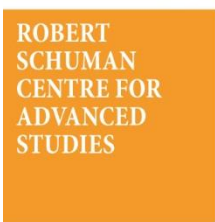




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RSCAS 2014/46  
Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies  
Global Governance Programme-100

The United States as a regional security actor

Patryk Pawlak



European University Institute  
**Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies**  
Global Governance Programme

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this paper is to explore the U.S. role as a regional actor along three dimensions: intra-regional, inter-regional and trans-regional. The paper investigates to what extent these three dimensions are present within the U.S. strategic thinking and discusses briefly different dimensions of the U.S. role as a security provider. The paper demonstrates that despite the extensive interdependence between the United States and its North American neighbours, the political and analytical significance of their relationship is overshadowed by its international commitments in other parts of the world, including in the Middle East or Asia. The paper concludes that the roles that the United States plays as a regional security provider are in constant evolution which results in a varied geometry of U.S. engagement within North America and globally.

## **Keywords**

North America, U.S. foreign policy, regional security, security strategy





## **Introduction\***

Existing studies on regional integration demonstrate that no other two countries in the world are more important to the U.S. economy, security and society than Canada and Mexico (Pastor, 2011). They are the two largest markets for U.S. exports, the two largest sources of energy imports, and one-third of all immigrants to the U.S. come from Mexico. More than half of all the tourists who visit the U.S. each year come from Canada and Mexico. In 2010, Stratfor maintained that the greatest international issue for the United States will no longer be the Islamic world or even Russia but Mexico: ‘Mexico is a rapidly growing but unstable power on the U.S. border (...) Mexico’s cartels are gaining power and influence in the United States (...) the United States will be trapped by a culture that is uneasy with a massive Mexican immigrant population and an economy that cannot manage without it’ (Stratfor Global Intelligence, 2010). The importance of the closest neighbourhood for U.S. interests is even more significant if one expands the definition of the neighbourhood to include Central America and the Caribbean in the South (due to migratory pressures, transborder crime or trade potential) and the melting ice of the Arctic in the north (due to its strategic importance for the transportation routes and natural resources). Yet, the political and analytical significance of the U.S. relationship with its closest neighbours is overshadowed by its international commitments in other parts of the world, including in the Middle East or Asia. The purpose of this paper is, therefore, to explore the U.S. role as a regional actor along three dimensions: intra-regional (i.e. the U.S. security role within a broader North American context), inter-regional (i.e. the U.S. security role in other parts of the world) and trans-regional (i.e. the security role that the U.S. plays as a consequence of domestic policies with extraterritorial implications). The paper investigates to what extent these three dimensions are present within the U.S. strategic thinking and discusses briefly different dimensions of the U.S.’s role as a security provider.

## **United States: ‘first among equals’**

The discussion about the U.S.’s role as a security actor cannot take place without reflecting upon its current standing in global affairs. While the general view is that the position of the U.S. is decreasing, the assessments of the implications that such a shift implies differ. The most recent global trends report prepared by the U.S. National Intelligence Council in 2013 – an authoritative source aimed to guide the U.S. foreign and national security policies in the years to come - states that the U.S. pre-eminence across a range of power dimensions and the legacies of its global leadership will determine that the U.S. ‘most likely will remain “first among equals” among the other great powers’ (National Intelligence Council, 2012: 101). The report also points to dramatic changes in the global context – including the relative economic decline of the U.S. and its major partners, changes in military spending across the world, the growing weight of China – as potentially undermining the future influence of the United States.

If the United States loses its position as the ‘indispensable nation’, the question is who will fill the vacuum. Analysts of international relations argue that with the global redistribution of power the world will become more polycentric, with several hubs playing a major role. This conclusion seems to lose its ground when tested against the economic and trade data. The most recent study conducted by the Centre for European Policy Studies on request from the European Commission suggests that while the volume of trade flows between EU, U.S. and China will become more balanced, the three will still lead the world in 2030. Given that perceptions among policymakers and the public opinion play a role in setting policy directions, it is important to better scrutinise the perceptions within this ‘G3 power

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\* The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and should not be attributed to the EUISS.

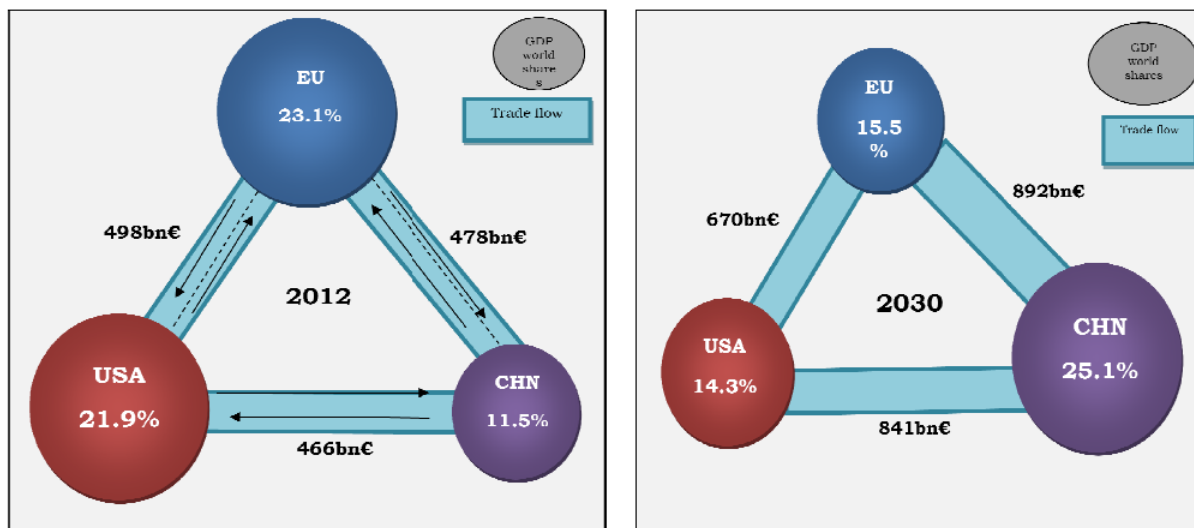
triangle’ in order to enhance the understanding of how the U.S. assesses its security roles within the region and in other parts of the world.

