

Moving into a Post-Western World

The “unipolar moment” that followed the Cold War was expected to start an era.¹ Not only was the preponderance of U.S. power beyond question, the facts of that preponderance appeared to exceed the reach of any competitor. America’s superior capabilities (military, but also economic and institutional) that no other country could match or approximate *in toto*, its global interests which no other power could share in full, and its universal saliency confirmed that the United States was the only country with all the assets needed to act decisively wherever it chose to be involved.² What was missing, however, was a purpose—a national will to enforce a strategy of preponderance that would satisfy U.S. interests and values without offending those of its allies and friends. That purpose was unleashed after the horrific events of September 11, 2001. Now, however, the moment is over, long before any era had the time to get started.

Such a turn of events is not surprising. Unipolar systems have been historically rare and geographically confined, at most geostrategic interludes during which weaker nations combined to entangle Gulliver with a thousand strings. What is surprising, though, is not only how quickly this most recent moment ended, but also how quickly a consensus has emerged about an inevitable and irreversible shift of power away from the United States and the West.³ Moving out of this consensual bandwagon, the challenge is to think about the surprises and discontinuities ahead. In the 20th century, the post-Europe world was not about the rise of U.S. power, but about the collapse of everyone else. In the 21st century, the post-Western world, should it be

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confirmed, need not be about the decline of Western powers, including the United States, but about the ascendancy of everyone else.⁴

Lacking regulations, whether tacit or explicit, a world of several or many powers is likely to be messy, at least for a while, and even dangerous. Attempting to reassert U.S. preponderance and Western dominance may not be desirable, even if it were feasible, but the ability of any other power to achieve preponderance over the United States and the West will not be feasible either, even if it

were deemed desirable. A return to unipolar conditions is thus unlikely, but so is a return to bipolar conditions, notwithstanding repeated forecasts of China as America's principal rival. Finally, absent a major discontinuity such as the use of nuclear weapons in a regional conflict, a "concert" remotely comparable to what emerged in Europe after 1815 is also improbable, as neither the goals nor the members of any such concert would be readily identifiable, even if limited to democratic states.

Without a state able and willing to assert its preponderance, or share it with a co-partner or even a rival, unipolarity has given way to de facto zero-polarity, which has also been called "non-polarity" or "apolarity."⁵ In an era of globalization, there is a sense of interdependence which makes interests converge, and translates into a sort of "inter-polarity" which relies on a collective "we" to achieve these interests.⁶ Regardless of what the new world structure is called, order looks elusive. Picking allies, making friends, containing adversaries, and deterring conflicts promises to be an unclear, ambiguous, and delicate process.

A Euro-Atlantic Axis of Stability

The reported decline of U.S. power was exaggerated some 30 years ago, when the outcome of the Cold War was still in question after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and in the midst of the hostage crisis in Iran. In 1991, the Soviet Union collapsed "in a blink of an eye" and demonstrated that it was not even a rival after all.⁷ The days when a country like Prussia or even Soviet Russia could rise to be a great or a superpower before its economy took off, or the days when a minimally-sized and poorly-resourced Britain or Japan could build an empire and be called imperial, are gone. The United States, unlike any other great power in the past, has demonstrated unsurpassed resilience and capacity to stay the course, renewing its capabilities seemingly at will.

Entering the 2010s, the United States still enjoys superiority over allies and adversaries alike—no other country can match the completeness of U.S. power, however defined—hard, soft, or smart—and however measured, aggregate or per capita.⁸ There are weaknesses and vulnerabilities, including a volatile public opinion, which reinforce a need for allies and partners that are not only willing but also capable given unprecedented fiscal pressures.⁹ Under such conditions, a U.S. strategy of preponderance is no longer achievable. But the facts of power should not be overlooked either, and a strategy of U.S. abstinence would not be desirable or even sustainable. This is not the time for the United States to step back from the world, and the U.S. role promises to remain pivotal if a measure of order is going to prevail over more chaos.

