The Changing Balance of Power

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Balance of Power Concept

The struggle for power on the part of nations where each nation tries to preserve or overthrow the *status quo* leads to what is sometimes referred to as the balance of power. It is essential that the balance of power be preserved in order to maintain stability in a society of sovereign nations.

According to the late American political scientist Hans Morgenthau, the word 'equilibrium' is synonymous with 'balance' and signifies stability in a system composed of a number of independent parts. The concept of the equilibrium is based on the assumption that the independent parts which are to be balanced are entitled to exist and that without a state of equilibrium, one of the independent parts will rise, encroach upon the others and ultimately destroy them as independent entities[1].

The object of all equilibriums is to maintain stability or balance within the system while preserving the independence of all of the components. If stability were the only aim of international politics, it could be achieved by allowing one of the components in the system to overwhelm the others and destroy their independence. Stability in Europe could have been maintained by allowing Napoleon Bonaparte or Adolf Hitler to overwhelm and conquer the other components within the system and put an end to their independence. But the aim of the balance of power is stability and the preservation of all of the components. Each component in the system is allowed to pursue its goals and policies to the point where it does not overwhelm the other components[2].

The concept of the equilibrium or balance can sometimes be demonstrated in the realm of national politics where there are three major political parties. The strongest of the three parties can sometimes but not always gain a majority of the seats in the legislature.

[1] Morgenthau Hans, Thompson Kenneth, *Politics among Nations: the Struggle for Power and Peace*, New York, Knopf, 1985, p. 189.

[2] *Ibidem*.

The second strongest party is slightly weaker than the strongest party but can never by itself gain a majority of the seats and the third strongest party is much weaker than the second. Sometimes, when the strongest party is not able to gain a majority of the seats in the legislature, the second and third strongest parties will unite and rule the country as a coalition government. The classic example in demonstrating how this equilibrium works is the Federal Republic of Germany between 1969-1989 before the re-unification of Germany. During these years, whenever the Christian Democratic Party was unable to gain a majority of the seats in the *Bundestag*, the Social Democratic Party, which was the second strongest party would sometimes unite with the Free Democratic Party and deprive the Christian Democratic Party of the power to rule. Thus, the balance of power was maintained within the realm of West German politics.

Since the beginning of the modern State system, which was established in 1648 by the Treaty of Westphalia, the balance of power has been preserved by means of alliances. Traditionally, there were several powers in the world. In the world of international politics, no nation had permanent friends due to changes within the realm of the domestic politics of each nation. In order to preserve the balance of power, there were usually three different types of alliance systems. In one type of alliance system, there were two alliances and nations within both alliances were trying to change the *status quo* in their favor. In another type of alliance system, nations within one alliance were trying to preserve the *status quo* and nations within the other alliance were trying to change the *status quo*. There was also a third type of alliance system where the balance of power consisted of two alliances of equal strength and the balancer. The balancer was not allied with either side and always joined the weaker alliance whenever a war broke out or was just about to break out. Between 1648-1939, Great Britain played the role of balancer thereby making it impossible for either group of nations to gain power over other nations. Thus, the independence of most nations was preserved.

Political scientists often note that it was possible for Great Britain to play the role of balancer because Britain had no territorial ambitions in Europe. Britain was a sea power with territorial ambitions on other continents, was not directly affected by the outcome of the balance of power in Europe, and could therefore successfully play the role of balancer of power.

The Balance of Power and the Cold War

Between the end of World War II (1945) and the end of the Cold War (1989), the balance of power underwent several fundamental

changes which impaired the manner in which it traditionally operated since the beginning of the modern State system in 1648.

The first fundamental change was that the balance of power became inflexible for the first time since 1648. The inflexibility of the balance of power was the result of three factors:

1. - The first factor which caused the balance of power to become inflexible after World War II was the reduction in the number of powers[3]. Between the Conference of Westphalia in 1648 and the Congress of Vienna in 1815, Europe was composed of a vast number of principalities in Germany and Italy plus the medium and larger States. When the map of Europe was redrawn at the Congress of Vienna after the defeat of Napoleon, there were five major powers in the world: Great Britain, France, Prussia, Russia and Austria. All five powers in the world were European. Then between 1859-1871, the seven sovereign states of Italy united and Prussia rose to unite all of the German States excluding Austria. The number of European nations having the rank of world power was then six: Great Britain, France, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Russia and Italy. Soon the United States and Japan joined the ranks of the great powers and, at the outbreak of World War I in 1914, there were eight powers of the world: Great Britain, France, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Russia, Italy, the United States and Japan. World War I saw Austria-Hungary permanently eliminated as a world power since the Austro-Hungarian Empire was broken up and a number of independent States appeared in its place in East-Central Europe. Germany and Russia were temporarily eliminated as powers at the end of World War I. Therefore, in 1919, there were five major world powers: Great Britain, France, Italy, the United States and Japan. At the outbreak of World War II in 1939, Germany and the Soviet Union rejoined the ranks of world powers so there were seven world powers on the eve of World War II. At the end of World War II, the number of world powers was reduced to two and one half: the United States, the Soviet Union and Great Britain. The power of Great Britain was so much less than that of the United States and the Soviet Union which assumed the title 'superpowers'.

The reduction in the number of nations that were able to play the role of world powers in international politics had a deteriorating effect upon the operation of the balance of power. The greater the number of players as world powers on the international scene the greater the number of possible combinations resulting in greater flexibility. With the reduction in the number of powers after World War II, the balance of power became very inflexible.

[3] *Ibidem*, p. 360.

2. - The second factor that caused the balance of power to become inflexible after World War II for the first time since 1648 was bipolarity[4]. During World War II, only the United States, the Soviet Union, Great Britain, Germany and Japan were significant as far as power was concerned. Decisions of other European countries to join one side or the other were not capable of transforming victory into defeat; only the position of the five really mattered. Then, after World War II, the situation which existed at the beginning of World War II with regard to the five was augmented with regard to the United States and the Soviet Union whose power in relation to that of their allies was overwhelming. The multi-polar system had become bipolar[5].

3. - The third factor which caused the balance of power to become inflexible after World War II was the creation of the two-bloc system[6]. Between 1949-1989, neither the United States nor the Soviet Union had to fear the defection of an ally as nations did during World War II. The era of shifting alliances and new combinations was gone. But as many political scientists observed, this did not mean that the United States and the Soviet Union had nothing to fear from their allies. Although it was difficult if not impossible for an ally of the two superpowers to defect, the degree of support that they gave to the superpowers varied. They could remain effective supporters of the policies of the superpowers like West Germany and Czechoslovakia or implacable allies like Charles de Gaulle of France was toward the United States and Nicolae Ceausescu was toward the Soviet Union, thereby hindering the effectiveness of the alliances. Between the end of World War II and the end of the Cold War, the committed nations of the world were firmly in the orbit of the United States and the Soviet Union and the little flexibility that was left in international politics was provided by the nations of Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

The second major change that the balance of power underwent during the Cold War was that Great Britain's role as balancer of power disappeared. As late as World War II, the neutrality of Great Britain or its decision to join Germany, Japan and Italy instead of the United States and the Soviet Union might have made the difference between victory or defeat. But during the Cold War, the neutrality of

[4] *Ibidem*, p. 362.

[5] TYMOSHENKO YULIVA, *Containing Russia*, in «Foreign Affairs», vol. 86, n. 3, 2007.

[6] *Idem*, p. 365.

Great Britain in a war between the United States and the Soviet Union would not have affected the outcome of such a war[7].

The third major change which the balance of power underwent and impaired its operation during the Cold War was the destruction of colonialism. After the unification of Germany and Italy, there was little room in Europe for expansion and the European powers turned to Africa and Asia for expansion, establishing colonies and spheres of influence[8]. That which was formerly the periphery of international politics: Asia, Africa and Latin America became one of the centers of politics during the Cold War after the freeing of the Asian and African nations from the bonds of colonialism. Since nuclear war between the superpowers was no longer an option starting in the late 1950s and early 1960s, and with most of Europe committed to the United States and the Soviet Union, the Cold War became a war which was fought for the minds of people in the third world. Would these people embrace communism or western political systems? Would they become allies of the United States, or of the Soviet Union or of China? These were the questions which posed themselves after the worst period of the Cold War ended and the new period of the Cold War known as *détente* or relaxation of tensions began in the 1960s.

