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AMERICA'S CHANGING STRATEGIC INTERESTS

Dynamism is the key word in planning strategic options. As circumstances change strategies must alter accordingly in order to be effective. The end of the Cold War in 1990 and the dramatic changes in the international environment have forced world powers to review their past, analyze the present and decide upon the best course for the future in terms of choosing appropriate strategies. The issues that were critical before 1990 no longer appear to be as important today as different states particularly Big Powers sought to adjust to the changed scenario.

The purpose of the article is to try and analyze the changing interests of the United States in the post-Cold War era. However, in order to clarify this issue it would be useful to look back into the past and see how the United States has reacted to comparable changes in the international environment in the past. Then an attempt would be made to try and identify the major strategic interests of the US that have emerged in the geo-political realities of the post-Cold War world and ascertain the possible implication of these changes for the US military and other policies.

Evolution of the International System and US Strategy

There are strong threads of continuity which bind the old with the new and any study of the new cannot be made without studying the old. One can essentially identify four phases in the first two hundred years of US existence from 1780-1980 in terms of changes in the

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international system and the US strategic adaptation to them. In the first phase with the French Revolution dominating the European scene and with Europe continually at war, the US was deeply entangled in European affairs so as to warrant being termed as an European power. This was something which the US did not like but had little or no other option as it was then a minor power. This situation is succinctly expressed in the following extract from Jefferson's speech: "Were I to indulge my own theory, I should wish the US to stand with respect to Europe precisely on the footing of China."¹ In a similar vein, Richard Henry Lee supported "just wishes to be detached from European politics and European vices. But unfortunately Great Britain is upon our Northern quarter and Spain upon the Southern. We are therefore compelled to mix with their councils to be guarded against their ill designs."² The United States had to pursue a policy not of isolation which was impossible but of neutrality. American leaders quite explicitly held up Switzerland as their model. The principal American goals during this period were to defend American independence, territorial integrity and commerce in the North Atlantic and Mediterranean. To achieve these goals efforts were made to develop a strong militia system to guard against European incursions and a small but capable Navy to protect American shipping against the depredations of the British Navy, French privateers and the barbaric pirates. These military forces fought an undeclared war against France, the war of 1812 against Britain and engaged in various military actions against the Beys of North Africa.

The second phase began with the end of the Napoleonic threat to Europe and the rise of the Pax Britannia, a phase during which the US was sheltered behind British power and diplomacy. Isolation became the US strategy, continental expansion and economic development the US priorities. The Navy declined in importance and was designed to

1. J. Foid Rippy and Angie Pebo, "The Historical Background of the American Policy of Isolation," *Smith College Studies in History*, IX Northampton, H A, 1929, pp. 125-131.

2. *Ibid* : p. 127

combatting the slave trade, protecting American merchantmen in Asia and providing navigational support to commerce. The US fought two major wars during this period both in North America, the first to expand the union, the second to preserve it.

This phase concluded with the decline of Pax Britannia and the rise of Germany, Japan, Russia and the US itself as significant centres of power. As a direct result of its victory in the US-Spanish war in 1898 the US became a minor colonial power and a major world actor. For nearly five decades Germany and Japan waged their struggles to tilt the international balance in their favour and to secure their pre-eminence in their own particular regions. US strategy shifted from continental expansion to involvement in the international system to restore the disrupted balance of power in Europe and Asia. The small Navy was geared up in a massive build up designed to dominate the seas in any conflict and thus make possible the projection of US power unto Europe and Asia. The Indian fighting army gave way first to a large but much more cerebral force with the General Staff and War College dedicated to developing plans for a major war overseas and second to a totally new system of military reserves which could be mobilized for combat in such wars. And three times the US did go to war to restore the balance of power in Europe and Asia.

The elimination of the German and Japanese challenges in 1945 ended the 3rd phase and inaugurated the 4th phase which was dominated by the Cold War. The major aim of the US during this phase was to prevent the dominance of the Soviet Union in Eurasia. The political strategy for this purpose was containment and the military strategy deterrence. The six key components of American military structure developed to implement these strategies were (i) a very large active duty military establishment, (ii) a massive invulnerable strategic nuclear force, (iii) forward deployment of ground, air and naval forces in Europe and Asia, (iv) an extraordinary complex system of alliances and mutual security relationships, (v) force projection capabilities for Third World contingencies and, (vi) technological or qualitative

superiority in weapons. All six of these elements of American military policy represented major changes from previous practice. In 1989 and 1990 American policy of containment and deterrence achieved their objectives. With the end of the Cold War in 1990 the USA is once more confronting changes and reorienting its strategies to preserve its national interests. However, it will be quite a few years before a concrete strategy is devised which one can label surely, at the present juncture some educated guesses. But before doing that one may undertake a brief study of the post-Cold War security environment.

