revealed the EU’s internal tensions. Belgium, by accident of rotation, held the presidency of the European Council for the six-month period covered by September 11 and its aftermath, a role that traditionally requires the country to speak “for Europe” rather than for itself. Belgian foreign minister Louis Michel publicly rebuked Blair for “grandstanding and warmongering” and warned that Europe “will not follow Bush and Blair blindfold.” Not much attention was paid to this outburst. The EU visibly did not matter greatly in times of urgent crisis, when the United States turned to its traditional nation-state allies and to NATO, and Europe’s nation-states responded in kind.

Michel’s intervention had, however, served to remind Europeans of the widespread resentment felt by the smaller member states at the sometimes high-handed or self-interested ways of the larger ones, particularly the Big Three of Britain, France,

and Germany. This became a public row as a result of the September 11 attacks. A special EU summit at Ghent, Belgium, attended by all 15 heads of government, was preceded by a private meeting of Blair, Jacques Chirac, and Schröder to discuss military support for the Americans and the strategy of the war. The Belgians, whose summit was thus upstaged, were furious. Romano Prodi, the former Italian prime minister who was president of the Brussels-based European Commission (the EU’s executive arm), called the private meeting “a shame” and said Europe should meet together and stick together. Silvio Berlusconi, prime minister of Italy, was furious at his own exclusion, which he saw as a personal insult as well as a rebuff to Italy. The Swedes, Finns, Austrians, and Irish, none members of the NATO alliance and all of them guarding the traditional status of neutrality, eyed the meeting of the Big Three with understandable suspicion. Ironically, both the British and the Germans later leaked their bafflement at Chirac’s insistence on calling the brief and “not particularly useful meeting.”

Some further background is useful here to understand the depth of these various resentments, and the obstacles they present to Javier Solana’s task of forging a common foreign and security policy. Britain not for the first time irritated its partners not only by its instinctive support for the Americans on many, if not most, issues but also by its smugness about a “special relationship” with Washington that others could never share. (Despite Tony Blair’s personal popularity, not everyone in Washington saw it that way.) There was a distinctly Anglo-Saxon look about the first wave of allies who rallied to America’s side. The British led the way, followed by the Australians (dispatching warships and special forces) and Canada (in that country’s largest overseas deployment since the Second World War). The old Gaullist jibe that Britain, when faced with a choice between the European land mass and the open sea, would always

choose the Atlantic assumed a twenty first-century relevance.

The EU as an institution was in any event focusing its attention on two seminal tasks, which consumed much of the time and energy of the modest 17,000-strong EU bureaucracy. The first was the introduction of the new single currency, the euro, to 12 of the member states on January 1, 2002, just as the recession began to complicate EU and national budget and fiscal policies. The second was the vast preparation for the new round of enlargement. The EU's 15 members of 2001 were planning to become 26 or more within the next decade or so. Ten countries were clamoring to be in the first wave of new entrants in the period 2004–06. These were Poland, Hungary, the Czech and Slovak Republics, Slovenia, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Cyprus, and Malta. Romania, Bulgaria, and Turkey were all on a rather slower track. The Poles, Czechs, and Hungarians had all joined NATO in 1999; most of the others were hoping to become full members at the next alliance summit in Prague in November 2002.

Successful absorption is by no means easy, despite the achievement of Ireland, which has now achieved a GDP per capita that is higher than the EU average, the measure usually used to calculate relative prosperity (and to assign regional aid from the EU budget). Spain, however, is stuck at little more than 80 percent, and both Portugal and Greece are well below it. On average it has taken these three countries 15 years to rise 10 percentage points in the GDP per capita ratings. The most easily absorbed of the next round of entrants, Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Estonia, Slovakia, and Slovenia, are currently in the range of 35–50 percent of the EU's GDP per capita. Romania and Bulgaria are at less than 20 percent. Raising these countries to a level approaching the current EU average will be a task of decades. The next round of enlargement will increase the EU's population by 20 percent but its combined GDP by barely

3 percent, which is to say that “enlargement” is a polite way of indicating that the EU will be in the development aid business for a generation to come.