By the late 1960s and the early 1970s, one billion people in the former colonial nations plus one billion Chinese who in the past had been objects of the policies of other nations entered the world scene as participants. It was apparent that these nations were acquiring modern technology and some were even in the process of acquiring nuclear weapons. The superpowers feared that such a development could shift the balance of power away from themselves and end the bipolar system. Within a decade, the bipolar two-bloc system would disintegrate but for reasons very different from those that either bloc could have anticipated in the late 1970s.

In the early days of 1980, the Soviet Union did something that it had never done before. It invaded a non-aligned country. After troops entered Afghanistan, the socialist leader of the country (Amin) was murdered by Afghan communists and Barak Karmal, the new leader of Afghanistan, reoriented the foreign policy of his country toward the Soviet Union. Why did the Soviet Union invade Afghanistan? This is a question that political scientists have debated for more than a quarter of a century, just as they debate the question of why the United States really invaded Iraq in 2003. In any event, *détente* between the United States and the Soviet Union which had prevailed throughout the 1970s did not survive the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

[7] *Ibidem*.
[8] *Idem*, p. 367.

Presidents Carter and Brezhnev had signed the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (Salt II) in 1979 calling for a reduction in nuclear arms and a freeze on new weapons. This treaty had become controversial in the United States because the United States never build an Abm system under Salt I even though it was permitted to do so. Although the Soviets were forced to reduce the number of offensive missiles it possessed according to Salt II and the United States was permitted to build enough offensive missiles to give it parity with the Soviet Union, many argued that the ceilings were too high and in addition would give the Soviets superiority because their missiles were larger and could carry larger warheads. In addition, Soviet technology had greatly improved and could destroy 90% of the United States' Icbms in a first strike. But the Soviets had built only one Abm system around Moscow and the United States had numerous Mirvs which could confuse the Abm. Furthermore, even if the Soviets could wipe out 100% of the United States' Icbms in a first strike, the Icbm represented only 25% of American strategic power.

Whether or not Salt II would have been ratified by a 2/3 majority of the Us Senate before the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan is questionable, but after the invasion, President Carter did not even refer this treaty to the Senate knowing that it would be rejected. When Ronald Reagan became President of the United States in January, 1981, Salt II was dead. He had opposed it from the beginning since he believed that it did not respond to the growth of Soviet military strength.

When Ronald Reagan became President of the United States in 1981, Soviet-American relations which had already deteriorated during the final year of the Carter administration sank to their lowest level in twenty years. Reagan's rhetoric toward the Soviet Union was the harshest of any President of the United States in history. In his first press conference, he called the Soviet Union «a country ruled by men who reserve unto themselves the right to commit any crime, to lie, to cheat».

In March, 1983, in an address in Orlando, Florida, he referred to the Soviet Union as «the focus of evil in the modern world». What is often forgotten is that in this very same speech, President Reagan predicted that communism would self-destruct within a short time.

In 1984, the greatest fear of the Soviet Union came true when the United States installed Cruise and Pershing II missiles in Western Europe. These were intermediate ranged missiles that could hit Eastern Europe and all of European Russia. Reagan also pushed the construction of the Mx missile, an intercontinental missile and the Strategic Defense Initiative (Sdi) sometimes referred to as Star Wars. Sdi was a purely defensive missile which, if perfected, would render the

United States and its allies free from attack except by conventional means.

The End of the Cold War

Shortly after the re-election of Ronald Reagan as President of the United States in November 1984, Soviet-American relations began to improve. The catalyst in the amelioration of Soviet-American relations was the succession of Mikhail Gorbachev as Secretary-General of the Cpsu. President Reagan who had refused to meet with Presidents Brezhnev, Andropov and Chernenko and to even attend their funerals, agreed to meet President Gorbachev in Geneva in November 1985. At that meeting the two men agreed to meet again in Reykjavik, Iceland in October, 1986. Although these talks which focused on the reduction and eventual destruction of all missile systems broke down over the Soviet demand that the United States limit Sdi to basic research in the laboratory, this was a temporary setback. At a third summit conference in Washington, D.C. in December, 1987, the United States and the Soviet Union agreed to eliminate all intermediate range missiles from Europe and even made some progress on reducing strategic weapons by 50%. The treaty to eliminate all intermediate range missiles from Europe was ratified by the Us Senate in May, 1988.