**Table 1. The four engines of the world economy (% of world total, 2011)**

	North America	Europe	Asia	Commodity producers
GDP (Purchasing power parity)	20.9	22.0	35.9	21.3
Population	5.0	8.6	56.9	29.4
Private consumption expenditure	29.0	27.4	25.6	18.0
Exports	10.9	36.0	32.2	20.9
Imports	15.0	35.8	30.1	19.1
International reserves	2.1	11.6	60.3	26.0

Source: Hamilton and Quinlan (2013)

**Figure 1. Bilateral trade flow and GDP share of the G3 power triangle**

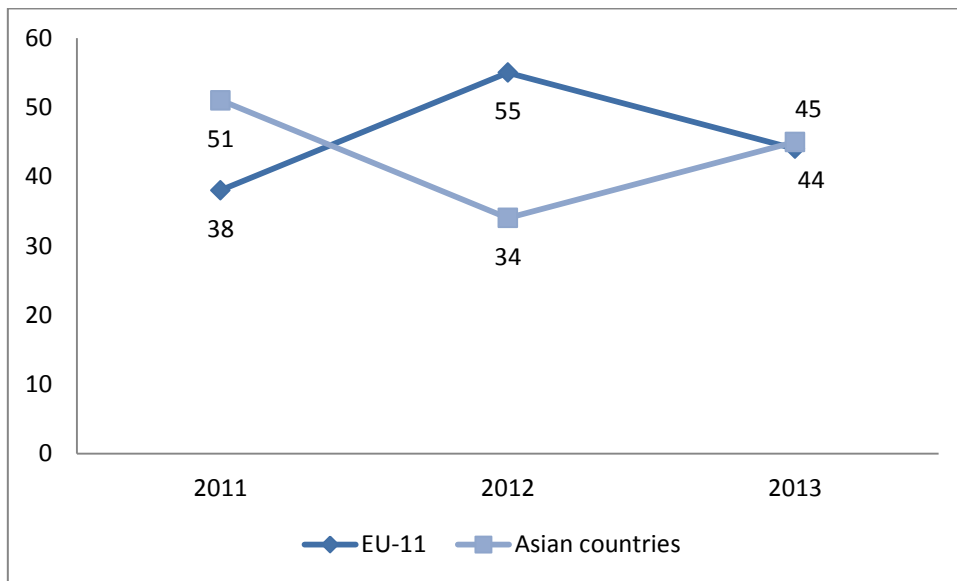


Source: CEPS, 2013.

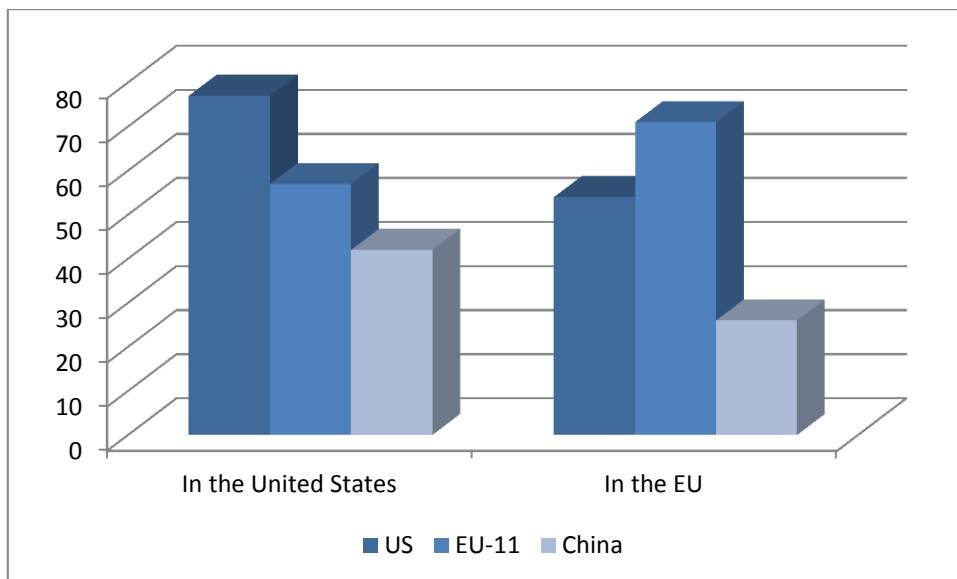
According to a Pew Research Center Survey conducted in 2011, China is perceived as the world’s leading economic power by 47% of Americans, with the United States named by 31% of respondents (Pew Research Center, 2011). This also translates into the definition of a Chinese threat stemming primarily from its economic power rather than military strength (60% and 27% respectively). The elephant in the room is whether China’s growing importance at the global stage will lead to a peaceful power shift or whether it will result in a conflict between major powers. Two-thirds of Americans (67%) still view the U.S. as the world’s leading military power (as opposed to 16% for China). Therefore, it is not surprising that the majority of Americans see China as a ‘problem’ but not an adversary (43% and 22% respectively), while 58% of respondents support a stronger relationship between the U.S. and China. It is noteworthy, that 20% of Americans name China as a country representing the greatest threat to the U.S. – an 11% increase in comparison to November 2009 (followed by North Korea, Iran, Afghanistan and Russia). Nevertheless, the surveys conducted by Gallup before the visit of Chinese president Xi Jinping to the United States in June 2013 confirmed mixed views of China among Americans, with some describing it as an ally (11%) or an enemy (14%), or as a friendly (44%) rather than an unfriendly nation (26%) (Jones, 2013).