And yet this task looks simple by comparison with the new challenges being urged on the Europeans by the United States: for the EU to absorb Turkey, the Balkans, and, in the further future, possibly Ukraine and Russia. The ten new members hoping to be in the first enlargement wave have a total population of little more than 70 million, half of them Poles, and all from recognizably Christian and European cultural traditions. Their absorption, for a prosperous EU that currently numbers some 370 million people, is a daunting but not unreasonable challenge. But Turkey alone has a population of almost 80 million people, and by the time it has completed the arduous accession process (at least a decade, and probably more) could expect to be the most populous country in the EU, ahead of Germany. Its Islamic traditions alone could fundamentally change the character of the EU.

The prospect of eventual EU membership for Ukraine, with a population of 50 million, and Russia, with almost 150 million, implies the replacement of the current EU with a very different, almost Eurasian body. Their membership would shift the EU's center of gravity far to the east. Russia's economic weakness notwithstanding, its numbers would give Moscow a dominant voice in the EU's parliament and council. The current EU members are therefore likely to delay such a development far into the future. Russia will certainly be granted far-reaching trade agreements and a considerable voice in EU affairs. Most likely, Russia will be offered membership in the loose affiliation known as the European Economic Area, of which Norway and Switzerland are members. This means joining the EU's free trade area, without having to join the Common Agricultural Program, nor contribute to the EU's modest \$100 billion annual budget (at around \$270 for each EU

citizen, it is not burdensome). Such affiliates do not elect members to the EU parliament, nor join the European Commission, nor attend summits and thus play no part in EU decision making. However, the invitation extended to President Bush in June 2001 to attend the EU summit at Gothenburg is likely to be extended in the future to a Russian president.

NATO

Before any of the European countries (with the exception of Britain) had responded to the September 11 attacks, the NATO alliance took an unprecedented lead. The British played a role in this, thanks to the close coordination between NATO secretary general Lord George Robertson (who had come to NATO from being Britain's defense secretary) and Tony Blair. When Dutch officials at NATO expressed some reservations about invoking article 5 of the Washington Treaty establishing the alliance (an attack on one is an attack on all), Robertson ensured that Downing Street was informed, and Blair then telephoned Dutch prime minister Wim Kok who ensured that the NATO decision was unanimous. Within 35 hours of the attacks on New York and Washington, the other 18 NATO allies said they were prepared to invoke article 5. For the first time, the defense of American shores was entrusted to European and Canadian NATO air crews, whose AWACS airborne radar and command aircraft took over the patrols of the U.S. eastern seaboard, freeing U.S. AWACS aircraft for duty in Afghanistan.

While heartened by these contributions and offers, the U.S. military were in some difficulty in welcoming them. It was not the kind of war that required large numbers of military personnel, and the command and control problems of a multilingual force away from familiar NATO terrain would have been challenging. Only the British had the sealift and in-flight refueling capabilities to get troops to the region under their own steam, and to keep them supplied once in

place. With France's solitary aircraft carrier in port in Toulon for the repair of its endlessly troublesome (and leaky) nuclear reactor, the other NATO allies would require U.S. logistical support. Allies might also have proved restrictive on American freedom of action, as NATO allies had on occasion been over target selection during the Kosovo bombing campaign. At the same time, allies were diplomatically useful in explaining and supporting American policy at the United Nations and elsewhere.

Still, the contrast for impatient Americans keen to right the wrong done to them on September 11 could hardly have been more clear. Europeans acting as nation-states or acting through NATO responded warmly and quickly. Europeans acting in or through the EU dithered, wrangled about old issues, and slowed almost everything down in layers of bureaucracy (relaxing the textile quotas for Pakistan was an exception). NATO was planning to complete a second round of enlargement to bring in the East European states before the ponderous EU even got around to admitting its first wave.

