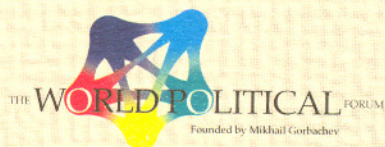
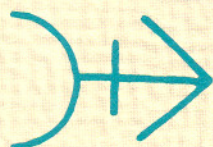


The World Political Forum



1985-2005
Twenty Years
that Changed
the World



ple in the course of all these years have had many bad turns and difficult situations [...] in the end, one way or another, they have tried to get out of these situations; but now things have changed.

We are here to talk about geo-strategic consequences: well now the Russian people have less and less say, so if there is ever to be a renaissance of the Russian people, we need a leader: a moral, serious, professional leader. Unfortunately, I do not see this leadership. [...]

ROBERT LEGVOLD, PROFESSOR OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
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[...] When the post-war international system perished between November 9 1989 and December 1991, it exposed three hopes for what the future would bring. These three hopes were masquerading as assumptions at the time. The hopes were never clearly articulated and they were disembodied; that is they were never tied together.

The first of those, primarily in the West, including [...] the United States, was that relations among the major powers and the disorders in the world outside, in the world at large, would be managed through cooperation among the major powers. This was not so much the failed idea of collective security that had underlaid the League of Nations and the United Nations; it was, if anything, akin to the nineteenth century notion of the Concert of Europe. The Russian version of that, in the early years under Yeltsin and his Foreign Minister Andrei Kozarev, was a notion of a zone of peace and stability from Vancouver to Vladivostok, as they used the expression. It was a kind of 'Concert of the Northern hemisphere'.

The second hope that masqueraded as an assumption was that peace and stability among the major powers would be underpinned by the spread of democracy in the post-socialist world, and the most important case in point was Russia. The theory of democratic peace was not only the core of the Clinton administration's policy towards Russia, but it was one of the critical pillars of the Clinton foreign policy in general.

The third hope masquerading as an assumption was that the powerful forces of globalization were sweeping aside traditional

power politics and therefore traditional security concerns, and with it the risk, the likelihood, even the possibility of war among the major powers. I stress war among the *major* powers in international politics. [...]

Between 1993 and September 11 2001, the three hopes dissolved. And to the extent that the assumptions were real in any fashion, they turned out to be very shallow and in important respects, even false. Globalization's negative dimensions turned out to be more than mere inconveniences. They turned out to be a genuine threat to the positive features of globalization. There were things like 'globalized crime' and 'globalized drugs' and then it crossed that qualitative and historic threshold to become 'globalized terror'.

Democratic peace theory grew cloudy when the process of democratization in the former Soviet Union faltered, beginning in 1994 in central Asia and in parts of the Caucasus and then when the faltering, when the trend toward illiberalism accelerated after 1999 and 2000 throughout the post-Soviet space.

And the Concert [...] never took shape [...] for a series of reasons. It did not first of all because of the irresolution and the self-preoccupation of the Europeans. It did not because of the abstinence of the Chinese and I believe the Japanese. It did not because of the ambivalence of the Russians and it did not because of the destructive unilateralism of the Americans. In this case, the adjective is important: 'destructive'; because in a world where the objective reality, whatever else has been said around this table in the course of the conference, is unipolarity, is American preponderance, that doesn't necessarily mean that unilateralism has to be destructive. Under American preponderance, unilateralism could be positive, it could even be necessary. But it has been destructive because of three principle qualities associated with it. It has involved consultation without deliberation. It has involved coalitions of the willing rather than coalitions of the necessary. It has exempted the United States from international rules and regimes and, more than that, it has led the United States to obstruct the creation of rules and regimes. And finally it has privileged US security, insisting that US security be enhanced even at the expense of the security of our friends, at least the way in which our friends define security. This [...] destructive unilateralism was manifest

long before the Bush administration was elected and long before September 11.

I call this, this combination of factors that I just listed about why the Concert failed: 'great power irresponsibility', by which I mean the failure of major powers to assume responsibility after the end of the Cold War and the transformation of the international system. I am what the Chinese used to call in the Chino-Soviet split a «great power chauvinist». But in my case, what I mean by 'great power responsibility' is that if there is to be a lead in forming, in controlling outcomes, as the new order takes shape, then it has to be as a result of the lead by the major powers. I think there have been major costs that have stemmed from great power irresponsibility, and I'll point to two of them.

The first is the ineffectiveness in dealing with the new world disorder, and I'll say no more because we've been talking about it for two days now at this conference.

The second, we don't talk about very much – and partly because I think it's something we take for granted – the second cost of great power irresponsibility is that we have jeopardized one of the great historic blessings of contemporary international politics, for a unique moment in the last three-hundred years of modern international relations we do not have strategic rivalry among the major powers. That's very unusual. By that I mean that now, during this period of time, there is no major power that defines one or more of the other major powers as the principle threat to national security. By that I mean that no major power organises its defence and develops its arms against one or more of the other major powers. And by that I mean no major power mobilizes alliances against one or more of the other great powers. We are simply taking this unusual historic blessing for granted and we do so, I think, for the most part, as a result of a stunning historical illiteracy, an illiteracy that is based on the notion, the foolish notion that the US preponderance is or can be made permanent.