Over the past six decades, the European Union has become a “region-state” that supersedes its members on an ever-larger range of significant issues.¹⁰ Even now in the midst of its most serious institutional crisis since the 1957 Rome Treaties, the EU still offers a credible model of postmodern governance which favors soft security tools such as trade policy, economic and humanitarian aid, and public diplomacy over the traditional hard tools of military power. But for the 27 EU members to play a role in the world commensurate with the normative power of their Union, they must achieve an institutional finality compromised by spreading crises of financial solvency, economic prosperity, inter-state solidarity, and political leadership. Amidst this complex web of interlocked issues, the EU risks atrophying into a state of paralysis, a condition no less serious than rupture.¹¹ The paralysis—felt most of all from the bottom-up and shown from the top-down—challenges

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the idea that the EU is “inevitable” and even suggests that the impetus of the EU may be “reversible.” Both ideas are not the same. Reversibility weakens individual members—if already in, why not do less? Questioning the inevitability of the EU raises obstacles to further institutional initiatives—enough is enough, why do more? Thus, while the past 60 years made Europe a power in the world again, the next few years may determine whether Europe has the will and the potential to become a world power anew.

In the meantime, a post-America, post-Western world is characterized by a lack of political will and societal resilience more than a depletion of resources and fading relevance. On the European side of the Atlantic especially, the national consensus is fragile everywhere. There are coalition governments in countries that lack experience in multiparty politics, such as Germany and the United Kingdom, and there is a new populism fed by self-images that do not absorb imperial projects well. Modest and unevenly-shared economic growth

Is the fate of the West learning how to live frugally, age graciously, and retire peacefully?

frustrates an enduring culture of entitlements. Defense budgets are falling, and there is rising frustration with an abusive world. In short, anger is directed at the bigger rival because it is too big or too powerful, and impatience at the smaller neighbor because it is too small or too poor. Is learning how to live frugally, age graciously, and retire peacefully the fate of the West in a new post-Western world?

At the eastern end of Europe lies Russia, where enough residual military power was left from the Soviet days to substantiate claims of resurgence and justify some security concerns for neighboring states liberated from Soviet domination only recently, or for newly independent states that used to pose as so-called republics in the defunct Soviet empire. Russia is not “a European country like any other,”¹² but it is to remain a power in Europe. Russia is too big, too near, too nuclear, too well-endowed, and even too resentful and assertive to be ignored, let alone provoked.¹³ In August 2008, the short but brutal war in Georgia resurrected visions of Russia’s past—a specter worsened by Moscow’s ability to choke its energy-starved neighbors by interrupting supplies, increasing prices, or both. Whether Russia can sustain its bid for regional primacy and global influence, however, is doubtful. An inefficient and corrupt Russian state running out of people, energy resources, security space, and usable military capabilities may also be running out of time. In sum, rather than the assertive and domineering power it is sometimes portrayed to be, relative to Europe and the rest of the West, Russia is a *demandeur* state, and what it demands most is a willing and capable partner for the power it lacks and cannot regain without Western help.

A Geopolitical Troika in Asia

As an aggregate, China is an economic superpower—it is the second largest economy in the world by GDP, having passed Japan in the summer 2010 (and projected to surpass the United States by 2030 or earlier).¹⁴ But if measured in terms of per capita income, China ranked 133rd out of 229 countries in 2008. While the average standard of living in Shanghai approximates Portugal, one of the poorest EU-15 countries, in rural provinces it is near Rwanda.¹⁵ Predictably, even under conditions of sustained economic growth, China faces difficult societal disruptions along demographic (young-poor), regional (urban-rural), professional (white collar-labor), and gender lines, in addition to political issues of ideology and governance.¹⁶

In the meantime, as China's aggregate continues to grow, so does the geographic range of its vital interests helped by a cash diplomacy that no country has pursued as openly and effectively since post-1945 dollar-rich America. China's cash diplomacy now extends to Europe, where the Chinese government has promised to hoard the bonds of Greece, Portugal, and Spain, which their own EU partners no longer want. Its involvement also grows ever deeply in Latin America, where its trade grew tenfold between 2000 and 2007 and exceeded \$142 billion in 2008—about one-fifth that of the United States but growing at a faster rate, especially in Brazil and most of the other larger countries in the region.¹⁷