The U.S. relationship with Europe is more mature and characterised by cooperation at several levels underpinned by a higher level of trust in comparison to Sino-American relations. Nevertheless, the ascending role of China (and Asia in general) as an important actor in global affairs has increasingly made both the EU and the U.S. pivot to the Far East. According to the Transatlantic Trends 2013, Europeans still perceive the United States as more important to their national interests than Asia (64% and 27% respectively), whereas the views of American respondents are more split (45% for Asia and 44% for Europe). It needs to be highlighted that if the reference to Asia is substituted by China specifically, there is an even higher degree of relevance assigned to the transatlantic link – 71% in Europe and 53% in the United States. Most importantly, the respondents in EU and in U.S. tend to prefer each other’s leadership in world affairs to the Chinese (see Figure 3).

**Figure 2. Most important region to United States**



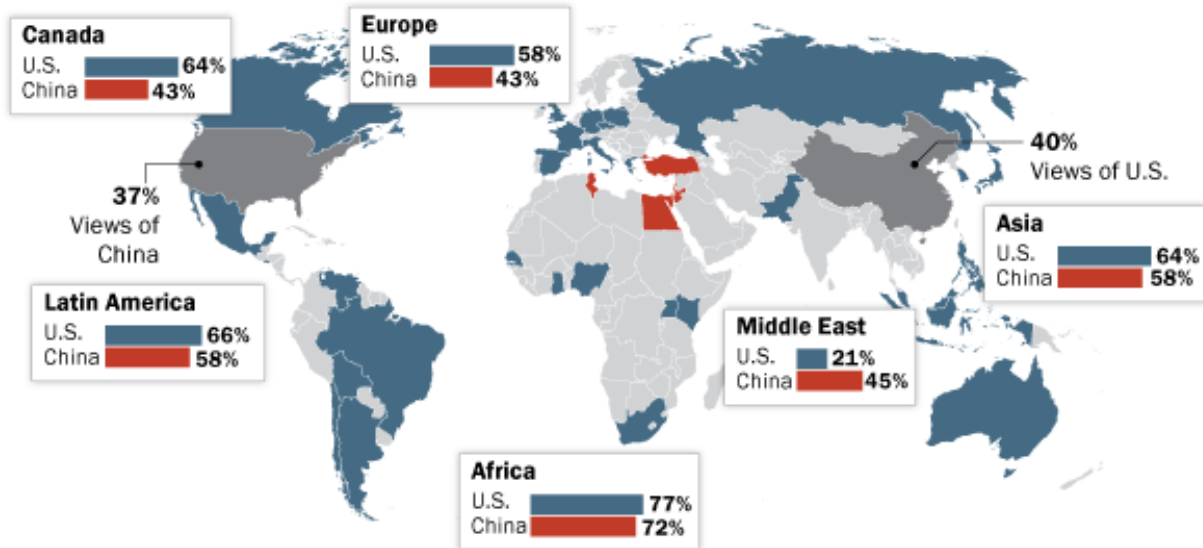
**Figure 3. Desirability of leadership in world affairs**



Source: German Marshall Fund of the United States (2013). Author’s compilation

The data presented above suggests that certain components of the United States power still make it a ‘partner of choice’ for many international players. However, the data also suggests that there is a growing divide between European and American respondents with regard to how they perceive the importance of their bilateral relationship and their respective role for each other’s national interests.

**Figure 4. Median favourability of U.S. and China by region**



Source: Pew Research, Global Attitudes Project (2013)

### How does the U.S. define its security landscape?

The strategic context and security priorities of the U.S. government are primarily defined through the process encompassing a wide array of strategic reviews and guidance. The national security strategy (NSS) issued by the President provides an umbrella for more specific documents originating from the Department of Defence (National Defence Strategy, Quadrennial Defence Review Report), Department of State (Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review) or Department of Homeland Security (Quadrennial Homeland Security Review). The Obama Administration has declared from the outset that the concepts of national and homeland security should be approached in a comprehensive way (including economic, energy and environmental security) and should be treated as ‘indistinguishable’.

These are living documents that reflect the Administration’s *état d’esprit* directly involved in their drafting. For instance, the 2002 NSS prepared under the Bush Administration defined the goals broadly – ‘political and economic freedom, peaceful relation with other states, and respect for human dignity’ – and described eight areas of effort to meet those objectives. However, the 2010 NSS prepared under President Obama listed four ‘enduring interests’ for the United States: ‘the security of the United States, its citizens, and U.S. Allies and partners; a strong, innovative and growing U.S. economy in an open international economic system that promotes opportunity and prosperity; respect for universal values at home and around the world; and an international order advanced by U.S. leadership that promotes peace, security and opportunity through stronger cooperation to meet global challenges’.