The Post-Cold War Security Environment

The post-Cold War security environment is distinguished by diverse features. But mainly three types of changes are taking place.

Firstly, there are changes in the structure of the international and domestic politics. The new international system that is emerging is featured by a massive transnational market, the outstanding changes and advances in telecommunication and communication itself, the trend towards democratization and privatization and the rise, emergence and intensification of ethnic identities. The most distinct feature of this system is the relative preponderance of economic power and decline of military as the most important element of power.

Secondly, the international distribution of power has changed. These changes have resulted in the gradual decline of American economic power and the rise of Japanese power. The unification of Germany, emergence of the European Union and the rise of many important power centres in the Third World also took place. The most dramatic changes in this regard has been the dissolution of the Soviet Union and its disappearance as a power. The direct result of this has been the withdrawal of Soviet presence from Eastern Europe, the breakdown of the Warsaw Pact, all of which signal the end of the bipolar era.

If now, the international system is not bi-polar then what is its structural identity? Some observers term it as uni-polar which others think it is a multi-polar system. As Huntington succinctly observes: "Both observations are true. The United States remain politically and military the single most important power in the world, the only super power. But there are other important centers of power in different regions of the world. China is definitely a power to watch and India is perhaps the most important regional power today. The older industrialized states remain as important sources of power."³

The world with clear cut divisions in terms of friends, foes, allies and neutrals has been replaced by the unpredictable post-Cold War world. Dramatic changes in interstate relations have occurred including changes in US-Russian relations and German-Russians relations. Other countries have similarly moved to establish relations cutting across the old Cold War battle lines and more directly reflecting their own interests. Overall, it can be said that the new world will not be characterized by clear cut divisions as it was during the Cold War days. Rather it will be characterized by multiple ethnic, national religious scenarios and cultural antagonism. This mood of international relations has two distinguishing features :

Firstly, interstate relations are likely to be more volatile and unstable. States are likely to have more commonly perceived threats covering a relatively longer time frame and less likely to pursue unilateral interests. There may be a tendency to downplay multilateral permanent alliances like NATO and more attention may be paid to temporary coalitions on political issues. In short, ambiguity may be the *modus operandi* of international relations.

Secondly, as a by-product of the first feature, relations between nations are likely to be more ambivalent with no clear labels of good or bad. Relations among powerful countries are likely to contain both

3. Samuel P Huntington, "Americas Changing Strategic Interests", *Survival*, Vol. XXXIII. No 1, Jan-Feb 1991, p-3.

elements of competition and cooperation. For example, US and Japan may remain as military allies but economic rivals.

In the above section attempt has been made to discuss the changing strategic environment in which the countries of the world including the US must operate. Accordingly, some changes may be necessary in the strategic options of the states. We now embark upon a discussion of the possible strategic alternatives open to the US in the new world.

US Strategic Options in the Post-Cold War World

As has happened in the past, there is a great debate going on in the US regarding the US role in the changed world circumstances. Planners and of course, academics are lobbying for strategies which they consider appropriate. Such debate and discussion is normal for an open liberal democratic political system that is prevalent in the US and such debates have occurred in the past when alternative grand strategies like isolationism, containment, multilateralism etc. were considered. Similarly diverse personalities or groups are arguing for containment plus disengagement or isolationism of the 19th or 20th century variety, global reform, world order, economic nationalism, the promotion of democracy and social justice everywhere and variations of or combinations of these alternatives. Anti-military liberals and anti-communist conservatives urge substantial US disengagement from an active role in world affairs. Some political figures promote economic protectionism and economic nationalism, others feel that US foreign policy should heavily hinge upon international law and the United Nations. The democratic regime in power at present feel that the principal goal of US foreign policy should be the promotion and consolidation of democracy throughout the world.