1988 was the best year in Soviet-American relations since the creation of the Soviet Union in 1921. The Soviet Union agreed to withdraw from Afghanistan and undertook many domestic reforms not only in the Cpsu (*Glasnost*) but in the economy as well (*Perestroika*)[9]. Basically this meant that the economy would be decentralized, the collective and state farms would be given much more autonomy than they had been given in the past, that workers' collectives could be established in smaller industries resembling to some extent State and collective farms and some private enterprise would be allowed. In addition, a degree of democracy would be introduced into the Communist Party. The central Party leadership would no longer dictate to the local Party units nor would it control the nomination and election of candidates to offices within the local Party units. Democracy would apply to the election process within the top organs of the Communist Party as well. The Party organization at each level would no longer dictate to the legislature at that level and exercise only an indirect influence over the legislature since the vast majority of deputies at all levels were Communist Party members.

[9] Anders Asland, *Russia's Capitalist Revolution*, Washington, Peterson Institute for International Economics, 2007, pp. 356.

The elections to the Supreme Soviet (national Parliament) in 1989 proved to be most interesting. There were three factions: the old guard with no acknowledged leader, the moderates led by Mikhail Gorbachev and the liberals led by Boris Yeltsin. After the results were tallied, most of the deputies elected were either moderates or liberals. The old guard suffered a crushing defeat. This reform parliament undertook sweeping reforms and even announced that in the elections to the Supreme Soviet that would be held in five years, parties other than the Communist Party could compete for office and run against communist candidates. This pronouncement essentially spelled the end of the Soviet system as it had existed since its inception. One year earlier, Gorbachev had announced that the communist parties of the States of East-Central Europe would have to sink or swim on their own and could no longer count on Soviet troops to save them. Consequently, mass demonstrations occurred throughout the region. Within one year, free elections in all of these countries resulted in the defeat of the communist parties and the establishment of western democracy throughout East-Central Europe. German re-unification was achieved by holding free elections in the former German Democratic Republic where the people overwhelmingly demonstrated that they wanted unity with their West German brothers. Re-unification was achieved on October 3, 1990.

The end of the two-bloc system came in July 1991 when the Warsaw Pact was dissolved. The foreign policies of the former communist States of East-Central Europe were re-oriented toward the West and some even spoke openly of their desire to join Nato and the European Union as early as 1991.

In an effort to save communism and the disintegration of the Soviet Union itself, a group of hard core communists attempted a *coup d'état* in August, 1991. The coup failed due to a large extent to Boris Yeltsin, President of the Russian Republic and on August 29, 1991, the Soviet Parliament voted to suspend the activities of the Cpsu. The Soviet Union officially broke into 15 independent Republics on December 26, 1991, even though several Republics had already declared their independence in late August, 1991. Russia, which had dominated the Soviet Union since its inception in 1921, ceased to be a superpower, thereby leaving the United States the sole superpower in the world. The balance of power shifted to the United States and its allies, several of which were second rank powers (ex. Great Britain, France, Germany, Japan and Italy). Russia underwent socio-economic-political turmoil in the 1990s comparable to that of the early part of the XXth Century and the Russian ruble sank to a level surpassed in recent history only by the German mark in 1923. The diffusion of power also resulted in massive corruption on the part of governmen-

tal and non-governmental officials. Several of the former Republics of the Soviet Union became openly hostile toward Russia and the Russian Republic was faced with the possibility of disintegration.

According to Clyde Prestowitz, President of the Economic Strategy Institute in Washington, D.C., the XXth Century ended on Christmas Day, 1991 (the following day the Soviet Union was dissolved) and the XXIst Century did not begin until September 11, 2001. Between these two dates, the United States lived in a state of euphoria. It was the only superpower. It had won the Cold War. The attack on the World Trade Center was a wake-up call that demonstrated that America was still vulnerable. The XXIst Century had begun.

Europe

Before 2003, the national interests of the United States and Europe were more complementary than they have been since that time. America is the daughter of Europe. It possesses a white Christian culture. Although quite diverse ethnically and religiously, the vast majority of Americans are Christian and of European ancestry. The ideas expressed in the Declaration of Independence and in the Constitution are derived from European thought[10]. When America was attacked on September 11, 2001, all of Europe and most of the world supported the United States and many European countries were willing to send troops to Afghanistan and fight alongside United States troops. However, when the Bush Administration decided to go to war in Iraq in 2003 in spite of the fact that there was no United Nation's resolution authorizing the war, and rejected both the Kyoto Accord on global warming and the creation of the International Criminal Court both of which Europe accepted, the United States and Europe began to drift apart[11].