It also, from my point of view, involves a dangerous failure of imagination, because it doesn't take much imagination in looking at the contemporary world to see that the seeds of the demise of this historic blessing are already there. They are there in the limbo of US-Chinese relations between the troubled co-operation of the moment and the constant temptation to think already about

this as a strategic competition. And that's only going to grow stronger in the next ten to fifteen years. And when that begins to develop in such a direction of strategic competition, it'll either be preceded or it'll be followed, but certainly will be accompanied by strategic rivalry between China and Japan.

Secondly, the seeds are evident in the tendency now to move toward rather than away from strategic rivalry between Russia and the West in the post-Soviet space. And that's now particularly evident in the western portions of the former Soviet Union in the context of the Ukrainian elections and many things that complemented it.

I see this as a great pity, because I think we have squandered a conceivable historical opportunity to have created a US-Russian alliance during this period of time. What would that alliance have been about? What would have made sense as its foundation? The struggle against weapons of mass destruction, the struggle against global terrorism, the need to deal with regional instability: these are the basis for the new NATO-Russia Council. They would not be the basis for a US-Russian Alliance, or would not have been. The basis for a US-Russian alliance would have been stability and mutual security in and around the Eurasian landmass. That would have been the basis for the alliance. That should be the alliance. And I stress *mutual* security because it could not have been an enterprise that was over the heads or behind the backs of Russia's neighbours within the area.

Finally, there is a list of other more specific costs. [...] We are deeply worried these days about controlling the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction the wrong hands and we have stopped thinking about the strategic regime that will govern those states already having or possessing nuclear weapons. Fundamental things are happening at the moment. The strategic regime which we have failed to modernize is now being transformed unilaterally by the United States as it imposes its notion of what that strategic nuclear regime should be.

It has two critical, I think very deleterious effects at this point. The first of those is the movement for the 'weaponization' of space and the second is lowering the nuclear threshold, which is making nuclear weapons useable, and that is something that the Russians have joined us in doing since 1998-1999. But that is only a part of

the problem. We have also failed to begin developing a strategic nuclear regime to deal with a world that has India and Pakistan. And we are not preparing ourselves for a strategic regime where North Korea has nuclear weapons and then Japan becomes nuclear and then China responds to Japan, India and Pakistan. The list is much longer than that. [...] My view is that the twenty years since 1985 are only the first twenty years and the end of this story is only going to be told in the next twenty years. And it is in the course of the next twenty years that we are going to find out just how large the costs are of the great power irresponsibility of the last ten to fifteen years. The thing is, however, it'll be our grandchildren, not us who will be paying those costs. [...]

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[...] We all agree that since the collapse of an unpleasant but stable bipolar system, we have been confronted with the search for alternative international systems, or a system able to win a consensus of support from the international community. This search, so far, has failed – provisionally failed let us say. At the same time during this period, with the contribution made by terrorism in 2002, it has served to unleash certain fantasies or dreams with a sense of destiny that has accompanied the United States since its colonial founding. I say this, which is obviously a comment on the Bush Administration, not for polemical purposes but as an analytical statement. And I would add that while American policy is currently dominated by the specific acts and judgements of this administration, it is also largely in continuity with the policy of the Clinton Administration, which preceded it. Indeed the programme enabling the creation of a system of United States global military commands and a policy of base building and of cultivating close relations with the military, particularly of countries of the non-Western world, originated in the time of Jimmy Carter.

The belief that dominates American policy at the present time is articulated by Brzezinski in his recent book [...] that the seemingly unique American power predominance has provided

the United States with the means but also the obligation of global intervention and the privilege to act in that way in the general international interest. This assumption is generally supported by the Washington policy community and by the mainstream academic community and certainly by the American press. I emphasise that it is not an eccentricity of the Bush Administration although it has been given form by the Bush people. This vision, which has been much criticized, does include certain neo-conservative beliefs about the appropriate use of power or the value of power itself or of violence and notions about the dissimulations of national intentions in the interest of a vision of the world, which is too stark for the mass of people to be able to confront.

But basically, as I have said, this notion of special power and responsibility, has been with the country since its very founding. It would be a digression in view of the time that we have here to go into the religious aspects of this, which date from the Puritan belief in the United States as the founding of a new religious dispensation, through the essentially religious vision of Woodrow Wilson (who believed that his was not only a national, but personal and divine commission, to alter the world in a utopian manner). Right up to George Bush, whose commitment to evangelical Protestantism and possibly to a millenarian sectarian version of protestant evangelical religion, is an important yet impossible element to assess in the American stance. But this policy says that since the United States has both power and responsibility, it requires, again according to Brzezinski, more security than any other state.

Secondly, it requires exemption from multilateral constraints, and war crimes courts. Of course in part, and under the Bush Administration, the demand for exemption from rules has been expanded to exemption from the Geneva Conventions on the conduct of war and the commonly accepted international rules concerning torture. Finally, it demands international acknowledgment of the primacy of the United States, and for this reason logically requires not the abandonment of NATO but the recasting of NATO, since NATO is internally a multilateral organization and functions by consensus, so NATO has to be recast as a military instrument which acknowledges American primacy. And this