Road maps towards achieving these broad objectives are successively outlined in specific documents, like Defence Strategic Guidance (DSG). For instance, the 2012 DSG entitled ‘Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Defence’ emphasised a shift from focusing on

winning today's wars to preparing for future challenges. It also signalled a 'rebalancing' in geographic priorities toward the Asia Pacific region while retaining an emphasis on the Middle East. With regard to specific missions, the document indicates a shift from stabilisation operations toward projecting power in areas in which asymmetric means challenge U.S. access and freedom to operate.

The analysis of those documents offers an insight into the security roles for the United States at several levels: intra-, inter- and trans-regional. Intra-regional level defines mostly the U.S. relationship with its direct neighbours – Canada and Mexico – and is founded on a mix of trade and homeland security objectives. Inter-regional level addresses the security role of the United States in other regions of the world, including in Europe or Asia. The common denominator is a decade-long network of alliances concluded by the United States in the past. The 2010 NSS states clearly that America's relations with its allies are the 'foundation of United States, regional, and global security' and that the U.S. commitment to their security is 'unshakable'. The document further states that 'these relationships must be constantly cultivated, not just because they are indispensable for U.S. interests and national security objectives, but because they are fundamental to our collective security' (White House, 2010). Finally, the guiding principle at the trans-national level is that 'many of today's challenges cannot be solved by one nation or even a group of nations' and therefore cooperation between nations is an imperative. The difference with regular forms of international cooperation is that this type of security role does not necessarily require a prior engagement with the other side. The following sections address in more detail the varied geometry of the U.S.'s role as a regional security actor.

**Table 2. Comparing Free Trade Agreements (billions of \$ unless otherwise specified)**

	Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership	TransPacific Partnership	NAFTA
GDP (Purchasing Power Parity)	15853	5802	3062
% of World Total	20.1	7.3	3.9
Population (thousands)	501917	346079	149143
% of World Total	7.2	5.0	2.1
Per Capita Income (\$)	35087	16329	19397
Personal Consumption Expenditure	10195	3243	1744
% of World Total	25.2	8.0	4.3
Exports	5854	1976	802
% of World Total	32.8	11.1	4.5
Imports	6063	1957	882
% of World Total	33.1	10.7	4.8
U.S. Outward FDI stock to ...	2094	727	410
% of U.S. Total	50.4	17.5	9.9
U.S. Inward FDI stock from ...	1573	307	225
% of U.S. Total	61.8	12.0	8.8
U.S. FDI income earned abroad	177	95	53
% of U.S. Total	38.7	20.9	11.5
Foreign FDI Income earning in the U.S.	95	18	13
% of U.S. Total	62.9	11.9	8.5
Foreign affiliate sales of U.S. MNCs in ...	2107	1321	761
% of U.S. Total	40.8	25.6	14.7
U.S. affiliate sales of foreign MNCs from ...	1609	309	245
% of U.S. Total	52.1	10.0	8.0

Source: Hamilton and Quinlan (2013)

## **The United States as an intra-regional security actor**

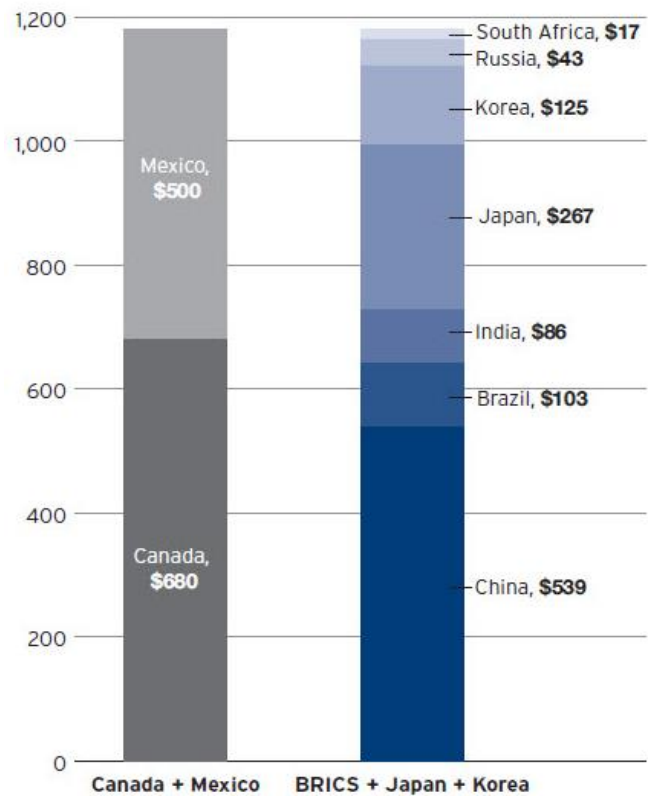
A report published by the Brookings Institution in 2013 underlines a distinctive quantity and quality of trade within North America (Parilla and Berube, 2013). The most recent data on trade in goods and services from 2011 show that the United States exchanged nearly \$1.2 trillion worth of goods and services with Canada and Mexico – the amount similar to the U.S. trade with Japan, Korea, and the BRICS nations (Figure 5). The economic and security considerations have also provided the ground for debates about further institutionalisation of North American integration. For instance, in 2005 a task force of scholars convened under the auspices of the Council on Foreign Relations published a report suggesting the creation of a ‘North American Community’ (Council on Foreign Relations, 2005; Pastor, 2008). The report mentions three shared challenges that such a community would help to address: security threats (mostly related to terrorism, organised crime and irregular migration which require a common approach to border management); challenges to economic growth and development (especially in such sectors as natural resources, agriculture and energy); and uneven economic development (deep disparities between different regions of Mexico and related migration, corruption, violence) (Ibid.).