Although the United States and Europe are similar in cultural background and are examples of western democracies, big differences in values have ensued in recent years. Europeans are much less religious than Americans and accuse Americans of being super-patriots[12]. Europeans are concerned that this religiosity coupled with super-patriotism can cause Americans to become overly aggressive and engage in unnecessary conflicts. Europeans see the vast disparity of income in the United States between the wealthy on the one hand and the middle class, working class and poor on the other as the cause of a vi-

[10] Prestowitz Clyde, *Rogue Nations*, New York, Basic Books, p. 230.
[11] *Idem*, p. 231.
[12] *Idem*, p. 236.

olent crime ridden society whose incarceration rate is more than five times that of Europe[13].

The Eu has achieved integration in many areas. Inflation and budget deficits have been reduced, a European Central Bank has been established and it is very likely that the euro will soon replace the Us dollar as the reserve currency of the world. The European Union has grown from six original members when it consisted of three original bodies, the European Economic Community, the European Atomic Energy Community and the European Coal and Steel Community, to twenty seven members in 2007 with a population of 490 million and a Gdp of $14.45 trillion a year. In comparison, the United States had a population of 300 million and a Gdp of $13.86 trillion in 2007. The European Union is a full-fledged economic superpower on the road to becoming a military superpower. When the foreign and defense policies of the member nations are able to be coordinated, an All-European army could very well replace Nato. This does not mean that the United States and Europe will no longer be allies. In final analysis, the interests of Europe and the United States are more complementary than contradictory. Even in France, where public opinion of the United States is lower than in most European countries, 61% of the French have a favorable opinion of America[14]. It is only natural that Europe assert itself in global terms much more than in the past when it becomes a military superpower.

Asia

The United States fought two wars in the first half of the XXth Century to redress the balance of power in Europe and to prevent the domination of Europe by any one nation. By 1945, no nation in Western or Central Europe was capable of dominating any other nation of that region. All potential threats to Western and Central Europe came from the outside. Between 1941-1976, the United States fought three wars in Asia: with Japan, with North Korea and with North Vietnam. But at the end of these wars, the same could not be said of the balance of power in Asia as was said about the balance of power in Europe after World War II.

When one looks at the economic and ethnic map of Asia, it is far more diverse than Europe. Japan, a major industrial nation has a Gdp larger than that of any single European country[15]. South Korea

[13] *Idem*, p. 237.

[14] *Ibidem*.

[15] Pyle Kenneth B., *Japan's Historic Change of Course*, in «Current History», vol. 105, n. 3, 2006.

and Singapore have an economic and technological capacity of advanced industrial States. Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand are growing at a favorable rate and India with a greater potential than any of the countries so far mentioned in this paragraph is still behind. It is unlikely that India will become an economic and military power in the first quarter of the XXIst Century, but it will become an economic and military superpower in the second quarter of this century provided that human civilization survives. China, with a population of 1.3 billion which will soon reach 1.5 billion and whose astronomical rate of economic growth and industrial potential have surpassed all previous estimates, will undoubtedly be an economic and military superpower in less than one decade[16].

The geopolitical situation in Asia could not be more different from that of Europe. The nations of Asia are not economically or politically united. The nations of Asia see different countries as their potential enemy. Some see China as their potential enemy; others see Japan as the country which could most likely become aggressive; and still others see Russia as the potential aggressor. India and Pakistan see each other as political and military foes although they trade with each other.

According to Henry Kissinger: «A hostile Asian bloc combining the most populous nations of the world and vast resources with some of the most industrious peoples would be incompatible with the American national interest. For this reason, America must retain a presence in Asia, and its geopolitical objective must remain to prevent Asia's coalescence into an unfriendly bloc»[17].

Kissinger goes on to say that the United States must play the same role in Asia that Great Britain played in Europe for four centuries, the role of balancer of power in Asia. It must resist the effort of any nation to dominate Asia and foster good relations with all Asian nations[18].

