

Comparing the U.S. to 19th century Great Britain, a point was made that while the U.S. has assumed a position of *status quo*, Europe is in flux. With the European enlargement process underway, it is not yet certain what form Europe will take. Will it become a loose federation or a strong confederation? Will it expand to the Middle East to include Turkey? To what extent will the European Union (EU) take responsibility for the Balkans? If the EU were to expand to the Middle East and become a direct player in and a neighbour to this strategically important region, Europe's place in U.S. foreign policy would undoubtedly grow in significance. However, before enlargement goals are achieved, serious challenges have to be met. They include concerns about political legitimacy and declining public support for enlargement and for the Euro.

2.2. NATO and European Security and Defence Policy

U.S. relations with NATO will be shaped by NATO enlargement to the East and the development of a European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), which provides for the creation of a rapid reaction force. Further NATO eastward enlargement will have to be considered against the backdrop of Russia's objections and concerns. It is unclear, at the present, where the U.S. administration stands in respect to the ESDP. Nonetheless, a suggestion was made that implementation of the ESDP would most likely not lead to a deterioration of U.S. - NATO (U.S. - Europe) relations. A question arose whether trade is not a more contentious issue for relations between the U.S. and Europe than the creation of the rapid reaction force.

2.3. NMD and Defence Policy

A point was made that the alleged wide-spread opposition to NMD is exaggerated. It appears that European objections have collapsed. Great Britain's Prime Minister Tony Blair and Germany's Chancellor Gerhard Schröder are nearly on board, Russia's President Vladimir Putin understands the principle of rogue states and accepts NMD in principle. European soft support notwithstanding, NMD is far from a deployment stage and there is no acute reason for worry today.

When considering NMD one should keep in mind that:

- there is no imminent deployment,
- allies are not asked to financially contribute,
- the Russian and Chinese governments have been reassured that NMD will not threaten their nuclear deterrence.

On the other hand, one has to ponder the implications of amending or scrapping the ABM treaty. The assertion that the ABM treaty is outdated, because the concept of nuclear deterrence and the relationship between offence and defence have changed dramatically since the fall of the Berlin Wall, should be carefully considered.