To unlock the region’s economic potential and dismantle barriers to trade and investment, the three countries established the North America Free Trade Association (NAFTA) in 1994 (Pastor, 2004). Even though it provided some initial stimulus to North American trade (e.g. the value of trade within America has more than doubled), many of the expected benefits have been undermined by the protectionist discourse and the security logic that dominated the U.S.-Mexico-Canada agenda after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The vertical integration of North American industries (whereby countries increasingly specialise in different stages of production of the same products) puts increasing pressure on the need for trade facilitation and potential trade disruptions. In that context, sub-national governments play an increasing role. All three NAFTA countries have federal systems and through their increased transborder activities, sub-national governments have a ‘significant potential’ to shape North American integration (Fry, 2004). For instance, several U.S. states maintain their own offices in Canada or Mexico. Regional business communities in at least 9 of the 10 Canadian provinces now export more to the U.S. than to the rest of Canada (Ibid.).

Despite several positive effects of trade liberalisation in general, NAFTA has been the subject of numerous criticisms. Free trade opponents underline a negative impact on environment, displacement of workers, reduction in social programmes and ‘race to the bottom’ (Schwanen, 2004). In Canada, the indicators of economic underperformance as compared to those of the United States became a matter of national debate. In Mexico, on the other hand, the biggest disappointment concerns the distribution of gains from NAFTA. Mexican regions further away from the U.S. border are among the poorest in the country and regional gaps in per capita income have widened since NAFTA was implemented. This also contributes to extensive migration within the country and from Mexico to the U.S. Some analysts argue that there is no higher priority for North America than reducing the economic divide between Mexico and the other two members of NAFTA (Pastor, 2004). In 2006, 36.5 million Americans were living in poverty, among which 9.2 million were Hispanics. Robinson, Morley and Diaz-Bonilla concluded that only a fundamental change in development strategy would induce sufficient growth to permit the narrowing of the income gap between Mexico and its neighbours (6% growth compared to current export strategy adding 1% of their growth rate) (Robinson et al., 2005).

The most recent cooperation on migration has been mostly security driven. According to some observers, it seems unlikely that North America will adapt an integration approach that includes free movement of people like in the EU (Meyers and O’Neil, 2004). However, the flow of people across national borders will continue, as will social, political and economic consequences (Peschard-Sverdup, 2007). To address key security and economic issues facing North America, in 2005 the leaders of Mexico, Canada and the U.S. adopted the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America (SPP). The SPP reflects the collective commitment ‘to market and democracy, freedom and trade, and mutual prosperity and security’ (SPP). The SPP process is conducted by working-level counterparts in three countries with the aim to discuss future arrangements for economic integration in order to create a single market for goods and services in North America as well as future arrangements for security against potential terrorist attacks (Anderson and Sands, 2007). Nevertheless, border security remains one of its primary concerns. Among the most recent developments is the decision by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to deploy thermal camera systems, Mobile Surveillance Systems, and Remote Video Surveillance Systems along northern and south-western borders of the United States. The DHS has also expanded the use of Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) with approximately 1150 miles coverage along the Northern border and the entire Southwest border.

**Figure 5. Total US trade with Mexico/Canada vs. BRICS/Japan/Korea, 2011 (in billions of USD)**



Source: Parilla and Beruba (2013)

With regard to specific projects, the development and implementation of the Mérida Initiative between the United States and Mexico is particularly noteworthy. Four strategic pillars covered by the initiative include disrupting organised criminal groups, institutionalising the rule of law, creating a 21st century border, and building strong and resilient communities. Whereas U.S. assistance initially focused on training and equipping Mexican counterdrug forces, it gradually evolved towards addressing the underlying societal problems and weak institutions that make the drug trade possible. According to the U.S. Department of State, it is ‘an unprecedented partnership between the United States and Mexico to address violence and criminality while strengthening the rule of law and the respect for human rights’. In addition, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) programmes under the Merida Initiative support Mexican efforts to improve citizens’ security and develop models to mitigate the community-level impact of crime and violence.

With regard to resources, North America is energy interdependent. In 2004, Canada and Mexico were the two largest exporters of oil to the United States; Canada supplies the U.S. with almost 90% of its imported natural gas and all of its imported electricity. North America contains the world’s largest integrated energy market. Cooperation is particularly evident for natural gas and electricity. Continental oil and electricity exchanges both doubled between 1990 and 2000, and gas trade grew

even faster. Non-traditional areas (i.e. Canadian Arctic and Alaska) are short of becoming reliable supply sources via two pipelines from the Far North (Dukert, 2004). Access to water is another aspect where interdependencies are clearly visible. Both northern regions of Mexico and the southern region of the U.S. have experienced growth in population and increased pressure on water resources. The past water disputes in border region demonstrate the importance of working towards common solutions in light of such issues as semiarid climate, rapid population growth (19.4 million people living in the border region in 2020 compared to 11.8 nowadays), extensive industrialisation, unchecked pollution, salinity problems, aquifer depletion and global environmental phenomena (US-Mexico Binational Council, 2003).

Some authors suggest that increasing interdependencies between Mexico, Canada and United States will make them reassess their respective approaches to North American integration (Schwanen, 2004). The ideas originating from Canada oscillate between a comprehensive 'grand bargain' that would foster integration beyond NAFTA, a 'step-by-step' approach focused on solving single problems and finally a more cautious approach that warns against any form of supranational institutionalisation (Wolfe, 2003).

