

In stark contrast to this rich and ambitious menu of measures to enhance strategic stability, the new Bush administration could bring itself to agree only to a paltry four-line statement at the G-8 Summit in Genoa, on July 22, 2001: "We agreed that major changes in the world require concrete discussions of both offensive and defensive systems. We already have some strong and tangible points of agreement. We will shortly begin intensive consultations on the interrelated subjects of offensive and defensive systems. Surprisingly, this agreement was hailed as a major breakthrough. Lost in the shuffle was the fact that precisely such a formulation had been under intensive consideration in the Ross-Mamedov discussions during the administration of President George H. Bush in 1991-1992.

From Bipolar to Unipolar Strategic Stability?

The Cold War was characterized by a bipolar system, with the US and the USSR as the two competing poles. From the mid-1940s through to the mid-1970s, bipolarity was essentially a zero-sum phenomenon. With the onset of the policy of *Ostpolitik* and the resulting *détente*, bipolarity slowly began to shift toward non-zero sum outcomes in certain areas. Eventually modified bipolarity became the norm underpinned by mutual assured destruction. All of this changed literally overnight with the dissolution of the Warsaw Treaty Organization and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union.

The four decade long bipolar system collapsed, leaving the US as the sole surviving superpower. Quickly, the US defence department drafted a new grand strategy designed to preserve unipolarity by preventing the rise of a peer.⁵⁸ In the face of mounting domestic and international criticism, the US reverted to the moniker of a "leader" or "an indispensable nation". For many neorealists, the least stable of structures is unipolarity, as any overwhelming concentration of power threatens other states and propels them to form countervailing coalitions.⁵⁹ Other scholars doubt whether the system is indeed unipolar and maintain that it is "uni-multipolar".⁶⁰ Whatever the characteristics of the international system, it is clear that for the foreseeable future it will be dominated by a predominant hegemon – the United States. It enjoys an overwhelming margin of superiority over its nearest rival, and also over all the other great powers combined. The US maintains overwhelming preponderance in all the key indicators of power: economy, military, technology and geopolitics. The challenge for the rest of the international community is how to deal with the US, how to tame the hegemon, and how to get it to carry its weight in a multilateral context? And, how will strategic stability evolve in a unipolar system? Already, we are witnessing some of the stresses and strains as the US struggles to redefine its nuclear force posture without upsetting the rest of the apple cart. With regard to strategic stability, is this unipolar system conducive to peace, will it engender attempts at countervailing coalitions. Furthermore, is the hegemon positioning itself to forestall the rise of challengers – is the US cozying up to India, for example, to provide a regional counter to China? It is as yet too early to answer these questions – the current tendencies though do not appear propitious, because the sole surviving superpower is afflicted with leadership, vision, commitment and engagement deficits. Thus, there is a window of opportunity for middle powers to try to tame the hegemon and to direct it toward constructing a cooperative, interdependent system of strategic stability.

⁵⁸ Patrick Tyler, "The Lone Superpower Plan: Ammunition for Critics," *The New York Times* (March 10, 1992), p. A12.

⁵⁹ Christopher Layne, "The Unipolar Illusion: Why New Great Powers Will Arise," *International Security* (Spring 1993), pp. 5-51; and Michael Mastanduno, "Preserving the Unipolar Moment: Realist Theories and U.S. Grand Strategy after the Cold War," *International Security* (Spring 1997), pp. 44-98.

⁶⁰ Samuel Huntington, "The Lonely Superpower," *Foreign Affairs* (March/April 1999), p. 36.