In most of the broader Pacific region, however, China's rise is cause for growing concern. From former U.S. enemies such as Vietnam to traditional allies such as Australia, most Asian countries now seem to fear a U.S. withdrawal which would leave them at the mercy of China's intimidating might, enticing money, and intrusive people. The spread of Chinese influence is also welcomed and feared in far-away regions where China finds the commodities it needs, such as in Nigeria, Sudan, or Venezuela, and where it aspires to achieve universal saliency such as in Brazil or South Africa. Closer to home, however, more than 10,000 miles of land borders with 14 different countries, including India, create considerable security pressures and demands on the Chinese government. The situation has consequences for China's bilateral great power relations—with Russia in Central Asia; with the United States and Europe in Iran, Afghanistan, as well as North Korea; with India over Pakistan and Sri Lanka; and with Japan over a brutal past that continues to linger.

India is the third largest economy in Asia and the center of world economic growth after China. Whether and how the gap between the Indian and Chinese economies can be closed will test the merits of a democracy relative to those of a one-party state. While India's resilience was confirmed with its impressive recovery from the great recession of 2008–2010, its geopolitical position in Asia is dangerous and demanding.¹⁸ Since 1947, it has waged armed conflicts in nearby Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives. When China became a nuclear power shortly after it humiliated India in the 1962 war between the two countries, India also gradually chose to go nuclear—a decision it might have come to regret when an unstable Pakistan became nuclear as well in 1998. Instabilities in three other neighbors (Myanmar, Nepal, and Sri Lanka) might filter into India, whose own ethnic and linguistic diversity (including 14 official languages and numerous dialects) was initially designed to manage the country's fundamental heterogeneity, but now feeds emotive demands for statehood in areas said to have been marginalized by uneven economic growth.¹⁹ The rising expectations of an immense populace which is mostly young—70 percent below the age of 35, and half under the age of 20—and counts 300 million citizens living on a dollar a day, as well as complex issues of national temperament and

leadership, are conducive to vulnerabilities that undermine predictions of India's "limitless potential" and "irreversible" future as a global "center of influence" in the early part of the 21st century.²⁰

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In short, Asia's two main emerging geostrategic powers for the post-Western world have hardly emerged yet—as President Obama asserted when addressing the Indian Parliament in November 2010. On the whole, these remain regional powers, clearly united in their shared objections to continued U.S. or Western primacy, occasionally responsive to the tactical convenience of short-lived alignments on a global issue, and periodically tempted to

assert dominance over weaker neighbors with harsh but meaningless discourse or even short-lived and unsuccessful displays of old-fashioned gunboat diplomacy.

Indeed, Japan—the third member of Asia's geopolitical troika and until mid-2010 still the second largest economy in the world—is a reminder that changes in world power are slow and unpredictable. Only 20 years ago, Japan was heralded as the most obvious newcomer in an emerging post-American and post-Soviet power structure. Instead, the evidence accumulated since the Cold War appears to have turned Japan into an economic afterthought and a geopolitical footnote compared to its bigger neighbors in Asia.²¹ During this 20-year period, Japan's economy grew at the miniscule rate of 1.1 percent a year, the total value of its stock market collapsed by an estimated 75 percent in real terms, and its general government net and gross debt vaulted from 13 and 68 percent of GDP, respectively, in 1991 to 115 and 227 percent, respectively, in 2010. With the recession of 2008, Japan's economy declined by 5.2 percent in 2009—a condition that led to the end of 50 years of uninterrupted rule by the Liberal Democrats (LDP) and opened an uncharted political course for Japan.

Nonetheless, a more active role for a militarily-revitalized Japan is eminently desirable, not only to reduce the influence of China, which the Japanese government now views increasingly as its central security threat, but also to help control an erratic and even irrational but nuclear North Korea. Whether Japan can step up on regional issues will determine its place not only in Asia relative to its larger neighbors, but also as a reliable member of a Western axis of stability.

New Influentials

New influentials arise because of their relevance, aspirations, capabilities, potential, and vulnerabilities. In the 1970s, several such states flexed their influence with an unprecedented manipulation of energy supplies and prices.

The Nixon administration hoped to use some of these states—including Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Nigeria—as regional viceroys for a world order that would be less reliant on dwindling U.S. power, post-Vietnam and post-Watergate. Now, the great recession of 2008–2010 has exposed the fragility of the developed economies and shown the dynamism and resilience of developing economies that used to be seen as dependent on their stronger partners.

