

**Competing or Complementary Policies?  
Understanding the Relationship between the NEI  
and NDI**

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## ***Introduction***<sup>1</sup>

In recent years the relationship between the European Union and the United States has become increasingly contentious. The principal European critique laments what many Europeans see as America's blatant disregard of global norms and what Chris Patten, the EU's External Affairs Commissioner, has labelled America's "neuralgic hostility to any external authority over its own affairs".<sup>2</sup> In its rejection of the Kyoto Protocol and the establishment of an International Criminal Court, its reluctance to pay its dues to the United Nations, and its eagerness to scrap the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, Europeans often see America as lurching towards a unilateralist stance based on America's military preponderance, whilst multilateral organisations, legal conventions and international norms are pushed aside.<sup>3</sup>

The various merits or otherwise of such criticisms are not the concern of this paper. However, such debates do provide an interesting background to American policy in the Baltic Sea Region through its Northern European Initiative (NEI), which has been widely overlooked in EU debates on American policy. This is surprising since the NEI is precisely the type of inventive, norm-driven, multilateral-based policy that Europeans tend to champion. What is more, in the NEI the US has explicitly picked up on the EU's own Northern Dimension Initiative (NDI). Rather than being an arrogant hegemon with a simplistic understanding of the dynamics of world politics, which is how Europeans often characterise America, in the European north American policy has been driven by a sensitive understanding of the dynamics of the region and a distinct concern not to appear as an overbearing superpower.

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<sup>2</sup> Chris Patten, speech to the Institut Français des Relations Internationales, Paris, June 2000

<sup>3</sup> For an overview of European views see, Steven Everts (2001) *Unilateral America, Lightweight Europe? Managing divergence in transatlantic foreign policy* (London: Centre for European Reform, Working Paper). The debate between multilateralism and unilateralism is, of course, also a lively American debate. E.g., Martin Walker (2001) 'Bush's Choice: Athens or Sparta', *World Policy Journal* (Vol.18, No.2)

This paper explores the relationship between America's NEI and the EU's Northern Dimension Initiative. Firstly, the paper elaborates on the complementarities between the policies and highlights how both represent rather innovative approaches to governance that break out of traditional Westphalian frames of reference and that prioritise questions of 'soft' societal security over those of 'hard' military security. The second and main focus of the paper, however, highlights that significant tensions and differences between the policies can also be identified. These are particularly evident in the position accorded to NATO in each of the policies. The paper attempts to explain the reasons for these differences and notes that whilst there is significant complementarity, the policies can also be seen to be competitive in other respects. To a certain degree, therefore, the relationship between the NEI and NDI stands as a microcosm of the tensions and compatibilities in EU-US relations more generally. In conclusion the paper speculates on how the post-September 11 environment and the likely future enlargement of NATO to the Baltic States, will affect developments in the region and the dynamics between the NEI and NDI.

### ***Complementary Policies***

Although this section will highlight the rather strong compatibilities and similarities between the NEI and NDI, it is first important to note that the original motivations behind the initiatives have been different. The Northern Dimension, for example, originated as a Finnish initiative in 1997<sup>4</sup> that, it has been argued, was intended to multilateralise Finnish-Russian relations by bringing Finnish concerns onto the EU agenda, but also to enhance the voice of northern Europe in EU affairs more generally.<sup>5</sup> As such, for the

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<sup>4</sup> See, Paavo Lipponen, 'The European Union Needs a Policy for the Northern Dimension', speech presented at the 'Barents Region Today' conference, Rovaniemi, Finland. 15.09.1997. Available at <http://www.vn.fi/vn/english/index.htm>

<sup>5</sup> E.g., Hanna Ojanen (1999) 'How to Customise Your Union: Finland and the Northern Dimension of the EU', *Northern Dimensions* (Yearbook of the Finnish Institute of International Affairs) pp.13-26; Christer Pursiainen (1999) *Finland's Security Policy Towards Russia: From Bilateralism to Multilateralism* (Helsinki: UPI Working Papers 14); Tapani Vaahtoranta and Tuomas Forsberg (1998) 'Finland's Three Security Strategies', in Mathias Jopp and Sven Arnsfeldt (eds) *The European Union and the Baltic States: Visions, Interests and Strategies for the Baltic Sea Region* (Kauhava: Ulkopoliittinen instituutti and Institut für Europäische Politik); David Arter (2000) 'Small

Finns the Northern Dimension has in part existed as a subtle security policy vis-à-vis Russia. America's Northern European Initiative also emerged in 1997, however, the initial point of concern here has been preserving the security and independence of the Baltic States. The question, as Ronald Asmus and Robert Nurick put it in an article that provided the foundations for the NEI, was how to preserve the Balts' security in light of NATO enlargement to states in Eastern Europe. In this respect the NEI originated as a policy designed to signal to Russia that even though the Baltic States would not be included in the initial round of NATO enlargement, this did not mean that the United States regarded them as lying within the Russian sphere of influence.<sup>6</sup> As such the NEI was initially underlain with quite traditional geopolitical concerns.<sup>7</sup>

The proposed solutions envisaged by both the NEI and NDI to such traditional geopolitical security concerns, however, have not involved falling back on traditional realist conflict driven frames that presuppose the continued hostile division of Europe. Rather, drawing on principles of democratic peace theory and the insights of liberal institutionalism/interdependence the aim has been to prevent the conflicts of the past from infecting the politics of the present. In American rhetoric the aim is to finally create a 'Europe whole and free', to 'fix' Europe once and for all by finishing a process that began after the end of World War II with the institution of the Marshall Plan.<sup>8</sup> For its part, European rhetoric on the Northern Dimension talks of the need "to avoid new dividing lines in Europe" and "to involve all our neighbours".<sup>9</sup> In short, both the NEI and NDI represent attempts to shift concerns within the European north away from questions of hard military security towards a new agenda of

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State Influence Within the EU: The Case of Finland's 'Northern Dimension Initiative', *Journal of Common Market Studies* (Vol.38, No.5) pp.677-97

<sup>6</sup> Ronald D. Asmus and Robert C. Nurick, 'NATO Enlargement and the Baltic States', *Survival* (Vol.38, No.2 1996)

<sup>7</sup> Christopher S. Browning, 'A Multi-Dimensional Approach to Regional Cooperation', pp.89-91

<sup>8</sup> Ronald D. Asmus, Deputy Assistant Secretary for European Affairs, 'Northern Europe and the Transatlantic Relationship', Address at the Fourth Annual Conference on Baltic Sea Regional Security and Cooperation, Stockholm, Sweden, November 4 1999.