### **The United States as an inter-regional security actor**

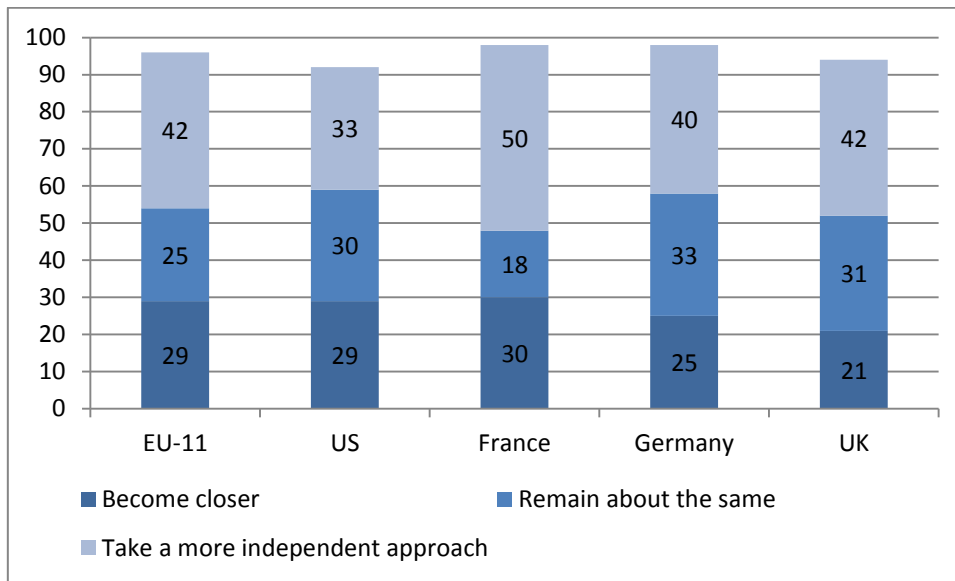
In addition to being a regional security actor *sensu stricte*, the U.S. is also a *de facto* regional security actor in other parts of the world through a web of security partnerships it has established in the past decades. The U.S. relationship with European, Middle Eastern or Asian partners come to mind. Each of them demonstrates a specific set of dependencies and characteristics.

Pre-dating all of them is the transatlantic partnership between the U.S. and European countries bilaterally and through the U.S.-EU and NATO cooperative arrangements. As stated in the U.S. National Security Strategy of 2010, the U.S. relationship with European allies 'remains the cornerstone for U.S. engagement with the world, and a catalyst for international action'. Bilateral EU-U.S. cooperation is mostly aimed at trade (Hamilton and Quinlan, 2013), homeland security (Pawlak, 2011), and increasingly crisis management and peacebuilding around the world (Gross, 2013). Since 2001, the number of initiatives has grown significantly, primarily due to the adoption of the smart borders doctrine in the U.S. (and successively in the EU) and new engagements (military and civilian) in other regions of the world

With regard to trade and economic cooperation, the EU and U.S. embarked on the negotiation process for the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). The Partnership aims at removing trade barriers in a wide range of economic sectors to ease the purchase and sale of goods and services between the EU and the U.S.. On top of cutting tariffs, the agreement will tackle non-tariff barriers to trade-like differences in technical regulations, standards and approval procedures. Improving the growth and unemployment indicators as well as strengthening the competitiveness on global markets are among the main objectives on both sides of the Atlantic. Therefore, there is the expectation that this agreement could result in significant savings to companies and create new jobs. In addition to cutting tariffs, the focus in negotiations is tackling behind the border barriers – such as differences in technical regulations, standards and certification.



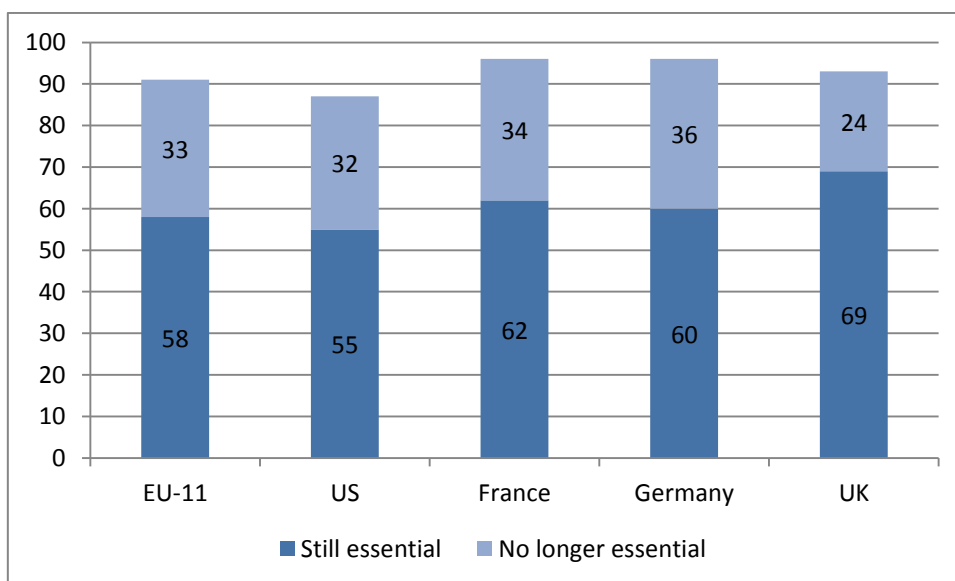
**Figure 6. Expectation about the future relationship between U.S. and EU**