Brazil is emerging as a leader of this historically broad-based and diverse group of new influentials. In South America, a region that has never mattered more to the United States than it does now, and was never opened to the rest of the world as much as it is now, Brazil is a regional hegemon, a state that surpasses the capabilities, influence, and reach of any immediate neighbor.²² Brazil's defense spending, which grew from \$13.6 billion in 2006 to \$33.1 billion in 2010, now exceeds total defense spending for all of the rest of Latin America.²³ Having achieved superiority with the benign consent of its neighbors, Brazil stands as a counter-weight for a cluster of self-styled, post-Castro revolutionary countries led by Hugo Chavez's Venezuela, but it is also a competitive counterpart to the post-Cold War power of the United States. Brazil enjoys quasi-parity with the likes of Russia, India, and China at G-20 summits when engaged in a broad recasting of the Breton Woods monetary system, at global summits when negotiating UN-sponsored treaties on climate change, or when standing up to Euro-Atlantic pressures at WTO-managed trade negotiations. The same thing happens in small groupings such as the so-called BRIC or BASIC groups. These actions show Brazil assuming center stage on global issues which exceed the country's regional interests and diplomatic reach, and which even the more mature powers dare not assume. Consider, for example, Brazil's co-offer of mediation (with Turkey) on Iran in the spring of 2010. Later, in the fall, Brazil gave unilateral diplomatic recognition of Palestine as an independent state within its 1967 borders; this followed Uruguay and was soon embraced by five other countries in the region.

Turkey also stands out as an incomplete but rising power with expectations of regional influence and global reach. It is a big and heavily populated Muslim country in an affluent and aging Europe, but also a poor European country situated between an unstable Middle East and the unsettled former Soviet empire. Turkey's strategic depth makes it a key to the West's ability to manage its relations with Islam.²⁴ That is what makes Turkey's bid for EU membership vitally important, irrespective of the difficulties it raises for the EU and many of its members. Turkey is a country of influence not only to Europe and the EU, but also to the United States and NATO. It is geopolitically linked to civil clashes in Iraq, including the making of a virtual state of Kurdistan, to the clash over Iran's nuclear aspirations and regional ambitions, and to Russia over instabilities in

Central Asia. “Losing” Turkey would diminish Europe and weaken the West immeasurably, but it would also weaken a vital region.

There are many other such countries that also rely on multiple capabilities—might, money, resources, position, and people—to bid for an influence which imperial and structural rigidities denied them during and before the past century (like Indonesia and South Africa, for example, which both overcame their haunting Cold War past of racial intolerance and democratic subversion). These new or emerging poles of influence expand the scope of the geopolitical transition. Gone is the time when great powers were “measured” with specific benchmarks such as an explicit percentage of total military resources or global naval capabilities, the size of land armies, or the capacity for national mobilization.²⁵ Gone too is the time when a part of the world could readily be dismissed because it was too far, too weak, too small, or too poor—pivot states that could be manipulated with some quick regime change, or failing states that geography isolated from any significant impact on or beyond their immediate neighborhood. Now, the abolition of geographic space and historical time has moved the over there of yesteryear over here.

Old Allies and New Friends

Accommodating this large cluster of emerging world powers, and an unusually large group of other states of rising influence, all with incompatible historical cultures and clashing conceptions of their place in the world, is a pressing and daunting challenge.²⁶ There are new friends to make, but there are also old partners to keep and rivals to remember. While much remains to be learned about what such a world might look like, at least three conclusions have already emerged to help settle into, and even construct order in, this post-Western world.

First, the United States and the states of Europe remain the least dispensable bilateral relationship in the world. Yet, however necessary the transatlantic partnership is, the framework it provides is too narrow to be sufficient for the new world order.

Once upon a time, 40 years ago, there was a “Chinamerica” that could (and arguably did) change the course of the Cold War, but there is no such prospect today.²⁷ Like Britain in the 1940s, when it was viewed as the co-partner of choice by the United States, Japan in the 1970s, when it was the centerpiece of a Trilateral Commission for an increasingly fluid bipolar order, and Germany in the 1990s, which President George H. W. Bush hoped to promote to “co-leadership” of the West, China’s strategic intimacy with the United States is unlikely.