All these alternatives are rational and hence arguments can be made in favour of all of them. Since it may be years before a concrete or definite policy option gains general acceptance, at present what one can do is to accept the realist approach based on the concepts of power

and security and of course national interest. Then one can proceed with the identification of interests in the case of the United States and discuss the best course in preserving them. In the post-Cold War world US may have the following basic interests:

- (i) to maintain the United States as the premier global power which in the coming decade means countering the Japanese economic challenge;
- (ii) to prevent the emergence of a political military hegemonic power in Eurasia; and
- (iii) to protect concrete American interests in the Third World which are primarily in the Persian Gulf and Middle East.

Maintaining the Status of Premier Global Power

During the Cold War years the US was the number one power in the world, if considered politically, economically, technologically, militarily or otherwise. It often had to face challenges to its position and has done so, sometimes better than others. In the post-Cold War world it will continue to have the same interest. The changed domestic circumstances or needs may moderate or temper it, but are unlikely to eliminate it. Rather the two may serve to strengthen or reinforce it.

Now which power or powers can challenge the US? The former Soviets have long since quit the field and instead of being a competitor they are seeking to become allies. Politically, culturally and militarily, the US is still the primary power of the world. The only area of weakness of the US is economic and the greatest challenge to that comes from Japan and may be possibly to an extent from China. In a world where economic power is the primary indicator of power that challenge is definitely a real one.

In recent years attention has focused increasingly on growing Japanese challenge to the US economy. Some crucial indicators have served to make the issue more intense. Between 1980-1987, Japanese

saved 20.3% of the net national income compared to 4.2% of the US. Investment gap continues to widen between the two states. Greater economic performance generates greater economic power through increased control over capital, facilities, markets and technology. Japan is increasingly making larger investment in the US, in US securities, in real estate, physical facilities as well as buying US companies. Four out of the 10 largest banks in state of California, for instance, are under Japanese control.

Public attention in the US is shifting towards this challenge. They see it as real threat compared to Cold War years of Soviet military challenge. Some interesting figures can be mentioned here. Between 1987 and 1990 the proportion of Americans having a favourable view of the Soviet Union increased from 25% to 51% while the proportion for Japan fell from 70% to 56%. In 1989, some 72% of the American public said that they thought that US and Japan should be close friends. Yet 73% also believed that the greatest threat to American security is the economic challenge passed by Japan and supported the idea of shifting resource from the military sector to domestic investment to make America economically more competitive. In other words, in the perception of American public the military threat from the Soviet Union has been replaced or shifted to economic challenges from Japan. These perceptions are being reflected in academic circles and various publications both in the US and Japan that express hostile criticism against one another⁴. As Daniel Bell has observed, economics is the continuation of war by other means⁵. Increasingly this observation seems to be correct when applied to US-Japan relation which, in effect is developing into an economic cold war. A few observations can be made regarding US-Japan relations in terms of Japanese challenge. More specifically, American national security could be affected if

4. *Ibid*, p-8.

5. "How We See Japan : The American Enterprise", *New York Times*, 10 July 1990, Vol.1 Nov-Dec 1996.

the Japanese expansion thus leads in a variety of important military strategies.⁶

Secondly, the growth of Japanese economic power threatens American economic well-being. The loss of markets translates into loss of jobs and profits. The recent trend of Japanese purchases of US companies has two-fold consequences: (i) increasing access to American technology and (ii) shift of high value added manufacturing from the United States to Japan.

Thirdly, increased economic power being corresponding increases in influence, Japanese penetration and influence in American media, academic institutions and policy making processes have increased significantly. Perhaps one can draw an analogy with the 1940s when the Soviet Union used its ideological appeal to impress influential Americans to serve its interests. Today Japan is using its financial resources to enlist the support of the influential American. However, even the bitterest opponent can find common grounds. For example, during the Cold War the United States and Soviet Union had the rational choice of bringing about total annihilation by crossing the nuclear threshold. Similarly, Japan and the US can find common grounds to shape and influence their mutual economic policies. Economic competition is the reverse side of economic dependence. By shifting emphasis and restructuring interests this competition can be directed into more constructive channels.