The Bush administration found it difficult to take the EU, with its revolving presidency, seriously. George W. Bush, in December 2000, before his inauguration, was pressed to call on President Jacques Chirac in a brief courtesy visit to the French embassy in Washington "because France holds the presidency of the European Council." So it did, until, the end of the year. And then Sweden took over, and hosted the EU summit that Bush attended in Gothenburg in June of 2001. The following month in Italy, Bush was surprised to find a Belgian attending the G-8 meeting of the major industrial powers, an honorary presence that reflected the fact that Belgium had taken over the presidency on July 1.

President Bush was not impressed by this European roundabout, nor by the evident tensions between European Commission president Romano Prodi and whichever prime minister or president of whichever

country happened to be holding the presidency that time. Prodi had been furious at Chirac's brief meeting with President-elect Bush (of which Prodi had not been informed). Prodi's petulant refusal to attend the final presidential press conference after the Ghent summit (on the grounds that the Belgian prime minister hogged the available time) was widely reported. Politicians of all nations understand and are accustomed to this kind of human friction, but White House officials in private mocked Prodi and the Belgians, and noted the contrast with the decisive Blair and Chirac, and the brisk NATO response. A prime example was the energetic role of NATO's secretary general, Lord Robertson. He worked closely with Blair, visited Washington frequently (and made a point of cultivating good contacts in Congress), and also took a prominent role in the Russian courtship. Even before September 11, Robertson had worked hard at reconciling the disparate American and European views on the Bush proposals for anti-missile defenses, and he saw the crisis as a way to highlight the merits of NATO at a time when American opinion was likely to be appreciative. His brisk leadership ensured that the unprecedented vote to invoke article 5, and the offer of NATO AWACS aircraft, went speedily through the NATO Council.

Second, Europe's military response was organized directly by the continent's big powers. Rather than defer to the EU, the individual nation-states of Europe immediately, and even instinctively, took the lead. Britain instantly offered its unconditional support "until the end," took part in the first cruise missile and air attacks on Afghanistan on October 7, and offered to commit its renowned SAS Special Forces, along with 4,200 other specialist troops and Royal Marines. This triggered a Dutch offer of their own marines, who now train alongside their British comrades. France offered reconnaissance aircraft and special forces. Italy and Spain offered their mountain

troops, the Czechs offered their highly regarded chemical warfare detection and treatment units, and Germany offered whatever military assistance the United States might need.

This was remarkable. Despite profound misgivings on the part of the Green Party, the junior partner in the governing coalition, Chancellor Schröder was able to secure a clear majority in the Bundestag to commit German forces in a role that went far beyond peacekeeping. Moreover, they might be deployed not just elsewhere in Europe, as they were during the Kosovo crisis, but could be ordered into combat in Central Asia. There could have been few more powerful symbols of Schröder's success in carrying out his 1998 election campaign pledge "to make Germany a normal nation again," less inhibited about asserting its interests and its foreign policies. For some Europeans, this fundamental shift in German self-confidence and the prospect of a Germany that could exert a diplomatic and political weight to match its economic predominance in Europe, was a salient outcome of the September 11 crisis. (The Bundeswehr's pared-down budget suggested any such outcome lay far in the future.)

Britain went beyond its traditional and jealously preserved role of America's closest ally in Europe to rally others to the American cause. This provoked some resentment, but less than might have been expected. Under the leadership of Tony Blair, Britain could no longer be portrayed as an uncooperative or even reluctant European. For Blair, the Atlantic and Anglophone and Commonwealth connections were reinforcements rather than alternatives to Britain's European commitment. But the other big powers were irritating their EU partners in other ways. France offended small powers rather more because Paris tended to throw its weight around in EU institutions. France's president, Jacques Chirac, single-handedly scotched the prospect of fundamental reform (laboriously negotiated by

the agricultural ministers of all 15 member states, including France) of the Common Agricultural Policy at the 1999 Berlin summit. France broke the tradition that the holder of the EU Council presidency acts in the common rather than the national interest at the Nice summit in December 2000, absolutely refusing to give up its voting parity in the council with Germany in a heated four-day meeting. The votes were supposed to reflect populations; Germany boasts 84 million while France has fewer than 60 million.