[http://www.state.gov/www/policy\\_remarks/1999/991104\\_asmus\\_nei.html](http://www.state.gov/www/policy_remarks/1999/991104_asmus_nei.html); Downloaded 15/01/01

<sup>9</sup> Chris Patten (1999) 'A Northern Dimension for the policies of the Union: current and future activities', Speech at the Foreign Ministers' Conference on the Northern Dimension, Helsinki, 12/11/1999. Available at

[http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/news/patten/speech\\_99\\_161.htm](http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/news/patten/speech_99_161.htm)

'cooperative security'. This is to be achieved through promoting mutual dependencies by building a series of multilateral organisations and regimes that include all the actors in the region, especially Russia. Also central is the encouragement of foreign direct investment in the region and the opening up and integration of the Russian northwest into the global economy, the belief being that this will create wealth for all in the region (but also in the US and the EU more generally) and will therefore contribute to soft security.<sup>10</sup> Importantly, therefore, in the NEI and NDI security is not conceptualised as a zero-sum game in which if the security of one side increases then that of another must necessarily be impaired. Instead, through encouraging cross-border interaction and building up networks of interdependence it is believed a win-win situation can be created to the benefit of everyone's security. This is reflected in the priority goals of the NEI and NDI, which are virtually identical. Of particular import is to promote cooperative regimes in the areas of the environment, business promotion, civil society creation, law enforcement, energy linkages and public health.<sup>11</sup> Given European concerns of American unilateralism highlighted at the start of this paper it is also interesting to note that the US has been explicit in affirming that it has no intention of creating its own institutions. Instead, the US goal is to work through the many existing multilateral structures and institutions in the region such as the Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS), the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC), the Nordic Council, and the Helsinki Commission (HELCOM).<sup>12</sup>

Whilst opportunities are seen to exist to move towards a cooperative security agenda in the European north, the NEI and NDI are also similar in that both see the emergence of new forms of governance

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<sup>10</sup> Peter van Ham (2000) 'US Policy Toward Northern Europe: Political and Security Aspects', in Lars Hedegaard and Bjarne Lindström (eds) *The NEBI Yearbook 2000: North European and Baltic Sea Integration* (Berlin: Springer-Verlag and Nordregio) p.279

<sup>11</sup> See, Overview of the Northern European Initiative. Fact Sheet released by the Bureau of European Affairs, US Department of State, Washington, DC, April 1 2001. <http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/fs/1985.htm> ; Downloaded 25/02/02; Council of the European Union, *Action Plan for the Northern Dimension with external and cross-border policies of the European Union 2000-2003*, Brussels, 14 June 2000, 9401/00

<sup>12</sup> Strobe Talbott, Deputy Secretary, 'Opening Doors and Building Bridges in the New Europe', Address to the Paasikivi Society, Helsinki, Finland, 21 January 1998 [http://www.state.gov/www/policy\\_remarks/1998/980121\\_talbott\\_eursecurity.html](http://www.state.gov/www/policy_remarks/1998/980121_talbott_eursecurity.html); Downloaded 15/01/01

in the region as having wider global application. This is clearest in the case of the NEI where American discourse frequently refers to the European north as a 'laboratory', 'experiment' and a 'testing ground' for a new type of politics and regional governance.<sup>13</sup> For America the key is to try to integrate Russia into liberal democratic norms and institutions of governance and in the process overcome the Cold War division once and for all, the idea being that if Russia can be successfully integrated into regional cooperation in northern Europe then the NEI will provide a model to be transposed elsewhere in order to extend the democratic peace to more tumultuous regions. For example, comparing the Baltic Sea Region with the Balkans, in 1999 Deputy Assistant Secretary for European Affairs, Ronald Asmus, noted that, "The sense is that if we could figure out a way to translate your experience and plant similar seeds in southeastern Europe today, we would be very, very well advised".<sup>14</sup> As has been pointed out elsewhere, such goals are reflective of a tradition of Wilsonian idealism and liberal internationalism in US foreign policy that depicts American identity as imbued with a moral purpose to spread the liberal democratic principles of American civilisation around the world.<sup>15</sup> Central to this liberal internationalist vision is the assumption that there is nothing inherently conflictual about international politics, and if only liberal democratic institutions would be widely accepted then conflict between different societies, cultures and states could be mediated peacefully. Thus, commenting on US policy in northern Europe, in

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<sup>13</sup> Council on Foreign Relations (1999) *US Policy Toward Northeastern Europe* (NY: Council on Foreign Relations); Peter van Ham, 'Testing Cooperative Security in Europe's New North: American Perspectives and Policies', in Dmitri Trenin and Peter van Ham, *Russia and the United States in Northern European Security* (Kauhava: Ulkopoliittinen instituutti & Institut für Europäische Politik 2000) p.63

<sup>14</sup> Ronald D. Asmus, Deputy Assistant Secretary for European Affairs, 'Northern Europe and the Transatlantic Relationship', Address to the Fourth Annual Conference on Baltic Sea Regional Security and Cooperation, Stockholm, Sweden, November 4 1999. [http://www.state.gov/www/policy\\_remarks/1999/991104\\_asmus\\_nei.html](http://www.state.gov/www/policy_remarks/1999/991104_asmus_nei.html); Downloaded 15/01/01

<sup>15</sup> On such missionary tendencies in the NEI see, Edward Rhodes (2000) 'The American Vision of Baltic Security Architecture: Understanding the Northern European Initiative', *Baltic Defence Review* (No.4) p.107; Peter van Ham, 'Testing Cooperative Security in Europe's New North', p.58. On this missionary heritage in American identity more generally see, Vilho Harle (2000) *The Enemy with a Thousand Faces: The Tradition of the Other in Western Political Thought and History* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger) ch. 4; John O'Loughlin (2000) 'Ordering the 'Crush Zone': Geopolitical Games in Post-Cold War Eastern Europe', in Nurit Kliot and David Newman (eds) *Geopolitics at the End of the Twentieth Century: The Changing World Political Map* (London: Frank Cass) pp.38-9

1997 Robert Hunter even went so far as to proclaim that "We are trying to do nothing less than to repeal and abolish that most failed principle of international politics of the last 350 years, which is the balance of power itself".<sup>16</sup>

