

***Jan Hallenberg and Håkan Karlsson (eds.):
Changing Transatlantic Security Relations
Do the US, the EU and Russia Form a New Strategic
Triangle?***

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For more than 15 years now, the debate continues over an appropriate security construct being able to replace the old Cold War bipolarity framework, which has served its purpose as a relatively easy framework for analyses. The editors Jan Hallenberg and Håkan Karlsson contribute to the present discussion in resurrecting the metaphor of a strategic triangle, which already existed in the second half of the Cold War (formed by the USA, the Soviet Union and China), with their publication *Changing Transatlantic Security Relations. Do the US, the EU and Russia form a new strategic triangle?* The book itself, part of the Contemporary Security Studies published by Routledge, is the result of cooperation among scholars from the Department of Security and Strategic Studies at the Swedish National Defence College and the contributions of two scholars from the United States and one scholar from the United Kingdom.

Following the introduction, the book is divided into three sections, whereby the focus of each section is on one of the actors of this new strategic triangle. The first part consists of four chapters, and provides an overview of different aspects of the EU's latest development. It tries to assess the extent to which the EU can be called an actor in the context of this strategic triangle. In the second section of this book, attention falls on Russia, with two chapters looking closer at Russia's relations with the EU and two of its neighbours, Belarus and the Ukraine. Finally, the third part casts a glance at the US. This part is comprised of three chapters, which highlight its relations with the other two actors in the context of this strategic triangle. The final chapter concludes with analyses and tries to assess the circumstances in which a new strategic triangle may exist or could arise.

The editors Jan Hallenberg and Håkan Karlsson wrote the introduction. Jan Hallenberg is a professor of political science at the Swedish National Defence College. He specialises in US foreign policy and transatlantic security relations. Håkan Karlsson is a Ph.D. in political science and a Research Associate at the Swedish National Defence College; he is also a specialist on US strategy and nuclear weapons. Together, they provide the reader with the basic information needed to follow the succeeding analyses. First of all, they determine the criterion for the existence of a strategic triangle, which exists if „all three actors, in formulating their policies in a given issue area, take each other into consideration“ (p. 2). Hallenberg and Karlsson look at the differences between the former and the new strategic triangle, and introduce the actors briefly. Finally, they provide us with an overview of the structure of the book. Moreover, the introduction deals with possible criticism of the upcoming analysis. It faces, for example, the question of limited geographical

coverage of this new strategic triangle and it explains why all three actors are not treated in the same way in this volume.

Following the introduction, in the second chapter, Magnus Ekengren and Kjell Engelbrekt examine the impact of the EU enlargement on its „actorness“. Seeing actorness as a „function of capacity and cohesiveness“ (p. 20), they draw a complex picture of the latest EU enlargement in their analysis. The new member states lead to an enhanced capacity for the EU, while challenging the cohesiveness of the Union at the same time through the number of new member states and their diversity. In the end, they come to the conclusion that fear of negative impact from the enlargement process (on the EU actorness) seems to be exaggerated and propose four possible future scenarios, with regard to the Union’s actorness, and their implications on the strategic triangle.

In chapter three, Arita Eriksson looks to another topic which affects the actorness of the EU: namely, the build-up of EU military capability. While giving a brief overview on the development of the EU in this issue area since 1999, Eriksson discusses the internal and external implications of this Europeanisation process in greater depth. In one case study, she shows how the process is influencing Sweden’s security and defence policy and addresses the external implications of the overall process in regard to NATO. This leads her to the conclusion that the Europeanisation process will enhance the possibilities of the EU for an effective CFSP and may decrease the importance of NATO in the future.

In the fourth chapter, Fredrik Bynander examines the difficult positioning of the Czech Republic and Poland between both institutions (the EU and NATO). Again, he looks at the process of enlargement and its implications for the EU’s actorness. He discusses the choices both countries have made for the EU and NATO and shows why both countries differ to some extent in their choices: while Poland is more orientated towards NATO at the expense of the EU due to the low credibility of the EU in military security, the Czech Republic, with its aim to become a „rapidly modernizing state“ (p. 77), is more orientated towards the EU.

In the last chapter of this first part, Adrian Hyde-Price tries to answer the question „Is strategic coercion a possible tool for the EU or rather for Europe’s major powers?“ After providing a short analysis of the European strategic environment and Europe’s security agenda, he examines the meaning and nature of strategic coercion, considering its implications and complications. These deliberations lead to the reasoning that despite problems, the tool of strategic coercion is an attractive option. It is, however, unlikely that the EU itself will engage in collective strategic coercion. Consequently, it is more likely that major member states, like France or the UK, will form smaller coalitions, sometimes acting in the name of Europe.