Germany, while less clumsy and (for understandable reasons of history) more circumspect in asserting its interests, was increasingly ready to capitalize on its status as the richest and most populous of the 15 member states. While reluctantly accepting parity with France and Britain and Italy in voting on the European Council (where the national governments meet), Germany had by far the largest voting block in the European Parliament and had displayed its determination to get its own way over German reunification, the anti-inflation rules of the new European Central Bank, and the insistence on breaking up the Yugoslav Federation by forcing recognition of Croatia's independence. The result, clearly on display at the Nice summit, was a modest crisis for the traditional comity of the Franco-German locomotive as the driving force of the European project. Traditionally, EU summits had been preceded by Franco-German summits at which successive chancellors and presidents would issue a joint letter to set the agenda for the EU gathering. The Big Three meeting before the Ghent summit, concerned with U.S. policy and war in Afghanistan rather than EU matters, signaled an important shift in the way the EU had traditionally done business. Blair later sought to correct this, inviting the Italian and Spanish prime ministers to join the next Big Three summit in London on November 4. Outraged phone calls of protest to Downing Street provoked a hasty widening, and

the Belgian prime minister (as custodian of the EU Council) was invited, along with Javier Solana. This encouraged the Dutch premier Wim Kok to invite himself as a provider of military forces, and the Big Three had suddenly become an Enlarged Eight.

Turkey

It was significant that the United States chose to accept Turkey's offer of ground forces to help in Afghanistan before turning to the French, German, and other European offerings. As a NATO ally and secular nation with a largely Muslim population, Turkey blurred the potentially embarrassing flavor of Christendom in arms that tinged the American-dominated military effort. Although the Turks had no common language with Uzbeks and Tajiks, let alone the Pash-tun, there was a loose but helpful Turkic cultural affinity that was reinforced by regular military contacts and exchange visits with Central Asian countries throughout the 1990s. Moreover, the Turks had the advantage of recent combat experience in similar terrain against similar forces to the Taliban, the Kurdish guerrillas. Turkish support was therefore of practical as well as symbolic importance to the Americans.

For the Turks, this American blessing to their aspirations to become an important regional power was welcome, and so was the implicit guarantee of American financial support as Turkey's government struggled to stabilize the country's banks and currency and lobbied for new International Monetary Fund credits. The deployment of 90 officers and NCOs of the Turkish special forces was moreover a modest repayment for Washington's relentless diplomatic efforts to persuade the EU to accept Turkey as a candidate for full membership.

Turkey was seen as a decided asset by successive U.S. governments, who were aware of the serious costs (\$6–20 billion, depending on who was counting) Turkey had shouldered during and after the Gulf

War in closing Iraqi oil pipelines and blocking trade. The United States was also appreciative of the discreet military alliance between Turkey and Israel. Turkey, as NATO's southern anchor and potential stabilizer in the Middle East and Central Asia, was too important in the view of successive U.S. administrations to be excluded or disdained by the EU. President Bill Clinton intervened twice personally, telephoning the Greek prime minister during the Cardiff EU summit of 1998, to help smooth Turkey's way, and also calling Turkey during the Helsinki summit of December 1999 to persuade Ankara to accept the highly conditional EU offer as the best deal available.

By contrast, many EU governments saw Turkey as a problem, from Turkey's Islamic character to its rickety finances and incomplete industrialization, from its lamentable human rights record to its legendary corruption and political instability. EU officials complained that the Americans had no conception of the complexity of the EU membership process, the 80,000 pages of rules and regulations that had to be incorporated into national law to ensure that EU environmental, labor, legal, and bureaucratic standards could be matched. Germany, with the largest Turkish population in the EU, found it politically difficult to disentangle foreign and military policy from domestic arguments over immigration.

And despite recent Greek and Turkish efforts to move beyond the long-standing hostility, every EU approach to Ankara ran the constant risk of a Greek veto. The issue of the divided island of Cyprus, accepted as an EU candidate member, meant that the problem was threatening to become acute. Few EU members wanted to accept Cyprus with the island still divided and Turkish troops glowering from the northern half. But Greece threatened to veto any EU enlargement if Cyprus were not included in the first round of new memberships, whatever Turks or Turkish-Cypriots might say. Again, to an American observer, NATO ap-

peared to be an alliance that worked and delivered, while the EU looked like a system where decisions bogged down in a morass of bureaucracy and nationalist haggling, while its members ignored the broader strategic costs of their delays.