Notably, this missionary element to American identity is also paralleled in widespread understandings of the EU as founded in and imbued with a peace mission to spread its practices beyond its borders. As French President, Jacques Chirac, has put it, "The purpose of the European Union is to establish lasting peace on our continent. This is its task. It will take up this task gradually but irreversibly".<sup>17</sup> In this respect, for many within the EU the Northern Dimension is seen as simply one further manifestation of this peace mission as the EU now disseminates its liberal democratic values across the EU's external borders to the Baltic States and Russia. As Antola notes, "This role of the EU is very much at the heart of the Northern Dimension".<sup>18</sup> At the same time, the EU is rather less eulogic than the United States in its rhetoric on regionalising developments in the European north. This is probably partly because, for the EU, some of the novelty has probably worn off, after all the EU has already been engaged in the European north through the CBSS and BEAC for a decade. However, to some extent the Northern Dimension is also seen as somewhat troubling to the EU. Whilst this point will be elaborated upon below, for now it can be noted that there is something of a contradiction between the EU peace mission, as most clearly embodied in its internal decentralised and multi-layered system of governance, and the EU's current rather modern desire for strict territorial sovereignty along its external borders, as epitomised by the Schengen visa regime.<sup>19</sup> Notably, the Northern Dimension plays directly upon this tension,

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<sup>16</sup> Robert E. Hunter, Address to the Second Annual Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Baltic, Stockholm, Sweden, December 1997.  
<http://www.usis.usemb.se/bsconf/hunter.html>; Downloaded 07/02/01

<sup>17</sup> Jacques Chirac (2001) 'The Common Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union', *Defence Europe* (Les Dossiers de L'Abécédaire parlementaire, No.8, 2<sup>nd</sup> trimestre) p.20

<sup>18</sup> Esko Antola (1999) 'The Presence of the European Union in the North', in Hiski Haukkala (ed) *Dynamic Aspects of the Northern Dimension* (Jean Monnet Unit, University of Turku) p.126

<sup>19</sup> See Christopher S. Browning (unpublished manuscript) *The Internal/External Security Paradox and the Reconstruction of Boundaries in the Baltic: The Case of Kaliningrad*. On Schengen see, Heather Grabbe (2000) 'The sharp edges of Europe: extending Schengen eastwards', *International Affairs* (Vol.76, No.3)



aspiring to include non-members in decision-making and thereby blurring divisions between the inside and outside of the EU, and further promoting the regionalisation of European governance, not just within the EU, but also across its borders.

Finally, it also needs to be noted that in their promotion of regional cooperation and cross-border interaction, in their focus on non-governmental organisations, civil society, business and the private sector, and in the fostering of inter-regional and sub-regional networks that largely bypass the modern state, both the NEI and NDI are promoting developments that actually go well beyond traditional notions of transcending the Cold War and that actually envisage a rather profound reorganisation of political space in the European north. Put pejoratively, in their explicit goal of transcending borders, encouraging multiple layers of governance and providing a forum for non-state actors to have a voice, the NEI and NDI exhibit rather postmodern features. This is particularly clear in the metaphors that have been attached to both policies.

Most evocative in this respect is the widespread comparison of the possibilities of the present with the *Hanseatic League* of the 13<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, a pre-state system of international governance that it is contended united northern Europe in a liberal free-trade framework. In this respect the construction of a *neo-Hanseatic League* is presented as representing a return to normality following the unnatural division of the region during the Cold War. As Anthony Wayne, a US official dealing with European and Canadian Affairs, has put it:

With the disappearance of the artificial divisions of the Cold War, the Baltic sea is resuming its role as a regional unifier rather than a divider. The old Hanseatic ideal of an open trading area can once again become the model for how the region can grow politically and economically.<sup>20</sup>

In particular the CBSS, with its focus on bringing about the cultural, commercial, economic and environmental unity of the region, has

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<sup>20</sup> Anthony Wayne, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for European and Canadian Affairs, 'The US Stake in Northern Europe', Address to the Baltic Sea Region Conference, Stockholm, Sweden, November 19 1998.  
[http://www.state.gov/www/policy\\_remarks/1998/981119\\_wayne\\_baltics.html](http://www.state.gov/www/policy_remarks/1998/981119_wayne_baltics.html);  
Downloaded 15/01/01. For a more detailed analysis of the Hanseatic analogy in the NEI see, Edward Rhodes, 'The American Vision of Baltic Security Architecture', pp.94-96



been depicted as the contemporary equivalent of the Hanseatic League. Also important about the metaphor, however, is that it extends the region to Russia as Russian cities like Novgorod were also participants in the Hanseatic League.<sup>21</sup> The implication is that without taking Russia into account little will be accomplished in terms of moving towards a new security agenda.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, the metaphor encourages actors to think regionally, to re-conceptualise national identities in regional terms and in that process to undermine the previous tight link between the nation and the state's territorial sovereignty that has been characteristic in the region for much of the last century.

The other key metaphor is, of course, that of the *North* which is indicative of how in the NEI and NDI the US and the EU have been able to step outside the constraining conceptual boundaries of East and West. As Peter van Ham notes, as such "Since 'Europe' is no longer defined on the basis of 'westernness' but also on a more diffuse notion of 'northernness', Russia is offered a new focal point, a new route for cooperation which may make it feel at home".<sup>23</sup> This is to say, by opening up the notion of northernness the NEI and NDI appear to depoliticise the significance of East-West categorisations of Europe. Such rhetoric transcends Huntingtonian notions of civilisational divides, in favour of a more variegated European geography which offers Russia the opportunity to be included.

### ***Tensions and Differences***

Having laid out some of the principal similarities between the NEI and NDI I will now turn to the main focus of this paper, which is to highlight where the policies of the US and EU in the European north differ. Thus, despite shared proclamations of a Europe 'whole and free' and 'without dividing lines', this section will show that such

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<sup>21</sup> Derek Shearer, US Ambassador to Finland, Remarks at The New Hanseatic League Conference, Helsinki, Finland, 8 October 1997.

<http://www.usemb.se/BalticSec/shearer.htm>; Downloaded 27/11/00

<sup>22</sup> Peter van Ham, 'Testing Cooperative Security in Europe's New North', p.68

<sup>23</sup> Peter van Ham, 'Testing Cooperative Security in Europe's New North', p.88. For another extensive discussion of this point see, Pertti Joenniemi (1999) 'The North Meets Europe: On the European Union's Northern Dimension', <http://www.northerndimension.org/paper1.pdf>; Downloaded 22/02/01

sound bites also mask points of contention in the US-EU relationship.

### *NEI: Conflating NATO with 'Europe'*

Perhaps the clearest difference between the two initiatives is the distinct positions they accord to NATO in the forthcoming Europe 'whole and free'. Notably, in American discourse on the NEI a link with NATO enlargement to the Baltic States is always made. In contrast, the Northern Dimension eschews any discussion on such a linkage and rather appears more concerned with making NATO redundant. Moreover, given that the US sees the NEI as a policy aimed at overcoming the geopolitical divisions of the Cold War by fostering interdependence and a new politics of cooperation, the link to NATO enlargement appears particularly perplexing given widespread Russian hostility to the organisation. The first question we need to explain, therefore, is why it is that the NEI and NATO enlargement are so closely linked in US policy?