It is suggested that the US should try and remedy the deficiencies it is facing in its competition with Japan instead of focusing and criticizing Japan. A two-track policy could be pursued, on the one hand, pressurizing Japan to be more liberal and less protectionist in its economic policies and on the other hand, undertaking to remedy

6. In 1988, for example, the Reference Science Board identified 22 areas of critical technology and judged the Soviet Union to be ahead in two areas but Japan to be ahead in 6. In 1990 a Commerce Dept study found Japan to be ahead of the United States in 5 of the 12 emerging technologies and rapidly gaining in another 5. US Department of Defense. Critical Technologies Plan, Washington DC, March 1989. CF: *The Economist*, 7 July 1990 p- 29.

the shortfalls which had permitted Japan to expand economically fast in the first place. These shortcomings or weaknesses could be the following : (i) the continuing budget deficit, (ii) the low saving rate of the Americans, (iii) inadequate spending on research and development, particularly for non-military purposes, (iv) most importantly, the potentially dangerous deficiencies in the education and the resulting decline in the quality of workforce. Both the Americans and the Japanese have been trying to redefine their relationship in the light of the above circumstances. The political leaders, diplomats as well as foreign policy analysts in both the countries are quite aware of this challenge faced by the US-Japan alliance system and have been trying to deal with the matter.

While the US-Japanese strategic relations can no longer remain the same, the Sino--US security ties may in fact increase in the coming years. There were many speculations that the US-China relations could be marred by the issues of human rights, the reckless arms sales policy of China and the irrelevance of China's strategic position in the post-Cold War security environment.

The US thinking on this issue is clearly reflected in the writing of an American specialist who is of the view that "China remains of considerable strategic importance to the United States for a number of reasons. It is an influential member of the Security Council, possessing a nuclear capability, satellite and missile technology and fostering a huge and growing market. It would be difficult to resolve many of the regional conflicts in East Asia without China's constructive participation and will be impossible to liberalize the trade and investment regime in East Asia unless China takes part."⁷

Maintaining the Eurasian Balance of Power

In contrast to coping with the Japanese economic challenge which is still a relatively recent phenomenon, the US has had a very old

7. Donald. S Zagoria, "Clinton's Asia Policy" *Current History*, Vol 92, No. 578, Dec. 1993, p. 40.

interest in promoting and helping maintain the balance of power first in Asia and then in Europe so as to prevent any country or combination of countries from achieving a predominance that could possibly threaten American interests. American statesmen have displayed a reluctance in acknowledging this fact, they have never articulated it but they have always followed this. Historically, in order to implement this policy in the first 40 years of its independence, it tried to play off one European power against another, more explicitly France against Britain. When after the concert of Europe in 1815 Britain had begun to play the role of balancer, the United States turned its attention to the Western Hemisphere. Following the Monroe Doctrine the United States remained relatively isolated from European affairs. The only exception to this being the open door policy to China, and the 1920s Naval Arms Agreements. But this policy was effectively brought to an end with the onset of the Second World War. With the elimination of German and Japanese power, massive American power was deployed to balance Soviet and Communist threats in both Europe and Asia, the implementation of the Truman Doctrine and Marshall plan. Containment and deterrence were the policies during the Cold War years to achieve this goal.

At present, though the Russian federation remains a formidable military power, the unification of Germany, the fall of communism in East Europe, and the political and economic decay of what once was the Soviet Union, all signal virtually the end of the Soviet hegemonic threat. A multipolar situation involving the UK, France, Germany and the erstwhile Soviet Union appears to be emerging in Europe, with its counterpart in Asia being a constitution of power involving China, Japan and Southeast Asia.

However, if we glance back at the past we can conceive of a hegemonic threat developing in future. For centuries before 1917 Russian government regularly intervened militarily in Eastern Europe. The power replacing the former Soviet Union could find compelling geo-political reasons to intervene once again in Eastern European

affairs. United Germany could attempt to use its economic power not only in European Union but also in Eastern Europe. That too, is a course which German governments—imperial, democratic and Nazi—have followed in the past. The political and economic integration which would lead to a united Europe becoming an extraordinarily powerful entity also can be a major threat to American interests.

In East Asia, an economically strong Japan could seek to establish through investment and trade its historical goal of co-prosperity region. China, however, could be another source of instability in East Asia. However, at the present moment, apart from a possible power vacuum in the heartland, none of these potential threats to Eurasian balance is immediate or even likely in the future, but neither of it is impossible.

In the circumstances, the overall strategic interest of the US does not lie in deterring on existing threat but rather in preserving the equilibrium and in preventing the rise of new threats. Pursuing equilibrium rather than containment requires less emphasis on military power and more emphasis on diplomatic, economic and institutional means. The challenge for US policy there now is to curtail military power in Eurasia, but make certain that it does not mean absence as it had done so in the past in Europe before the two World Wars. The US position is somewhat comparable to the situation that the UK faced after the end of the Napoleonic Wars that ultimately led to the concert of Europe.