There are many good reasons for bringing Turkey into Europe. It has been a staunch NATO ally, occupies a strategic location, and provides a promising new market and investment opportunity. And some of the traditional objections have lost their old force. There has been a cease-fire in the long-running war against Kurdish separatists, and Turkey's human rights record has improved. And despite the grumbling from former German chancellor Helmut Kohl that Europe was "a Christian club," Turkey's European credentials long predate the Islamic religion. Some of the founding texts of European civilization, from Homer's account of the Trojan War to St. Paul's "Letter to the Ephesians," are set in what is now Turkey. But the fact remains that bringing Turkey into Europe means that the EU suddenly would thereby gain some troublesome new neighbors, including Iraq, Iran, and Syria. The EU would become, at a stroke, a deeply involved participant in the geopolitics of the Middle East, the oil-rich Caspian basin, and Central Asia. These are areas where American interests have clashed with Europe in the past, from Europe's refusal to let U.S. aircraft use their bases to re-supply Israel in the 1973 Yom Kippur War to more recent rows over sanctions against Iran and Iraq. The United States seems, without thinking through the implications, to be pushing Europe into geopolitical roles in Eurasia for which it is far from ready, and which are likely to steer it into policies that Americans may find uncomfortable.

Russia and Geopolitics

President Vladimir Putin began his administration with reminders of Russia's continued ability to make life difficult for Washington, beyond opposing the Bush adminis-

tration's plans to develop an anti-missile system despite the Antiballistic Missile Treaty. He signed a Treaty of Friendship with China, agreed to multi-billion-dollar arms sales to China and Iran, including a promise to complete a nuclear power plant for Iran, and visited Moscow's old friends in Vietnam and Cuba. His careful courtship of Britain, France, and Germany, and his evident support for an enlarged EU and suspicion of NATO enlargement, looked like a traditional Kremlin ploy to divide the Atlantic alliance. But even before the terrorist attacks of September 11, Russia had signaled its readiness for a far closer relationship with the West. Putin's meetings with Bush in Ljubljana and Genoa opened the prospect of an agreement to amend the ABM Treaty in a way that would permit testing of missile defenses, and Russia also resisted OPEC proposals that it restrain oil production to shore up energy prices.

After September 11, despite the opposition of much of Russia's security establishment, including his old KGB colleague, Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov, Putin agreed to an unprecedented and far-reaching support of Bush's war on terrorism. He ordered Russian Intelligence (FSB) to share information on the Taliban and opened Russian airspace to American logistics aircraft. He overruled the earlier statements of his military establishment to accept a U.S. military presence in Uzbekistan, and helped rearm and equip the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance. He asked nothing in return, although other officials said they were expecting relief on the \$48 billion of Soviet-era debt owed to Western governments through the Paris Club.

Alexei Arbatov, deputy chairman of the Duma's defense committee, has noted that "no more than 10 to 15 percent" of the country's elite think that the time is ripe for such fundamental changes to Russian foreign policy. Arbatov, a political centrist, is one of them. Another is former deputy prime minister Boris Nemtsov, who sees

this as the chance of joining the West that Russia failed to seize in 1945 and after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Alexander Bessmertnykh, the last Soviet foreign minister, argued that "this is in Russia's interest. The alternatives to alignment with the West are to become a problem for it (by aligning Russia with the Irans and Iraqs, the North Koreans, and Cubas of the world) or to bow out of international affairs altogether—which with our geographic and geopolitical location is not a serious option."

Despite the rumblings at home about his new strategy, the month after the attacks on New York and the Pentagon Putin went to NATO headquarters in Brussels to suggest—for the first time—that he was becoming relaxed about the prospect of NATO enlargement. Just as "nobody in his right mind" could see Russia as a security menace to NATO, Putin noted, he saw NATO changing to the degree where it no longer looked like the old Cold War anti-Kremlin military alliance. "They keep saying that NATO is becoming more political than military," the Russian president said in Brussels. "We are looking at this and watching this process. If this is to happen, it would change things considerably.... We believe things are moving toward a qualitative change in the [Russia-NATO] relationship."