Sustaining an ever closer Euro-Atlantic community of compatible interests, shared goals, overlapping values, and complementary capabilities remains a more

convincing option. If not, then who else? Already, the North Atlantic area combines the 34 members of the EU and NATO (including 21 European countries in both institutions).²⁸ The foundation of such a de facto Euro-Atlantic G-2 is economic, with total commercial sales of more than \$4 trillion a year and a shared labor pool which provides more than 14 million good jobs in mutually “on-shored” employment on both sides of the Atlantic.²⁹ Driven by unsurpassed flows of investment, the combined commercial activities of the United States and the 27 EU states is greater than the GDP of most nations. By comparison, U.S. or EU relations with China, India, and all the emerging economies of Asia are no more than speculation.

Equally central to the significance of the Euro-Atlantic relationship is the public support it enjoys irrespective of the crises that seem to threaten it periodically. A relatively small percentage of Americans still take the countries of Europe seriously, but a large majority of them nevertheless view the EU as a desirable force for leadership in world affairs. No European country except the United Kingdom is deemed “very important” by much more than one-fourth of all Americans, but an overwhelming majority (84 percent) predict approvingly that the EU will exert strong leadership in the future, with 72 percent finding this to be the case now. For Europeans, the United States has returned to full legitimacy since Obama became arguably the first U.S. president they liked immediately upon his election. More than half (55 percent) of the EU publics found U.S. world leadership desirable, as opposed to slightly more than one-third during the previous two years.³⁰

But no matter how indispensable the United States and the states of Europe may be to each other, they are no longer sufficient for the multitude of challenges they face. While moving into a post-Western world, it is just no longer enough to develop common Euro-Atlantic policies on a global issue to resolve or defuse it. The Middle East, a region absolutely vital to all,

is a case study in conditional followership—neither China nor India nor Russia wishes to replace U.S. power, but even when accommodating its leadership, all expect the United States to make room for their interests in the region.³¹ Stalled or unproductive negotiations over Iran, climate change, or global trade are other examples where U.S. leadership and Euro-Atlantic solidarity are indispensable and thus necessary, but not decisive or sufficient.

As a result, an alliance of democratic nations might eventually expand NATO to global partners from Asia, including Japan, though not now. Over time, too, a tri-continental “Atlantic” grouping might also reach out to other

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Atlantic states in the south, from Brazil to Argentina to Mexico, and from Nigeria to South Africa to Morocco. Meantime, however and in a more traditional sense, the United States and its Western partners show their predilection for a democratic and secular India as a more attractive, more willing, and ultimately more capable third partner than a much smaller Japan, an ever-hopeful Russia, or an increasingly assertive China. As another

version of the trilateral approach envisioned with Japan 40 years ago, this would have to become more than the “Commission” invoked then—akin instead to the *Dreikaiserbund* that Bismarck built by expanding to the Russian empire Germany’s natural alliance with the fading Habsburg Empire, thus isolating France and keeping Britain at bay. For this democratic entente between North America, Europe, and India (cum Japan) to emerge, however, it will be necessary for the United States and the EU to develop a closer policy toward India, which promises to be all the more demanding as the larger European countries continue to disagree on a common EU foreign policy, and India considers the terms of its future engagement with the West.

Second, China and India are more interested in the United States and Europe than in each other. Neither country holds a “card” that it can effectively play with the other, or even with others, against the West.

There is no “Chindia” in sight, meaning a gigantic new Asian partnership between China and India. Both countries admittedly utilize international institutions to further their national interests. They worked together during the Doha round of trade negotiations and both have been keys to failure (in Copenhagen in December 2009) and success (in Cancun one year later) in the UN-sponsored climate change negotiations. Both have been obstacles to sanctions against Iran.