A case can be made that the NEI's link to NATO enlargement to the Baltic States is simply rhetorical and nothing more. In the first instance it should be remembered that the NEI emerged in relation to the question of how to preserve the security of the Baltic States in the wake of NATO enlargement in East and Central Europe. That NATO should appear in the policy at a discursive level is therefore not surprising. In this respect the Balts have expressed some concerns that rather than being an actual commitment to their future membership in the Alliance the NEI is actually little more than an empty appeasement policy designed to defer any decision on the issue altogether.<sup>24</sup> Evidence for this can be seen in the 1998 US-Baltic Charter of Partnership, which explicitly makes a commitment to the Baltic States' future membership in NATO. At the same time, however, the Charter was left devoid of any timetable for membership and emphasised that enlargement would be dependent on NATO concluding "that the inclusion of these nations would serve

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<sup>24</sup> Peter van Ham (1998) 'U.S. Policy Toward the Baltic States: An Ambiguous Commitment', in Mathias Jopp and Sven Arnsward (eds) *The European Union and the Baltic States: Visions, Interests and Strategies for the Baltic Sea Region* (Kauhava: Ulkopoliittinen instituutti & Institut für Europäische Politik) p.224

European stability and the strategic interests of the Alliance".<sup>25</sup> Such provisions clearly open the possibility for delaying the membership of the Baltic states and also appear to give the lie to the claim of the very next paragraph in the Charter that no non-NATO country will have a veto over the membership decisions of the Alliance. Clearly, if enlargement to the Balts is going to be staunchly opposed by Russia then enlargement is unlikely to contribute to European stability or the strategic interests of NATO.

On the other hand, there are reasons to suggest the US commitment to the Baltic States' membership of NATO is genuine. First, the missionary rhetoric of liberal internationalist discourses, that construct American identity in terms of a crusading role that it is America's destiny to play in Europe, is important. Not only was this missionary view of America's role in the world central to President Clinton, but it remains important to the Bush Administration. For example, President Bush has spoken of the need to confine talk of East-West divides to history and to complete the project of creating a 'Europe whole and free'.<sup>26</sup> In this vision all the previous Eastern bloc states have the right to be "welcomed into Europe's home".<sup>27</sup> However, such notions mask a very particular understanding of what 'Europe' and 'belonging to Europe's home' means in US thinking. In short, the US maintains a highly institutionalised view of the definition of Europe that equates belonging with membership in Western organisations, in particular NATO and the EU. This is prevalent in rhetoric that the Baltic States have a 'right' to 'join Europe', membership of which was denied to them as a result of the Cold War. As van Ham puts it, "The aspiration of becoming a full member of NATO and the EU (and to a lesser extent the WEU), is considered a necessary and natural element of being a European country, of not just being an integral part of *geographical* Europe, but also of a *political* Europe" (original emphases).<sup>28</sup> This is further

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<sup>25</sup> A Charter of Partnership Among the United States of America and the Republic of Estonia, Republic of Latvia, and the Republic of Lithuania, January 16 1998. [http://www.state.gov/www/regions/eur/ch\\_9801\\_baltic\\_charter.html](http://www.state.gov/www/regions/eur/ch_9801_baltic_charter.html); Downloaded 15/01/01

<sup>26</sup> George W. Bush (2001) Remarks by the President in Address to Faculty and Students of Warsaw University, Warsaw, Poland, 15 June 2001. Available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/06/20010615-1.html>

<sup>27</sup> George W. Bush (2001) Remarks by the President in Address to Faculty and Students of Warsaw University, Warsaw, Poland, 15 June 2001. Available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/06/20010615-1.html>

<sup>28</sup> Peter van Ham, 'Testing Cooperative Security in Europe's New North', p.73

evidenced by the fact that American officials have also drawn on rhetoric of the Baltic states as 'coming home to the West', that is 'coming home to Europe', the implication being that it is NATO and the EU that represent the essence of the 'real' Europe.<sup>29</sup> Consequently, the US desire to create a Europe whole and free is seen to require expanding the institutional framework of Europe as embodied in NATO and the EU. As Madeline Albright contended in April 1997, a central reason for enlarging NATO "is to right the wrongs of the past. If we don't enlarge NATO, we will be validating the dividing line Stalin imposed in 1945 and that two generations of Americans and Europeans fought to overcome".<sup>30</sup> More recently, President Bush has emphasised that all Europe's new democracies, from the Baltic to the Black Sea, should have the chance to join Europe's institutions, whilst on NATO enlargement Bush stated, "we should not calculate how little we can get away with, but how much we can do to advance the cause of freedom".<sup>31</sup> As such, the desire to erase all borderlines in Europe has in fact become synonymous with the need for NATO expansion.

Importantly, this position in US policy is further inscribed by the way in which NATO has been re-envisioned as a security community and a community of values since the end of the Cold War, thereby naturalising NATO's enlargement in the future. As Williams and Neumann have noted, NATO is no longer simply understood as a military alliance, but has been re-conceptualised in civilisational and cultural terms as a security community centred around the shared democratic foundations of its members.<sup>32</sup> This transformation became evident during the Kosovo war when NATO justified its bombing missions in terms of the need to uphold the values of Western civilisation, loosely understood in terms of human rights,

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<sup>29</sup> E.g., Strobe Talbott, Deputy Secretary, 'A Baltic Home-Coming', The Robert C. Frasure Memorial Lecture, Tallinn, Estonia, January 24 2000.

[http://www.state.gov/www/policy\\_remarks/2000/000124\\_talbott\\_tallinn.html](http://www.state.gov/www/policy_remarks/2000/000124_talbott_tallinn.html);

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<sup>30</sup> Madeline Albright quoted in Peter van Ham, 'U.S. Policy Toward the Baltic States', p.217

<sup>31</sup> George W. Bush (2001) Remarks by the President in Address to Faculty and Students of Warsaw University, Warsaw, Poland, 15 June 2001. Available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/06/20010615-1.html>; Also see Philip H. Gordon and James B. Steinberg (2001) 'NATO Enlargement: Moving Forward', *Policy Brief* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, No.90)