Between 1949-1971, the United States and China were bitter enemies solely for ideological reasons, while their national interests in Asia were at the same time complementary not contradictory. They fought each other in Korea strictly for reasons of ideology. On the other hand the national interests of the Soviet Union and China were not complementary between 1949 and the late 1960s, but the conflict

[16] Lampton David M., *The Faces of Chines Power*, in «Foreign Affairs», vol. 86, n. 1, 2007.

[17] Kissinger Henry, *Does america Need a Foreign Policy?*, New York, Simon and Schuster, 2001, p. 12.

[18] *Idem*, p. 135.

was sublimated by ideology. However, starting in the late 1960s, the two communist nations became bitter ideological enemies and, at that point, the conflict of national interests between the two communist giants surfaced.

During the years 1971-1972, Us President Richard M. Nixon opened the door to better relations with China. The warming of relations between the two nations was based on the Soviet threat of hegemony in Asia, an attempt to prevent the Soviet Union from upsetting the balance of power in Asia. The fall of communism in the Soviet Union, its breakup into fifteen independent Republics and the elimination of Russia as a superpower completely changed the geopolitical situation in Asia just as it did in Europe. There was no balance of power in Asia in the decade following the breakup of the Soviet Union since the United States was the sole superpower. Now that China is on the road to becoming an economic and military superpower, the balance of power in Asia is slowly being restored. But China is in no position to challenge the United States militarily and the United States has not given China cause to do so. China will not go to war over Taiwan unless the government of that country declares Taiwan's independence from China. President George W. Bush has already said that if such a scenario ever arises, the United States will not defend Taiwan since it would violate the foreign policy of every President of the United States starting with President Franklin Roosevelt. Every President has supported a one China policy since 1943 and has recognized Taiwan as part of China. Even the Nationalists on the island of Taiwan, who bitterly fought the Communists for four years between 1945-1949 and who lost and escaped to the island of Taiwan, oppose any attempt by the government of Taiwan to declare its independence from China. Therefore, Us foreign policy in Asia dictates maintaining the territorial integrity of China and since China does not challenge the governments of other nations on ideological grounds, any future confrontation between the United States and China will have nationalism not communism at its roots.

The cornerstone of Us foreign policy in Asia is to contain China. In so doing, Washington tightened its alliance with Japan, South Korea and Australia beginning in the year 2000 and declared Thailand and the Philippines to be major non-Nato allies[19]. Since the United States will not be able to contain China in Asia by itself for very much longer, it is encouraging the emergence of new power centers in Asia.

[19] TWINING DANIEL, *America's Grand Design in Asia*, in «Washington Quarterly», vol. 30, n. 3, 2007, p. 79.

The United States is also encouraging the rise of Japan as a military power again in order that Japan may assume the responsibilities as a guarantor of security in the Asian-Pacific region. Us Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage has called upon Japan to revise its interpretation of article IX of its constitution which forbids Japanese participation in collective self-defense and the former Secretary of State Colin Powell implied that Japan should even repeal article IX[20].

Washington has also been encouraging Japan to move beyond its bilateral alliance with the United States and cooperate militarily with other Asian democracies. In 2006, Japan signed a strategic global partnership with India, which in the future could lead to a military alliance between Japan and India. Japan and Australia signed a bilateral military alliance in 2007. This was the first bilateral military alliance that Japan has signed with any nation other than the United States since 1945. At the same time, the United States is cultivating India as a new center of power in Asia. India like Japan is a representative democracy. The United States has transferred military technology to India as well as civil nuclear energy, trade and investment science, education and agriculture. India will be an important center of power within Asia in the next 15-20 years and a major player in Asia.

Indonesia is the 4th most populous country in the world and an important emerging power. Indonesia is emerging from a decade of turmoil both domestic and international and is building democracy after decades of dictatorship. The United States is giving military assistance to Indonesia while not seeking an alliance with that country. It is seeking to build up Indonesia as a strong and independent power to balance the rising power of China.

Since 1995, Washington has been normalizing relations with Hanoi in an attempt to build up a strong and independent Vietnam to balance the rising power of China. The United States is even building a military relationship with Vietnam, while not courting Vietnam as a military ally. Us warships have visited Vietnamese ports, Vietnamese officers are undergoing training in the United States, and Washington is encouraging economic growth and military modernization[21]. The government of Vietnam maintains an economic and political system similar to that of China, but the two countries are not close. Hanoi believes that China does not want a strong and independent Vietnam and has urged Washington to contest China's influence more vigorously[22]. The

[20] *Idem*, p. 80.