Besides their similarities (size and population) and proximity—as well as phenomenal rates of economic growth—these two countries remain political adversaries, economic rivals, and security risks. The characteristics they share often tend to be adversarial, as is the case of India’s interest in a permanent seat at the UN Security Council, about which the Chinese remain eloquently silent. Trade does not say it all, but it does say a great deal. Although bilateral trade between China and India has grown significantly since 2002, it still remains much below the \$60 billion that had been scheduled for 2010 (about \$38 billion in 2009), or even the \$100 billion recently targeted for 2015—as compared to China’s trade with the EU (\$360 billion in 2009) and the United States (about

\$310 billion).³² Nor does either China or India show much interest in a privileged trade partnership with Russia, even for energy imports. Both countries would rather satisfy their energy needs elsewhere, which itself is a significant indicator of each Asian country's ambivalence toward their large but historically compromised Eurasian neighbor.

Perceptions also point to each nation's objections to making the other its interlocutor of choice. In 2006, 76 percent of Indians believed that their country's importance will move visibly ahead of China (and also of the United States) by 2020. This figure exceeded China's perception of its own status relative to the United States, which China viewed as its only possible competitor by that year, while dismissing India.³³ In 2009, the so-called Obama bounce was not noticeable in China, but it produced a 76 percent pro-American sentiment in India, up from 36 percent in 2006. In contrast, only 46 percent of Indians see China favorably, according to the 2009 Pew Global Attitudes Survey, down from 56 percent in 2005. Conversely, in a 2010 survey, China's image in India turned negative (30 percent positive to 38 percent negative), with many more respondents than three years earlier.

China's ascendancy does not raise demographic or even economic risks for India (it does for Russia), but it is cause for India's security concerns. China's and India's visions of a regional order are not compatible because of their different perceptions of the U.S. role in and beyond Asia, nor do they have mutually acceptable views of their respective roles and security needs in a multipolar world order. Each fears the other's hegemonic impulse, with India arguably more affected as China tends to dismiss India's capacity to live up to its potential.

Although the two countries need stability for their development, they are not evenly vulnerable to instabilities in their respective regions of primary interest and influence. The spillovers of civil disorders or worse in a failing Pakistan, and of U.S. failure in Afghanistan, are immediate concerns for India. By comparison, China can remain relatively complacent about both. The war in Afghanistan can be seen in Beijing as a diversion of U.S. power and a loss of U.S. prestige in the region, while Pakistan is a rapacious consumer of New Delhi's resources and leadership. India's security concerns include Pakistan's drift toward China as its primary supplier of military hardware and nuclear technology conducive to dual uses, as well as an old-standing Chinese ambition to develop Pakistan as a hub for markets and production centers in the Middle East and Africa.³⁴ Finally, just as with Japan, China has territorial issues with India; it has claims on the North-Eastern Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh, a territorial piece of Uttar Pradesh, the largest Indian state with a population twice that of Germany.

Third, good relations between Russia and China do not pose a serious threat to the West, and prospects of an upgrade in Russia's relations with India are also bleak. Although Russia is not a Western power, its future is with the West.

Sino-Russian relations have never been better. There is no longer any territorial dispute along the 2,600-mile border between the two countries. Both countries

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embrace a strong and assertive state that lacks sensitivity to human rights, an authoritarian capitalism that invites (or at least tolerates) corruptive practices, and an odd mixture of mistrust of, reliance on, and attraction to the West. Russia and especially China are prudent revisionist powers. They both resent their recent past, and neither can identify another

available like-minded partner. Watching the Soviet collapse in the 1980s taught China what to do (effective economic reforms prior to any semblance of political perestroika), which they have done rather well ever since. Watching the rise of China in the 1990s served as a model for Russia (prioritize internal reforms with external reassurances), which three Russian presidents have clearly not done as effectively as their Chinese counterparts.

For a moment after the Cold War, both countries appeared to envision a strategic partnership that alarmed the West and some of China's neighbors.³⁵ It could have linked Russia's bid for primacy in Europe and China's bid for primacy in Asia, with a decisive impact on the global influence of both. Although a few guidelines for such a partnership were met—including a shared rejection of U.S. (and Western) preponderance and a broad stake in new multilateral approaches to resolving global governance issues—the prospects for it to develop further are dim, even on grounds of convenience or expediency. Particularly in energy-rich Central Asia, Russia is concerned about China's growing influence, including trade levels that exceed half of China's trade with India (nearly \$39 billion in 2008). And Russia would be no less concerned than the United States over a surge of Chinese influence in Europe.