<sup>32</sup> Michael C. Williams and Iver B. Neumann (2000) 'From Alliance to Security Community: NATO, Russia, and the Power of Identity', *Millennium* (Vol.29, No.2) p.367

democracy and freedom. As van Ham has put it, in its quest for a post-Cold War role and identity, "By bombing the 'barbarians' in Serbia, the allies took advantage of a unique occasion to underscore their shared values, meanwhile assuring NATO's continued importance".<sup>33</sup> However, one implication of re-conceptualising NATO as part of a Western civilisational project is that in order to retain legitimacy NATO membership must be open to all those who wish to join and who comply with the values of the security community. Rejecting applicants solely on the basis of strategic thinking is becoming difficult. For example, whilst a member of the Clinton Administration, Madeline Albright asserted that, "We have said all along that NATO is open to all democratic market systems in Europe".<sup>34</sup> Similarly, the US-Baltic Charter affirms that the Baltic States "will not be left out or discriminated against due to factors of history or geography".<sup>35</sup> Having proclaimed such policies there is a certain obligation to live up to the promises. The role assigned for the NEI in this appears to be that of de-politicising the issue of NATO enlargement through enhancing soft security and constructing border-breaking regional identities and affinities such that questions of hard military security drop from the agenda. To cite Albright again, what the US really hopes for is that through such policies as the NEI Russia will eventually get bored with NATO enlargement and focus its energies on more fruitful areas of cooperation.<sup>36</sup>

Of course, waiting for Russia to get bored with the question of NATO enlargement may take some time. Despite more positive signals from President Putin over the last year, many Russian's clearly continue to view NATO as a geopolitical threat that seems intent on

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<sup>33</sup> Peter van Ham (2001) 'Security and Culture, or, Why NATO Won't Last', *Security Dialogue* (Vol.32, No.4) see pp.395-396

<sup>34</sup> Madeline Albright quoted in Alexander A. Sergounin, 'The Russia Dimension', in Hans Mouritzen (ed) *Bordering Russia: Theory and Prospects for Europe's Baltic Rim* (Aldershot: Ashgate 1998) p.36

<sup>35</sup> A Charter of Partnership Among the United States of America and the Republic of Estonia, Republic of Latvia, and the Republic of Lithuania, January 16 1998. [http://www.state.gov/www/regions/eur/ch\\_9801\\_baltic\\_charter.html](http://www.state.gov/www/regions/eur/ch_9801_baltic_charter.html); Downloaded 15/01/01

<sup>36</sup> Madeline Albright cited in Ronald D. Asmus, 'American Views on Security and Cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region', speech delivered at The Second Annual Conference on Baltic Sea Security and Cooperation', November 1997. <http://www.usis.usemb.se/bsconf/asmus.html>; Downloaded 31/01/01

tresspassing on Russia's traditional sphere of influence.<sup>37</sup> Thus, whereas for NATO the Kosovo war was understood as a chance to assert NATO as a democratic security community protecting the values of Western civilisation, Russia rather noted how the NATO mission lacked a UN Security Council mandate. In NATO's general disregard for Russian opinions it also "violated the letter and spirit of the Founding Act with Russia" that in 1997 had created a NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council. As such NATO's unilateral action was seen as moving geopolitical boundaries closer to Russia's borders, whilst at the same time reaffirming Russia's exclusion from Europe.<sup>38</sup> Rather than seeing NATO as the central security institution in Europe many Russians would prefer to highlight the UN, OSCE and the Council of Europe, organisations within which Russia has the equal status that is denied to it in NATO.<sup>39</sup>

What this points to is that there is a certain irony in the close tie the US makes between the NEI and NATO (and to a lesser extent EU) enlargement. In short, there is a danger that the Europe envisaged by the US as embodied in the institutions of NATO and the EU becomes presented as a civilisational empire gradually extending its borders through enlargement. Placing so much emphasis on NATO and EU enlargement has the potential to undermine the more multiperspectival view entailed in postmodern *Hanseatic* discourses on the NEI, which emphasise the role of multiple overlapping organisations and institutions without a particular hierarchy amongst them. By focusing so much on NATO there is a tendency to re-inscribe a hierarchy in which NATO is seen as the primary actor. Furthermore, given the history of the organisation, linking the NEI so closely to NATO is also only likely to undermine attempts to get beyond traditional East-West divisions in order to promote less politicised notions of Europe as being open to a new plurality of which northernness would be one part.

Notably, the EU also shares some of Russia's concerns. Whilst, like the US, the EU is motivated by a civilisational discourse in which the EU is understood as having a mission to continually extend its

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<sup>37</sup> On Russian attitudes to NATO see, S. Neil MacFarlane (2001) 'NATO in Russia's Relations with the West', *Security Dialogue* (Vol.32, No.3)

<sup>38</sup> Arkady Moshes (2000) 'Russia Looks at the Baltic Sea Region', in Arkady Moshes and Bertil Nygren, *Russia Looks at the Baltic Sea Region* (Stockholm: Strategiska Institutionen SI Serie R:2) p.11

<sup>39</sup> S. Neil MacFarlane, 'NATO in Russia's Relations with the West', p.286

peace project, in contrast, the EU rarely links its peace mission to NATO enlargement. In the EU perspective, NATO is generally associated with questions of military/hard security, whilst the EU is the paradigm of the soft security approach of mutual interdependence. In this respect, it is notable that until 2001 and Putin's more positive views on NATO, the EU NATO members have been rather cool on the enlargement of NATO to the Baltic States, seeing it as provocative and only likely to complicate relations with Russia.<sup>40</sup> Likewise, linking definitions of Europe to NATO membership does not fit the neutrality and non-alignment policies of a number of EU member states. Not least this is the case with Finland, the inspiration behind the Northern Dimension, and a country that has clearly seen the NDI as a way to keep the question of NATO enlargement to the Baltic States on the back burner. The difference between the NEI and NDI in this respect, therefore, is that the NEI appears to be trapped in a discourse in which membership of 'Europe' is equated with membership in a hierarchy of Western organisations headed by NATO, but with the EU not far behind. In contrast, in not having membership in *particular* and hierarchically prioritised institutions as an end goal, the Northern Dimension steps outside these potentially exclusionary definitions and more fully embraces the multiperspectivism of the *Hanseatic* metaphor, with its call for multiple and overlapping spaces of governance and political order.