[21] *Idem*, p. 86.

[22] BURGHARDT RAYMOND, *Us-Vietnam Discreet Friendship under China's Shadow*, in «Yale Global Outline», November 22, 2005, p. 6546.

leaders of Vietnam acknowledge that the United States plays an indispensable role in ensuring regional stability in Asia through its security commitments.

China in turn fears encirclement with the rise of Japan as a military power, and a possible military alliance between Japan, India and the United States. While the United States is occupied in Iraq and in Afghanistan, China is seeking better relations with all of its neighbors, especially with the nations of Southeast Asia. It has sought to exclude the United States from regional forums such as the East Asian summits and has also tried to pry loose the bonds between the United States on the one hand and Thailand and the Philippines on the other.

China is also pre-occupied with increasing its influence in the western hemisphere from Canada to Cuba, to Venezuela and to Brazil. In Africa, it is making major strategic investments in the financial sector while securing energy supplies. Brazil is shipping iron ore, timber, zinc, beef, milk and soybeans to China and China is investing in Brazil's hydroelectric dams, steel mills and shoe factories.

Resource rich third world countries like Brazil, India, Indonesia and the countries between Morocco and Iran are sometimes referred to as second world countries now that the former second world countries of East-Central Europe have joined the first world in Nato and the Eu. Russia, which dominated the Soviet Union between 1921-1991, remains the only original second world country. It is the most industrialized nation of the second world, rich in raw materials with a population as educated as that of any first world nation.

Russia and China

Russia's policy toward China under Presidents Yeltsin and Putin has been driven by pragmatic considerations. In the late 1960s, the two countries became bitter ideological foes and at that point their national interests which were not complementary collided. Relations between the Soviet Union and India, which had been good for many years, became even better, and both countries signed a Treaty of Friendship. At the same time, relations between India and Pakistan, the latter which was a military ally of the United States in Seato, became worse and relations between Pakistan and China improved markedly. Pakistan encouraged a rapprochement between China and the United States which took place in the early 1970s. Now that relations between India and the United States have improved and relations between Pakistan and the United States have somewhat deteriorated, China and Russia have moved closer together.

Russia is not only a European country, it is an Asian country as well. In 1881, after Russian forces defeated the Turkmens in their quest to conquer Central Asia, Fyodor Dostoevsky said: «In our com-

ing destiny, perhaps it is precisely Asia that represents our way out [...] In Europe we were hangers-on and slaves, whereas in Asia, we shall go as masters»[23]. Both Presidents Yeltsin and Jiang Zemin spoke of a 'strategic partnership' between Russia and China in 1996. This partnership began to take on considerable weight after the year 2000, when political and economic cooperation between the two countries deepened.

President Putin on a trip to Asia in the year 2000 spoke of Russia as both a European and an Asian country. For Russia, China is an important country with which it shares the biggest border in the world. Both Yeltsin and Putin tried to improve ties with China as an alternative to a more pro-western foreign policy, while having no desire to establish an alliance with Beijing. But Moscow and Beijing have a troubled history with occasional conflict along their border. In addition, Russia is holding some territory in the Far East which China considers to be its own. Skeptics in the West point out that alliance between Russia and China has been tried in the past, but that it has not always succeeded. On the other hand, Russia and China both opposed the response of the United States to the war in Kossovo in 1999 and the war in Iraq in 2003. China and Russia have been cooperating in the Security Council of the United Nations on a number of issues. The Chinese agree with the Russians on sanctions on Iran and the *status* of Kossovo. Russia and China vetoed a Security Council resolution regarding sanctions against Burma[24]. China has purchased more weapons from Russia in the past fifteen years than any other country.

Russia opposed the expansion of Nato to include her former satellites in East-Central Europe and the three Baltic Republics; it opposed the withdrawal of the United States from the Abm Treaty and America's continual development of Sdi. On the other hand, President Putin accepted the United States' invasion of Afghanistan as a response to the World Trade Center disaster, but eventually began to feel that he received little in return for his moral support.

China is expanding its influence in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, all former Republics of the Soviet Union which have good relations with Russia. However Russia realizes that China's economic influence in Central Asia is a natural outgrowth of geography[25], and that Chinese-Russian relations are better than they have been since the early 1960s.