The proposal was not outlandish. President Clinton, speaking in Aachen, Germany, in June 2000, had suggested that both the EU and NATO should "keep the door open" for eventual Russian and Ukrainian membership. President Bush used a similarly vague formula of eventual welcome in his Ljubljana meeting. But in light of the Russian support for the war on terrorism, and the simultaneous announcement that the Lourdes electronic surveillance base on Cuba would be closed, the prospect of a historic Russian turn to the West looked far more serious.

The West is a vague concept, but as it has developed since the end of the Second World War it has come to depend on a se-

curity club based on NATO, and a prosperity club based on market economies. The West as a financial system rests on institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, the global financial markets, and the World Trade Organization (WTO). Russia is already well on its way into this economic club. The recovery of the Russian economy since the 1998 default and devaluation, and the state budget surpluses engendered by the rise in the price of oil have combined to give Russia in 2001 the best economic prospects it had known since the Soviet collapse in 1991. Under Putin, it has installed a flat tax system and enacted a land reform law that established the principle of private property. Russia attends the G-8 summits of leading industrial powers (and note that China does not), including the key meetings of finance ministers. Both Europe and America have promised their help in steering Russia into the WTO.

The European allies are beginning to ponder the meaning of a Russia in NATO's anteroom, and are not altogether sure they like it. Poland and Hungary and the Czechs did not join the NATO alliance in order to climb into bed with the Russians, but to keep them outside the bedroom. Moreover, German commentators have noted that NATO is at base a military alliance that requires members to defend one another. Bringing Russia into NATO implies guaranteeing the sanctity of Russia's Siberian frontiers against any putative Chinese or Islamic threats. American administrations maintained with difficulty a 50-year commitment to send their troops to die on the Rhine to defend Western Europe. Securing a commitment to send them—and British and French and German soldiers—to die on the banks of the Amur in order to defend Siberia would be a breathtaking challenge.

Russia's embrace of the West portends a transformation of what we have understood by the term "Europe." It means instead starting to think in terms of Eurasia, of the

West's new frontier running for thousands of miles through Central Asia, with largely Islamic societies to the south and the vast population and surging economic growth of China to the east. Americans have thought in these terms before, witness James Baker's pungent phrase, as secretary of state during the Cold War's endgame, about the prospect of building a new security system that ran around the Northern Hemisphere "from Vancouver to Vladivostock."

The prospect of a transformed U.S. relationship with Russia, along with what could be a long-term American security commitment to several Central Asian countries, carries profound geopolitical implications. The inclusion of Russia in the security and economic embrace of the West, whether through eventual membership in the European Union and/or the NATO alliance, involves at least an implicit commitment to the defense of Russia's Asian borders. It could also bring NATO to the Chinese frontier, into intimate involvement with the politics of the energy basin of the Transcaucasus and the Caspian Sea, and into direct proximity with a newly energized Islamic world.

A decisive Russian shift to the West is likely to restore Sir Halford Mackinder's concepts of Eurasia and the World Island into the vocabulary, and consequently into the immediate concerns, of European and American policymakers. Above all, at a time of acute American sensitivity to Islamic concerns about "a clash of civilizations," a new strategic alliance of Russia, North America, and Europe could be perceived as troubling or challenging to others.

It will be difficult to persuade the Islamic world that it does not portend the emergence of a new Christendom. It may be difficult to convince Africans and many Asians that it need not be simply a white folks' club. It may not be easy to allay Beijing's fears that it heralds a new containment of China's growing power. At worst, it might even inspire a counteralliance of Is-

lam, China, Africa, and possibly others who see themselves as have-nots, against the rich, white world. A global cold war with racial characteristics could be one of the

most tragic outcomes of September 11, although it is entirely possible that this was precisely what the authors of the atrocity had in mind. ●