Source: German Marshall Fund of the United States (2013). Author's compilation

In military terms, NATO is an obvious example of the U.S. as a security provider for its European allies. However, with the end of the Cold War (which provided a rationale for the Alliance's existence) and the EU's launch of its own Common Security and Defence Policy (which directly challenges the European commitment to NATO) the questions emerge about NATO's new (?). In the NATO context, American partners have often underlined the need for Europeans to commit more to the alliance – primarily by increasing their military expenditure. In 2011, Secretary of Defence Gates pointed directly at problems with Europeans free-riding. 'If current trends in the decline of European defence capabilities are not halted and reversed', he said, 'future U.S. political leaders - those for whom the cold war was not the formative experience that it was for me - may not consider the return on America's investment in NATO worth the cost'. Nonetheless, stable majorities in Europe and in the United States support the idea that NATO remains essential to transatlantic security (58% respondents in Europe and 55% in the United States)

**Figure 7. NATO is still essential**



Source: German Marshall Fund of the United States (2013). Author's compilation

The second pillar of the U.S. inter-regional security role is in the Asia Pacific. Starting with the Bush administration's U.S.-India nuclear deal until the announcement of Obama's ambitious plan of a Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), United States' rebalancing to the Asia Pacific becomes an undeniable fact. In today's world, East Asia and the Asia Pacific region are pillars of global economic development and prosperity with high annual economic growth rates and GDPs. Two thirds of the world's commerce takes place within this area, making trade flows in the region of crucial importance. Rising China and India's 'Look East' policy render the region a more interesting foreign policy area offering more opportunities of growth and cooperation or creating scenarios about frictions and power-balancing competition. The Department of Defence strategy published in early 2012 clearly states that 'while the U.S. military will continue to contribute to security globally, we will of necessity rebalance toward the Asia-Pacific region'. The region's high growth rates along with China's rise and incidents of assertiveness have led the U.S. to name its policy 'pivot' towards the Asia Pacific highlighting this way its big return to the region. China's military build-up and strategic ambiguity have been at the root of U.S. concerns regarding the political intentions of the former.

In East Asia the United States cultivated a 'hub and spokes' system of discrete, exclusive alliances with South Korea, the Philippines and Japan, - a system that was distinct from the multilateral security alliances it preferred in Europe. Bilateralism emerged in East Asia as the dominant security structure because of the power play rationale behind U.S. post-war planning in the region. Although the United States created a series of bilateral alliances in East Asia primarily to contain the Soviet threat, a congruent rationale was to constrain 'rogue allies'. Underscoring the U.S. desire to avoid such an outcome was a belief in the domino theory, which held that the fall of one small country in Asia could trigger a chain of countries falling to communism. Truman and Eisenhower saw tight bilateral alliances as the best way to restrain East Asia's pro-West dictators (Cha, 2010). The 'hub-and-spoke' alliance structure led by the United States was – and remains – a major feature of security politics in the Asia-Pacific. The hub-and-spoke alliance structure was also used by the United States and its regional allies as a hedge against an undesirable multilateral order emerging in the region (Till and Bratton, 2011). The small and medium-sized states in Southeast Asia have undergone significant geostrategic changes with the end of the Cold War and the rise of China (Gowan, 2013). There has been a lively debate over the last decade about whether these countries would balance or bandwagon with China, and how their relations with the other major powers in the region would change. Some authors point out that Southeast Asian countries do not feel comfortable and do not want to choose between the U.S. and China, which undermines a simplistic argument of balancing versus bandwagoning (Goh, 2005). Some authors point out that key Southeast Asian states have actively tried to influence the shaping of the new regional order (Jae Jeok Park 2011).

### **The United States as a trans-regional security actor**

Another way to think about the U.S. security posture is through policies and actions which have extraterritorial effect – national legislative acts and regulations that indirectly impose specific obligations on the rest of international community without any direct involvement on their side. Such acts usually impose certain constraints, obligations or call for actions from other actors and include coercive elements which enhance the compliance. For instance, the WTO provisions which provide the benchmark for international trade and regulation include exemptions on the basis of security provisions (article XXI GATT) which allow states to introduce limitations in international trade, for instance by labelling certain products as dangerous. In such cases it's the WTO Dispute Body that deals with conflicts between countries. The inherent assumption behind such approach is that any country has the right to protect its own interests with all available means.

In the case of homeland security regulation the legal situation is even more complicated: not only is there no international body that could judge about the rightness of certain provisions, but, as it has already been indicated, there were hardly any provisions on what was allowed and what was not. Therefore, the reference to international law, sovereignty and territorial integrity provided main points

of reference. However, the growing scope of transnational regulation refers explicitly to situations where regulatory activity of one actor carries consequences for third parties. Therefore, 'it suggests that territorial grounds and national autonomy or sovereignty cannot be taken for granted' (Djelic and Sahlin-Andersson, 2007:4). Extraterritorial application of laws has two dimensions: it may occur on the basis of an international agreement between concerned parties (e.g. mutual legal assistance agreements) or through unilateral adoption of transnational regulations (Doyle, 2007). An example of regulation with extraterritorial application is the Helms-Burton Act of 1996 which extends the territorial application of the U.S. initially internal embargo to foreign companies trading with Cuba. This act was vividly opposed by the European Union who adopted a Council Regulation (No 2271/96) declaring the extra-territorial provisions of the Helms-Burton Act to be unenforceable within the EU. It also imposed sanctions against U.S. companies and their executives for making Title III complaints.