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[23] KUCHINS ANDREW, *Russia and China: the Ambivalent Embrace*, in «Current History», vol. 107, n. 702, 2007, p. 321.

[24] *Idem*, p. 324.

[25] *Idem*, p. 325.

Russian public opinion about China is positive, but it is negative about the United States. However, although 56% of the Russian population view China as a strategic partner or an ally, 62% view Chinese economic presence in Russia as negative[26]. There are many Chinese companies and Chinese workers in Russia which a vast majority of Russians consider dangerous. On the other hand, most Russians view China as a strategic partner or an ally in order to contain the United States. If the United States were to invade Iran, this would push Russia and China closer together. Russia's preferred position is to improve ties with China as a leverage in dealing with the West.

Conclusion

Let us turn the clock ahead to the year 2033. The world is a very different place from the world of today. Oil, while still an important natural resource, is no longer as important as it was twenty or twenty-five years ago. Automobiles run on hydrogen and electricity. Many homes are heated by solar power and most industries have gone nuclear. Oil producing nations are still rich but not as rich as they were in the past. Many countries have nuclear weapons but different countries have different levels of delivery systems.

The world is no longer unipolar or bipolar. There are several players on the world stage which are acknowledged as powers: the European Union, China, the United States, India, Indonesia, Brazil and perhaps Russia. There are several second rank powers as well such as Japan, Iran, Korea, Vietnam and Pakistan. A decade ago, the oppressive totalitarian regime of North Korea under pressure from world powers including China finally gave up and accepted unification with South Korea. North Korea was a failed State. Massive starvation and pressure from all of the world's powers forced the leaders of this oppressive regime to finally relinquish power and accept a bailout in return for unification with South Korea.

The Gdp of the European Union is nearly double that of the United States. China overtook the United States in terms of its Gdp a decade ago and India's Gdp is poised to overtake that of the United States in the near future. The Gdp of Indonesia and Brazil lag behind but they too are growing at a more rapid rate than the United States.

Although the United States is still an economic and military power, it is no longer the leading power of the world. The dollar has regained some of its strength, but the euro replaced the dollar as the leading reserve currency of the world more than twenty years ago,

[26] *Idem*, p. 326.

and the Chinese yuan is also much stronger than the dollar. All members of the Eu including the United Kingdom use the euro. The reduction of the economic strength of the United States has had an impact on its *status* as a military power. Us military power has been reduced in proportion to its economic power. The leaders of the United States finally accepted reality and no longer engage in costly unilateral military adventures abroad or in Un sponsored military actions; whereby the United States provides 80% of the armed forces and military hardware and the rest of the world provides 20%. The United States is an active participant in world affairs but in proportion to its economic strength. The Atlantic Alliance still exists linking the United States and Canada with the Eu, but Nato has been dissolved and replaced by an integrated European army.

The future of Russia is very hard to predict in the year 2008. Its economy is growing at a very rapid pace, from a meager $200 billion in 1999 to $987 billion in 2007. Russia's Gdp will surpass $1 trillion in 2008[27]. Although the government of Ukraine wants that country to join Nato and the Eu, a majority of Ukrainians are opposed to joining both. Most Ukrainians, especially those in the Eastern part of the country gravitate more toward Russia. When one speaks of Russia, there are two scenarios. If the economy of Russia continues to grow at the current pace and the decline in the population reverses itself, many Russians who are now living in the former Republics of the Soviet Union will return to Mother Russia. If this scenario materializes, Ukraine and Belarus may well federate with Russia and the new federation will indeed be a world power. If, however, the Russian economy deteriorates, the population continues to drop and ethnic violence erupts again, a different scenario could arise whereby the country could break up into several independent States. In that case, European Russia would be forced to look westward and along with Belarus and Ukraine join the European Union, thereby fulfilling Charles de Gaulle's dream of a Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals. If the first scenario comes to pass, the future of all of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus looks bright and if the second scenario materializes, at least the future of European Russia, Ukraine and Belarus looks bright.

One thing seems certain. The balance of power in 2033 will be very different from the balance of power today. There will be several major powers in the world just as there were between 1648-1939 and, as mentioned above, the greater the number of players (powers), the greater the number of possible combinations of powers in alliance. Thus, the balance of power in the world will once again become flexible.

[27] *Idem*, p. 323.