In order to promote a stable equilibrium of power in Eurasia the US 'it may be argued, has to ensure certain things:

(i) it would be wise to present the total collapse of what once was the Soviet Union and to help promote a stable, democratic, economically viable successor state;

(ii) NATO can be made responsible for the security of the whole of Europe to counter the possibility of the reimposition of Soviet or Russian political control over Europe;

(iii) Steps have to be taken so that Germany does not become too powerful in Europe;

(iv) to encourage stability in central and Eastern Europe by strengthening the new democracies;

(v) it would be in US interest to try and make the European Union an economic entity rather than a political one with common foreign policy; and

(vi) to limit Japanese and Chinese power; the first one can be done by continuing the US-Japan military alliance and the second one by encouraging trends towards political pluralism and market economy in China.

Protecting Concrete Third World Interests

During the Cold War the United States generally had three types of interests in the Third World. First, it had general interests which included promoting human rights, democracy, market economies, economic development and preventing aggression, political instability and weapons proliferation. Secondly, the US had competitive interests in the Third World which derived from the Cold War with the former Soviet Union. Much of US involvement in the Third World were designed to minimize Soviet influence there and to counter developments that appeared to further Soviet interests. Third, it had concrete interests in particular areas which supplied it with raw materials, which had substantial American investments or were markets for American goods, or which had close historical ties with the United States. Absence of an equal competitor will substantially alter the motives for involvement in the Third World. If the present trend of non-involvement of any competitor of the US in the Third World continues, the motivating force for involvement of the US in many Third World states will disappear.

If taken regionally, without the Cold War it is very difficult to contemplate specific US interest in matters that are very sensitive

and crucial to the concerned parties but of possible little significance to the US such as the future of politics in Afghanistan and Kashmir issue and the like.

Some writers are openly acknowledging that South Asia is simply not a strategic priority for US, nor is many parts of South East Asia and most of Africa.

Before the end of the Cold War the US strategic interest in South Asia was to deter Soviet expansionism. To this end, Washington cooperated with South Asian governments in various ways either through diplomatic dialogue or security assistance to promote security of the region. Concurrently support and assistance were extended to further economic growth and political stability. But circumstances have altered since. Immediately following the end of the Cold War and then of the Gulf war both India and Pakistan received sharp reminders that their military procurement and spending policies were under scrutiny by major aid donors. Thus, their freedom of manouvre on defence and nuclear issues seemed to have been greatly reduced by super power detente and dramatic political change which have dissolved the Soviet Union and transformed most of the regions of Eastern Europe.

Portentious possibilities loomed in South Asia recently where the US had undertaken a serious effort to upgrade economic, political security ties with India. Three US cabinet secretaries visited India during 1995 reflecting a recognition of the country's economic clout and longer term power potential. However, even as the US moved to solidify its ties with India parallel moves were afoot in the Congress and in the executive branch to increase flexibility in relations with Pakistan which had been operating under the constraints of the Pressler Amendment since 1990, following the Bush government's declaration that it could no longer guarantee the non-nuclear status of Pakistan. The passage of the Hank Brown Amendment in the US Congress on September 21, 1995 paved the way for the transfer of

US\$368m in military aid package to Pakistan that had earlier been blocked by the Pressler Amendment⁸. Apart from having simplistic anti-India compulsions these developments are indicative of a new realignment of US strategic policy in South Asia. A resolidified relation with Islamabad appeared to offer a realistic prospect for preventing incipient nuclear and ballistic missile proliferation competition in South Asia with the unpredictable consequences that might ensue. Here an engaged US afforded the prospects for ensuring a more stable regional balance than in the absence of a pervasive American role.

As seen from Washington, the South Asian region now attains a degree of relevance along two strategic contours—that of economic dynamism resource potential and the other, along the nuclear non-proliferation axis. South Asia attains a degree of relevance on both counts and the macro view or objective is provided by Henry Kissinger who counselled the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee in the following manner : “American interests in Asia go beyond the political realm. There is fundamental political interest to prevent the nations of Asia from forming a bloc inimical to American purposes either because of the emergence of a hegemonic power or by ill-judged American policies and presence.”⁹

The altered circumstances at present should also see a major reconstruction of US strategic involvement in South America. During the Cold War years the US had a major interest in preventing the spread of communism there. With the end of the Cold War and dramatic decline in the appeal of leftist ideologies there the US has little or no strategic interests and are likely to revert to their pre-1930 level of involvement there. US strategies will focus on areas where the US has concrete interests or concerns arising from proximity, security, demography, economics, drugs all of which serve to direct increasing American attention to that part of the world.