A third reason for the US emphasis on NATO in the NEI can perhaps be seen in terms of US-EU relations more generally and the fact that NATO remains America's most significant instrument of representation in European affairs.<sup>41</sup> This also explains the positive links that the US continually draws between the NEI and the EU's NDI. Notably, American speeches on the NEI virtually always make a link to the NDI and stress that it is in northern Europe that a new

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<sup>40</sup> Helmut Hubel (2002) 'Introduction: The European Union in the North-Eastern Baltic Sea Area - A General Perspective', in Helmut Hubel (ed) *EU Enlargement and Beyond: The Baltic States and Russia* (Berlin: Berlin Verlag) p.2; Peter Schmidt (2000) 'Drifting Apart? The EU's Emerging Security and Defence Dimension and the Transatlantic Connection', in Hans Zettermark, Magnus Hägg and Caroline von Euler (eds) *The Baltic Room: Extending the Northern Wing of the European House* (Stockholm: Swedish National Defence College) p.79

<sup>41</sup> Martin Walker (2000) 'Variable geography: America's mental maps of a Greater Europe', *International Affairs* (Vol.76, No.3) p.466; Peter Schmidt, 'Drifting Apart?', p.80



post-Cold War US-EU partnership can be forged.<sup>42</sup> In particular, the NEI is sometimes presented as little more than a supplement to EU policy in northern Europe.<sup>43</sup> To some extent these persistent references to NATO and to a relationship of partnership with the Northern Dimension betray American fears that as the EU develops into an increasingly unified actor with its own foreign policy and currency, the US is in danger of being isolated from Europe and of being marginalised in the triangle of EU-Russia-US relations.<sup>44</sup> These fears are clearest in concerns over European efforts to create a common European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), which will involve the establishment of a European army, and which has been positively encouraged by Russia who sees it as a chance to slide in between the US and the EU and to foster the multipolar world order they desire. American concerns in this regard have been vocal and the US has been quite adamant in asserting that NATO must remain the centre-piece of European security. As Colin Powell has put it, NATO "is the bedrock of our relationship with Europe. It is sacrosanct. Weaken NATO, and you weaken Europe, which weakens America".<sup>45</sup> The point is that the NEI's focus on a relationship of partnership with the NDI and its promotion of NATO enlargement establishes the policy as a vehicle for the US to remain engaged in Europe. Put another way, through the NEI the US finds space and a forum within which it can retain a constitutive voice in European affairs, and more particularly in the developing relationship between the EU and Russia.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> For example see, Conrad Tribble (2000) 'The NEI and the Northern Dimension', in *The Northern Dimension: An Assessment and Future Development* (Riga: Konrad Adenauer Stiftung and Latvian Institute of International Affairs 2000) p.62

<sup>43</sup> For example see, H.R. 4249: Cross-Border Cooperation and Environmental Safety in Northern Europe Act of 2000. [http://www.state.gov/www/regions/eur/nei/nei\\_bill.html](http://www.state.gov/www/regions/eur/nei/nei_bill.html); Downloaded 15/01/01

<sup>44</sup> Simon Serfaty (2001) 'A Euro-Atlantic Ostpolitik', *Orbis* (Vol.45, No.4) pp.601-602

<sup>45</sup> Colin Powell quoted in Ivo H. Daalder and James M. Goldgeier (2001) 'Putting Europe First', *Survival* (Vol.43, No.1) p.76

<sup>46</sup> Two further reasons for the US desire to link the NEI to the NDI can also be given. Firstly, making such a link and pooling resources plays well with those who want to see America's allies sharing more of its international financial burdens. Secondly, the link also reflects American awareness that playing down the US role is less likely to raise Russian sensitivities and avoids creating the impression of the US as a hegemon throwing its weight around in northern Europe.

## *The EU, Blowing Hot and Cold*

In stark contrast to US interest and references to the Northern Dimension, the EU's attitude towards America's NEI has been characterised by ambivalence - although there are now signs of change (see below). This ambivalence is no more evident than in the Action Plan on the Northern Dimension, the policy's foremost document to date, that was presented to the European Council at Feira, Portugal, in June 2000. Notably, the Action Plan fails to make a single reference to the NEI. On the other hand, the US is mentioned three times, but only to say that there *may* be some gains to be made through cooperation with the US and Canada in areas of energy, the environment, nuclear safety, legal reform, health and issues of sustainable development in the circumpolar and adjacent northern regions. However, the Action Plan is bereft of specifics of what this cooperation might entail, how it will come about, through which institutional forums, and who might be involved.<sup>47</sup> In 1999, amid proclamations of how both sides desired to enhance the effectiveness of their cooperation, the EU and the US actually decided to continue dialogue on northern Europe through the New Transatlantic Agenda (NTA).<sup>48</sup> In practice, however, the results have been at best haphazard, at worst non-existent. Indeed, by the EU's own admission concerning the NTA in general, "Despite the NTA emphasis on action-oriented co-operation, the formal structures for EU-US dialogue have largely been dominated by ad-hoc exchanges of information and delivered little in terms of concrete co-operative action".<sup>49</sup>

Despite this general ambivalence, however, European opinions on the relationship between the NDI and the NEI have actually been divided. For example, the Finns have been decidedly positive in their attitudes towards including the US in European policies in northern Europe. Notably, when Finnish Prime Minister, Paavo Lipponen, first

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<sup>47</sup> Council of the European Union, *Action Plan for the Northern Dimension with external and cross-border policies of the European Union 2000-2003*, Brussels, 14 June 2000, 9401/00

<sup>48</sup> Joint Statement By the European Union and the United States On Northern Europe, Second 1999 EU-US Summit, Washington, 17 December 1999.

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/us/summit/wash\\_12\\_99/north\\_eur.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/us/summit/wash_12_99/north_eur.htm);  
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<sup>49</sup> Commission of the European Communities (2001) Communication from the Commission to the Council. *Reinforcing the Transatlantic Relationship: Focusing on Strategy and Delivering Results*. Brussels, 20.03.2001 COM (2001) 154 final, p.10

introduced the Northern Dimension in 1997 it was made explicit that the United States and Canada were also included in the concept's geographical scope,<sup>50</sup> and the Finnish government has continued to emphasise the US role in northern Europe and the similarities between the NEI and NDI ever since.<sup>51</sup> Such enthusiasm can be partly explained in regard to Finnish security concerns. Although, until President Putin began to take a more open approach to the issue, the Finns had been reticent to see NATO enlarged to include the Baltic States, they have all the same been keen to keep the US interested in the region. For the Finns this is vital in order to prevent the peripheralisation and regionalisation of north European security concerns and reflects latent Finnish fears of Russian revanchist ambitions.

In contrast, however, other EU states have explicitly sought to marginalise any links with the US in the NEI, a position that tends to reflect the way some Europeans relate themselves to America more broadly. As David Arter notes, France has been particularly important in this regard and was initially suspicious of Finland's Northern Dimension Initiative, believing it to be US inspired.<sup>52</sup> Such negative attitudes again reflect European concerns of US hegemony and a desire to restrict American influence in Europe. One result of this has been that when the Action Plan came to define the geographical scope of the Northern Dimension, the United States and Canada were excluded.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Paavo Lipponen, 'The European Union Needs a Policy for the Northern Dimension', speech presented at the 'Barents Region Today' conference, Rovaniemi, Finland. 15.09.1997. Available at <http://www.vn.fi/vn/english/index.htm>

<sup>51</sup> For example see, Paavo Lipponen, 'The European Union Policy for the Northern Dimension from an Arctic Angle', speech delivered at the Fourth Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region, Rovaniemi, Finland, August 28 2000. <http://www.vn.fi/vn/english/speech/pm20000828e.htm>; Downloaded 18/09/00

<sup>52</sup> David Arter, 'Small State Influence Within the EU', p.689. Whether French suspicions are correct is difficult to say in view of current evidence. What is clear, however, is that Finland has been a pivotal location for the NEI. Notably, Derek Shearer, the US Ambassador to Finland at the end of the 1990s appears to have played a central role in drawing American attention towards the regionalising developments in the European north. An alternative interpretation might therefore be that, rather than the US being behind the NDI, it was Finnish policy (and that in the region more generally) that provided the inspiration for the US.