The second part of this volume, which provides a closer look at Russia, begins with the sixth chapter by Charlotte Wagnsson. She explores the question „Why, despite enough possibilities and attempts, has so little been achieved in terms of cooperation between Russia and the EU in the area of security?“ Through her analysis of the differences in actorness, diverging threat perceptions and the role of the US, she discusses the impediments on

the path to closer cooperation. Nevertheless, these obstacles are, in her view, no substantial hindrance for further EU-Russian rapprochement.

Following this analysis, Bertil Nygren focuses on Russia and its relationships with the Ukraine and Belarus. Nygren provides the reader with several examples of profound changes in Russian foreign policy attitudes towards their neighbour countries since Vladimir Putin came into office in 2000. He does so by highlighting the shift from a geo-political focus to a geo-economic one. While looking at both dimensions, he shows how Russian-Belarus relations were marked by a descending spin and how Russia pursued a pragmatic foreign policy towards the Ukraine.

Finally, the third part of the book focuses on the United States and starts with a contribution by Peter Dombrowski and Andrew L. Ross. While focusing on the US's grand strategy debate, they introduce five major options for the future of US foreign policy (neo-isolationism, selective engagement, liberal internationalism, primacy and empire), and they discuss each of these grand strategies with regard to the new strategic triangle. Finally, they come to the conclusion that only under the strategy of liberal internationalism is the prerequisite for a new strategic triangle given. Moreover, while looking upon the policy of the current Bush administration, Dombrowski and Ross reason that prospects for a new strategic triangle were undermined by this administration during its term of office.

Hereafter, the economic relations between the three dyads of the strategic triangle are in the centre of the ninth chapter, which is written by Jan Hallenberg. After starting with a brief overview of the economic grand strategies of the three actors, Hallenberg takes a closer look at trade and monetary relations as well as at the Foreign Direct Investments among the three dyads. He comes to the conclusion that they differ a lot in the strength of their economic ties (i.e. with strong ties between the EU and the US, moderate ties among the EU and Russia and weak ties between the US and Russia). Therefore, in the economic field, Hallenberg sees a very weak, but nevertheless slowly strengthening, triangle among the three actors, whereby strong economic ties are able to stabilise relations among the actors in other issue areas.

The third part of this volume ends with Håkan Karlsson's contribution, in which he analyses the „clash of strategic visions“ (p. 184) between the US and Russia. While examining the grand strategies of the Clinton and Bush administrations at the end of the Cold War, Karlsson shows how both administrations tried to perpetuate unipolarity in the international system. Moreover, he explains how Russia attempted to counterbalance the dominant US position. After focusing on security issues like missile defence, NATO enlargement or the strategic arms control, he concludes that, behind their partnership in combating terrorism, the US and Russia have „diametrically opposite approaches to the shaping of the future world order“ (p. 200).

This analysis is followed by the conclusion of the book, written by Hallenberg and Karlsson. Here, they look briefly at each of the three actors and recapitulate the major findings of the preceding chapters. In their view, there is a „nascent strategic triangle in the economic realm“ (p. 212). And, as other cases like the events in the Ukraine after the presidential elections in

late 2004 show, there are also indications that relations among the EU, Russia and the US „have been at least partly governed by what we might call triangular logic“ (p. 212). The editors conclude that although all three actors have not taken each other into account in their security policies in recent years, the metaphor of the strategic triangle can help understand the security policy relations between them. Moreover, provided that each of the three actors undergoes some changes, the US pursuing a global strategy, the EU developing its internal legitimacy and Russia improving in the fields of economy and democracy, the editors reckon that this strategic triangle may take on greater significance in the future, especially for understanding Trans-Atlantic security relations.

This volume offers a fresh and interesting approach in the study of the Trans-Atlantic security relations and encourages the reader to think about these relations in the perspective of a new strategic triangle. Although the book achieves its aim, that „each chapter makes at least some contribution towards a better understanding of the relationships among the three actors, even if the emphasis in some of the chapters is strongly on one or two of the three actors“ (p. 6), it may also disappoint some of its readers. Keeping the title in mind, one could expect a more or less clear affiliation of all of the chapters with the idea of a new strategic triangle (for example, whether and how the actors take each other’s policies into consideration). However, this is not the case. In chapters like the second, fifth or seventh, the focus lies explicitly on specific aspects of the respective actor, and thus it may lead to some irritation among the readers. Despite the possible „expectation gap“, this volume is easy to read. The chapters are well structured and give useful cross-references to the other chapters, so that the reader can follow the analyses without many problems. It is useful for those researching and studying security policies or international relations, and it may open doors for future research, especially if this new strategic triangle becomes a starting point for understanding Trans-Atlantic security relations.

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