8. Uday Bhaskar, "Pakistan in New Post Cold War World Strategies" *Strategic Analysis*, Jan 1996, Vol XVIII, No. 10, p. 10.

9. USIS, *World Focus*, NEA, Sept 22 1995 p. 6

Since and as long as the US remains heavily dependent upon oil from the Persian Gulf region it will have a major interest there. The policy of building up a defense system there ensued initially under the Carter Doctrine, continued under Reagan and George Bush, even under President Clinton.

The US has concrete interests for historical and political reasons in some individual Third World countries like Israel, South Korea and Philippines. In the past the US had also competitive or Cold War interests in these countries, particularly Israel and South Korea. To the extent the Cold War is over, that interest will decline; the interests stemming from domestic policies and historical association will remain.

Possible Implications of Change: An Abstentionist America

Nations do not necessarily pursue their strategic interests, their strategic interests may not necessarily be in their best interest and nations may subordinate their best interests to parochial and short term concerns.

If the US wants to pursue their best and strategic interests it will require significant modification in its policies and resource allocation. Foreign policy objectives should be re-examined even in those cases which are considered to be sacrosanct. If we make up a list of US declared foreign policy objectives, we shall find that many of them are actually in conflict with one another and all require a careful analysis of possible trade offs. For example, the US has always maintained that upholding and helping the growth of democracy is a part of its foreign policy objective as is the upholding of human rights. Yet in many parts of the world, US policies seem to help preserve traditional authoritarian institutions in place of democratic ones. In the case of the Gulf War the US was more interested in cutting down Iraq to size than fostering the growth of democracy there. Numerous other examples can be cited regarding this

contradiction. Of course, one can admit that fostering democracy is a delicate and quite tenuous guide to policy.

A similar judgment seems in order regarding the objective of upholding human rights. It is far better in eliciting domestic cheers than in being an effective guide to policy. As Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, David T. Sheilder stated in 1982: "our policy is to protect and promote human rights, not against our strategic interests but in conjunction with them."¹⁰

The time is ready now for the US to reappraise its foreign policy and strategic objectives and be candid about it. Changes in US strategic interests will require significant changes in the institutional means to preserve their policy, comparable to the 1940s when the US created the National Security Council, the Dept. of Defense and the Central Intelligence Agency. In the post-Cold War era the US may want a respite after involvement in all the major wars of the century. The US seems to be suffering from international leadership fatigue and unwilling to pay any substantial price in terms of money or lives for its moral goals. The Clinton administration has made US domestic prosperity a key pillar of its foreign policy.

In the Cold War years, the interests of power and morality generally coincided. The Soviet Union was a power to be countered, it was a totalitarian dictatorship and hence easily portrayed as evil. Such easy identity with the demands of power politics and morality are unlikely to exist in the future. Meeting the Japanese economic challenge may also require significant changes in US attitudes and behaviour. The Cold War was a competition between two opposing politico-economic systems; ultimately one prevailed over the other. The difference between US and Japanese economic systems are not so pronounced but they exist all the same. In the competition that is developing success is likely to go to that country which shows the

10. S.A. Hossain, "Human Rights and US foreign Policy In South Asia", *Asian Affairs*, Vol XIII, No- IV, Oct-Nov 1992, p. 13.

ability and flexibility to absorb some of its adversary's qualities. The issue is whether the US can meet the Japanese economic challenge as successfully as it met the politico-military challenges from the Soviet Union. The negative results from such a competition could mean the relegation of the US to the same place the former Soviet Union finds itself today.

However, another question that remains to be pondered is whether the US is to remain the only super power, how far that is beneficial to the ideas of global security and stability. Or whether a conglomeration of roughly equal powers including the US each pursuing its own interests and competing and cooperating with each other in a variety of permutation and combination is preferable. The path US chooses will effect the progression of the 21st century.

To interested observers and students of international relations, the evolution of the US strategic interest remains a matter of crucial importance. How, for example, is this change going to affect US position both in multilateral diplomatic contexts like the United Nations or in bilateral or regional diplomacy. How successful, for instance, is the US going to be in its adaptation to the changed world circumstances? The result of such endeavours will remain a subject of crucial importance as the world welcomes a new millennium.