<sup>53</sup> The Action Plan defines the Northern Dimension as extending from Iceland in the west to northwest Russia in the east, and from the Barents and Kara Seas in the north to the southern coast of the Baltic Sea in the south. Council of the European Union, *Action Plan for the Northern Dimension with external and cross-border policies of the European Union 2000-2003*, Brussels, 14 June 2000, 9401/00

Importantly, EU ambivalence towards the NEI also derives from the difficulties that the EU faces in trying to forge unity of purpose amongst its 15 member states. Thus, whilst the northern members (led by Finland and Sweden) tend to give the Northern Dimension high priority, southern members find it much harder to get motivated about the initiative, a problem that gains importance when southern members hold the presidency of the Union and when the NDI comes in danger of dropping off the agenda altogether. Moreover, even amongst the northern members there can be important differences. For example, in contrast to Finland, which has seen the NDI as an opportunity to multilateralise aspects of its foreign policy with Russia and would like to see the NDI oriented to its specific national concerns of relations with Russia's northwest regions and St Petersburg, when Sweden held the presidency of the EU it shifted focus more towards its priority areas of the Baltic Sea and Russia's Kaliningrad exclave. When Denmark takes over the presidency in July 2002 these vagaries will become even clearer with Denmark already stating that it has plans to shift emphasis towards the Atlantic north, and in particular towards its national interests in Greenland. In short, lacking a coherent approach for its own policy it is perhaps not surprising that the EU has found it difficult to embrace the NEI with the same enthusiasm that the US has approached the NDI.

Moreover, to return to a point made earlier, EU ambivalence to the NDI, and thus also to the NEI, is also clear in that the EU is rather less prone than the US to eulogise about the European north and the Baltic Sea Region as a testing ground for a new type of politics. This is probably because for many it is precisely the EU that should be the model people draw upon when they go looking for alternative models of governance to traditional *realpolitik* dominated perceptual frames. To quote Romani Prodi:

we have a unique historic experience to offer. The experience of liberating people from poverty, war, oppression and intolerance. We have forged a model of development and continental integration based on the principles of democracy, freedom and solidarity and it is a model that works. A model of a consensual pooling of sovereignty in which every one of us accepts to belong to a minority.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Romano Prodi quoted in Peter van Ham, 'Security and Culture, or, Why NATO Won't Last', p.397

In this regard, it is the forging of the (western) European security community since 1945 that should be considered the laboratory, testing ground or experimental space for a new type of politics, not the European north. Indeed, developments in the European north are actually problematic for the EU in some ways, which is making it difficult for the EU to fully embrace the NDI and NEI. Although this point cannot be explored in detail here, at issue is that in their calls for breaking borders and promoting multiple layers of governance, the NEI and NDI pose a significant challenge to the organisation of space in the EU. On the one hand, in its internal organisation the EU is, of course, precisely a model of the 'postmodern' *Hanseatic* approach to governance being promoted in the European north. However, externally the EU tends to favour the maintenance of rather strict state-like borders that preserve a clear division between insiders and outsiders. The Schengen visa regime is the most obvious example here. The NEI and NDI directly put the exclusionary nature of the EU's borders in question and as such open the whole nature of the EU project to critical analysis.<sup>55</sup>

Finally, to return to Europeans' concerns over America's role in Europe, it is perhaps ironic that growing fears of US unilateralism in international politics actually may now be providing an incentive for the EU to focus renewed attention on the European north and the link between the NEI and NDI, precisely in order to draw America into the multilateral approaches the EU prefers. Since George Bush became President these fears have increased and both Commission President, Romano Prodi, and External Affairs Commissioner, Chris Patten, have given speeches stressing the need to persuade the US to embrace multilateralism.<sup>56</sup> The hope of rejuvenating the New Transatlantic Agenda is clearly apparent,<sup>57</sup> whilst it was notable that

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<sup>55</sup> For an exploration of some of the themes raised here see, Christopher S. Browning (2001) *The Construction of Europe in the Northern Dimension* (Copenhagen: COPRI Working Papers 39); Christopher S. Browning (unpublished manuscript) *The European Union as a Foreign Policy Actor: The Limits of Modernism*

<sup>56</sup> Romano Prodi (2001) 'The New Europe in the Transatlantic Relationship', speech to Florence European University Institute, 9 May 2001. Available at [http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/news/prodi/speech\\_01\\_204.htm](http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/news/prodi/speech_01_204.htm); Chris Patten (2001) 'Statement on Transatlantic Relations', speech to Plenary Session of the European Parliament, Strasbourg, 16 May 2001. Available at [http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/news/patten/speech01\\_223.htm](http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/news/patten/speech01_223.htm)

<sup>57</sup> For example see, Commission of the European Communities (2001) Communication from the Commission to the Council. *Reinforcing the Transatlantic Relationship*:

during the Swedish Presidency of the EU during the first half of 2001, efforts were explicitly made to play up the level of cooperation between the EU and the US through the NDI and NEI. At the same time new areas for cooperation were also identified.<sup>58</sup> Therefore, despite the differences and tensions clearly existing between America's NEI and the EU's NDI, the European north clearly does contain the potential for forging new types of understanding in US-EU relations.

### ***Post-September 11 and NATO Enlargement***

In conclusion it is worthwhile to speculate a little on how the post-September 11 environment and the increasingly likely future enlargement of NATO to the Baltic States, due to be decided at a NATO meeting in Prague towards the end of 2002, will affect developments in the European north and the dynamics between the NEI and NDI.