China's main threat to Russia is not military, however, given Russia's overwhelming superiority in strategic capabilities that can effectively deter China's conventional dominance. Nor is the threat economic, as Russia's interest is centered on broader relations with, and access to, Western markets, money, and technologies. Rather, Russia remains most directly exposed to the 110 million Chinese massed next to its vast, resource-rich but nearly deserted Far Eastern Federal District (6.6 million people), where the Soviet Union used to deploy as many as 40 divisions. Although the chances of something happening there are low at this time, the rise of China makes the case increasingly real and gradually more urgent.

More than any of the other main bidders for global influence or even primacy, Russia needs a privileged or strategic partner. Wherever it turns, there is much potential for trouble: to the east, with a populous China next to Russia's least populated territories; to the south, with Muslim post-Soviet republics open to Islamic influence, the consequences of which are already bitterly felt in Chechnya; and to the west, where earlier NATO enlargement and ongoing EU enlargement have moved deeply into Russia's former security zones and economic space. That is much for one state alone to manage, let alone a state that is lacking in competence, organization, and even sustainable capabilities. With the West envisioned as a convenient counterweight to a rising China, the Russian goal is to align with the West rather than to confront it. In the same spirit, Moscow would rather have the United States stay in Europe, helping keep Europe free of its past nationalist demons, rather than restore a past that has not served Russia well.

Under Construction: A Post-Western Global Order

In paving the way for the future, history stutters—its poor record of predictability incites prudence about the multiplicity of futures ahead. “God does not play dice,” Einstein reportedly noted, which means that the rise and fall of great powers in the games of *grandes affaires* does not even itself out over extended periods of time, as would happen statistically with other games. States do tend to throw dice, however, with little capacity to predict how the throw will turn out: to expedite primacy or stall decline, to achieve affluence or escape austerity, compel regime change or resist it, win a war without ending it or end it before winning it, and more, much more.

In neither of the past two centuries did the need for a new world order require global assembly. For the better after 1815 and for the worse after 1919, the world was restored rather than recast, and old formulas of balance and *raison d'état* were revised rather than thought anew. That, however, is not the case in the 2010s, once again fated to be the decisive decade for a new century, like the 1910s and 1810s were before. There now is a pressing need for a new structural design to accommodate the new cast of characters.

For the United States especially, it is not an easy undertaking to move into a new world that is difficult to like and even more difficult to grasp. After the Cold War, there was some charm and even comfort during the short moment of unipolarity, when power talked and did not demand too much listening. In a unipolar world, allies are known (and sought) for their willingness, and adversaries are recognized (and defeated) for their capabilities; there is little need for diplomacy, and consensus is asserted rather than negotiated. By comparison, the emerging world order now depends on a geopolitical

cartography that is fraught with perplexities and contradictions—precisely the sort of world that the Founding Fathers warned against when they urged that the new republic be kept away from, and free of, entangling alliances.³⁶

Yet, there is little that is intrinsically wrong, generally threatening, or specifically harmful in this cartography. By comparison, the all-American map of unipolarity looked simple but proved exhausting, and the bipolar map of the Cold War was stable but remained dangerous. Only the next few years will tell whether a new generation of political leaders in the United States, as well as in Europe, will be able to grasp the enormity of what their predecessors achieved during the past century for what Dean Acheson defined as “half the world,”³⁷ and how much can still be done in the 21st century for the other half.

Notes

1. Charles Krauthammer, “The Unipolar Moment,” *Foreign Affairs* 70, no. 1 (1990/91): pp. 23–33. After 2001, Krauthammer envisioned a “unipolar era” of “thirty to forty years”; see Krauthammer, “The Unipolar Moment Revisited,” *The National Interest* 70 (Winter 2002–2003): p. 17. Krauthammer’s most incisive critic was Christopher Layne, “The Unipolar Illusion: Why New Great Powers Will Rise,” *International Security* 17, no. 4 (Spring 1993): pp. 5–51. Layne, too, revised his conclusions when early U.S. successes in Afghanistan and Iraq seemed to delay the rise of new powers; see Layne, “The Unipolar Illusion Revisited,” *International Security* 31, no. 2 (Fall 2006): pp. 7–41.
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