At first sight the future for the inventive postmodern politics encouraged by the NEI and NDI in the European north might appear bleak. George Bush's victory in the presidential election has undoubtedly seen a return to prominence at the White House of rather traditional realist power-political thinking, that prioritises questions of sovereignty and territorial control and military solutions to international disputes. As explained by Condoleezza Rice, Bush's foreign policy advisor, responsible state policy derives from a strict reading of the national interest, not from notions of what might benefit an illusory international community.<sup>59</sup> Multi-lateralism and adherence to global norms, therefore, have not been placed particularly high on the priority list of the Bush Administration. Indeed, on coming to power it is notable that in trying to define America's identity and role in world politics the Bush Administration has focused rather less on placing itself in a wider community of friends, than it has on deciding who America's enemies are. As Peter van Ham has put it, much of Bush's first months as president

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*Focusing on Strategy and Delivering Results*. Brussels, 20.03.2001 COM (2001) 154 final

<sup>58</sup> See, 'Highlights of EU-US Cooperation under the New Transatlantic Agenda', EU-US Summit Göteborg, 14/06/01. Available at [http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/us/sum06\\_01/coop.htm](http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/us/sum06_01/coop.htm)

<sup>59</sup> Condoleezza Rice (2000) 'Campaign 2000: Promoting the National Interest', *Foreign Affairs* (January/February) p.62



were dedicated to what he calls "threat procurement", even if there was little understanding of quite who or what was threatening the US.<sup>60</sup> To quote Bush in January 2001:

it [the Cold War] was a dangerous world, and you knew exactly who they were... It was us vs. them, and it was clear who them was. Today, we are not so sure who they are, but we know they're there.<sup>61</sup>

Such 'threat procurement' is accompanied by the United States' huge defence budget. This arguably, however, also tends to push the US towards unilateral militarised solutions. To quote van Ham, "With such a big and expensive hammer, the whole world apparently starts looking like a nail".<sup>62</sup> In contrast, having more limited military capabilities European states are more likely to ensure their security through other means such as multilateral institutions and upholding the value of international norms. As Joseph Nye has warned, there is a danger that America's military preponderance will result in it becoming blinkered to the effectiveness of other forms of power, such as economic, cultural and ideological levers, in enhancing American interests.<sup>63</sup> This is perhaps evident in the fact that the NEI certainly has not been a priority of the Bush Administration and the funds dedicated to it remain modest. Indeed, as part of his initial thrust to undo Clinton's foreign policy legacy Bush actually signalled an intention to cut back on economic assistance to Russia, which he saw as having been completely ineffective in assisting Russia's transformation to liberal democracy.<sup>64</sup> The events of September 11 have clearly enhanced some of these realist tendencies and from a European perspective America is becoming more unilateral than ever. Thus, at first sight the notion of the NEI and NDI as representing an opportunity to overcome the divisive politics of the past seems to be being buried in the militarist fallout of the terrorist attacks of last year and the US-led response in Afghanistan.

On the other hand, if the terrorist attacks of September 2001 and the war in Afghanistan have done one thing, it has been to settle the question of who America's enemy is - even if the 'terrorist threat'

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<sup>60</sup> Peter van Ham, 'Security and Culture, or, Why NATO Won't Last', p.400

<sup>61</sup> Quoted in Peter van Ham, 'Security and Culture, or, Why NATO Won't Last', p.400

<sup>62</sup> Peter van Ham, 'Security and Culture, or, Why NATO Won't Last', p.400

<sup>63</sup> Nye cited in Thomas E. Ricks (2001) 'Empire or Not? A Quiet Debate Over U.S. Role', *Washington Post*, 21/08/2001

<sup>64</sup> 'Bush to Scale Back Russia Aid', *BBC News*, 15/01/2001. Available at [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/world/americas/newsid\\_1117000/1117326.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/world/americas/newsid_1117000/1117326.stm)



remains rather vaguely understood. In contrast, having flirted with negative images of Russia, Moscow has now assumed the position of one of America's most prized friends and allies. In a simplified worldview that divides international society into a realm of 'us' and a realm of 'them', Russia is now firmly on the 'us' side of the divide, which largely precludes dealing with Russia in purely realist terms and can be seen to open space for more innovative approaches. Not least this is because the war on terror is explicitly a norm driven affair. Also important, however, has been President Putin's utilisation of the situation to integrate Russia into the Western world and to gain acceptance for a 'Western' and 'European' identity for Russia. Most notable, of course, has been Putin's decision to allow US military flights over Russian territory, his tacit acceptance of the phasing out of the ABM treaty and his reassertion that Russia is now prepared to see NATO enlargement to the Baltic States as negotiable - a position Putin had expressed before September 11. In this respect several points can be made that might indicate a rosier future for the visions of the NEI and NDI than one might initially expect.

Firstly, the latter point of Putin's basic acceptance of NATO enlargement to include the Baltic States is highly significant. Whilst it should not be doubted that many in the Russian Establishment would still see such a development as highly provocative, throughout the post-Cold War period many Russians have realised that if NATO wants to enlarge its borders in the Baltic then there is not actually much Russia can do about it. In this context, veiled Russian threats of retaliation and negative consequences in the event of NATO enlargement might better be seen in terms of posturing. This is to say that, throughout the 1990s, Moscow has used the threat of negative reactions over NATO enlargement as a bargaining tool in its relations in the Baltic, particularly with the Baltic States. As a result, questions such as still unresolved territorial disputes and the position of the Russian minorities in the Baltic States, have been easily securitised and placed on the high politics agenda of prestige and power. For their part, the Balts have also engaged in the same processes in reverse, arguing, for example, that the presence of potential 'fifth column' Russian minorities makes their NATO membership an urgent consideration. Putin's decision to ally with Bush and to accept NATO enlargement to the Baltic States is therefore going to make it very difficult for Russia to securitise its

relations in the Baltic States in the way that it used to. If in Prague a decision is made to include the Balts the most contentious security question in the European north will be removed from the agenda altogether. In such a new situation and assuming a real rapprochement in West-Russia relations is on the cards, with enemy images consigned to the pre-September 11 past, to have influence the only real option for all parties in the Baltic will be to engage in questions of societal security and regionalisation. This is because with the NATO issue decided the central questions of the region are likely to be of a low politics nature. Such a development, of course, would make the frameworks of the NEI and NDI more relevant than ever.

Secondly, the prospects for more multilateralism on the part of the US has also likely been enhanced since last September. Put in simple terms, Bush owes Russia and America's European allies. Russia is, of course, already reaping some of the rewards of its support, not least in the less critical attitude that the West is taking over Chechnya, in moves towards giving Russia a greater voice in NATO, and the fact that Russia's membership of the WTO looks closer than ever before. For their part, the Europeans are expecting to be taken into account much more than before and hopes for norm-driven solutions remain as strong as ever. In this respect, the relationship between the NEI and the NDI can indeed provide an ideal testing ground for more multilateral approaches across the US-EU-Russia triangle through which confidence, trust and strengthened friendships can be cemented. Finally, if NATO enlargement to the Baltic States is agreed upon in 2002 then this will also signal the fact that the single most obvious tension existing between the approaches of the NEI and NDI will have been resolved, thereby opening space for much greater coordination in addressing the problems of the north than hithertofore possible.

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