The U.S. has frequently underlined that 'legal and judicial set ups are not really adopted to work with these new challenges and solutions' (The United States Mission to the European Union, 2007). In that spirit, the U.S. National Strategy for Homeland Security of 2002 states that 'where [the U.S.] finds existing international arrangements to be inadequate or counterproductive to [the U.S.'] efforts to secure our homeland, [the U.S.] will work to refashion them. Throughout these efforts, [the U.S.] will harmonize [the] homeland security policies with other national security goals' (The White House, 2002:60). In his address of September 2001, President Bush signalled that the U.S. 'will direct every resource at [its] command – every means of diplomacy, every tool of intelligence, every instrument of law enforcement, every financial influence, and every necessary weapon of war – to the disruption and to the defeat of the global terror network' (The White House, 2001). Consequently, the new strategic culture that emerged in the United States was built on a set of new principles: a doctrine of pre-emption; American supremacy in international security affairs, with the focus on homeland security; and a preference for unilateral action if external constraints pose too high costs (Lantis, 2004).

## **Follow the money**

The picture of U.S. security engagement globally would be incomplete without the analysis of the financial commitments foreseen for 2014. Interestingly, the Foreign Operations budget increases by about 1.5% from 2013 estimated funding. While Bilateral Economic Assistance makes about 65% of total foreign assistance request (increase by 2.9% compared to 2013 estimates), the security assistance accounts for only 24% of the proposed foreign aid budget which represents a 6% decrease compared to 2013. Multilateral aid increases by about 13% over 2013 estimated levels to 9% of the total budget request.

In terms of an inter-regional security role, the State Operations resources for the frontline states of Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan decrease under the budget request for 2014 in comparison to 2012 (Epstein et al., 2014). Nevertheless, and despite financial constraints at home, the U.S. commitment to Israel, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Egypt remains unquestioned – judging from the list of top ten recipients of U.S. foreign assistance (see Table 4). The decrease is partly related to the termination of some programmes, including the Iraq Police Development Programme or the elimination of the Pakistan Counterinsurgency Capability Fund. The budget proposal for 2014 foresees an increase for 'overseas contingency operations' (OCO) which are defined as 'extraordinary, but temporary, costs of the Department of Justice and USAID', including for Somalia, Kenya and Yemen. There is also some controversy in the Congress about the creation of a new Middle East North Africa Incentive Fund (MENA IF) that could be used in a flexible way to respond to the rapidly evolving situation in the region. The Administration made another request for FY2014 specifying that the funding would provide support to Syrian opposition, humanitarian assistance or loan guarantees. With regard to the trans-regional security role, the Obama Administration supported in particular three foreign assistance initiatives: the Global Health Initiative (with funding for Malaria, Maternal and Child Health or Pandemic Influenza), Food Security Initiative (increased funding for economic resilience activities in

regions of Africa facing chronic food insecurity) and the Global Climate Change Initiative (among others, for bilateral clean energy funding, sustainable landscape funding) (Epstein et al., 2014).

**Table 3. Foreign aid by appropriations title, FY2012 Actual and FY2014 Request**  
(in millions of current US dollars)

	FY2012 Actual	FY2013 post-sequester estimate	FY2014 Request	% change, FY2013 to FY2014 Req.
USAID Administration	1,528.00	1,450.80	1,571.34	+8.3%
Bilateral Economic Aid	22,194.80	22,133.45	22,770.04	+2.9%
Security Assistance	9,749.59	9,070.95	8,524.39	-6.0%
Multilateral Aid	2,966.29	2,819.35	3,196.44	+13.4%
Export Promotion, net	(1,015.44)	(913.00)	(966.76)	-5.9%
Total Foreign Operations <sup>a</sup>	35,423.24	34,561.55	35,095.45	+1.5%
+ Food Aid from Ag bill	1,650.00	1,536.55	185.13	-88.0%
<b>Total Foreign Aid</b>	<b>37,073.24</b>	<b>36,098.10</b>	<b>35,280.58</b>	<b>-2.3%</b>

Source: Epstein et al. (2014)

**Table 4. Top 10 recipients of U.S. foreign assistance, FY2012 actual and FY2014 request**  
(in millions of current US dollars)

FY2012 Actual		FY2014 Req. Est.	
1. Israel	3,075	1. Israel	3,100
2. Afghanistan	2,286	2. Afghanistan	2,200
3. Pakistan	1,821	3. Egypt	1,600
4. Egypt	1,556	4. Pakistan	1,200
5. Iraq	1,270	5. Nigeria	693
6. Jordan	776	6. Jordan	671
7. Ethiopia	707	7. Iraq	573
8. Nigeria	647	8. Kenya	564
9. South Sudan	620	9. Tanzania	553
10. South Africa	542	10. Uganda	456

Source: Epstein et al. (2014)

### Conclusion: varied geometry of American engagement

The roles that the United States plays as a regional security provider are in constant evolution. They are shaped by both the international context and domestic developments. The growing importance of the Asia Pacific in international trade and the U.S. ambition to maintain the influence resulted in the U.S. administration's increasing interest in the region. 'Rebalancing' – as it was commonly referred to – encompassed new military deployments in the region and strengthened partnerships with Australia,

Singapore and the Philippines. At the same time, growing energy independence launched the debate about the shift away from the Middle East and the Gulf region and increased attention to potential integration processes within North America. This changing and varied geometry of U.S. engagement may be the cause of frustration for its international partners who often factor U.S. involvement as a guarantee of their own security: this is the case for Europe but also for countries like Japan, South Korea or Israel.

The analysis of trends in U.S. foreign and security policy as well as resources committed to specific parts of the world or initiatives provide a better understanding about the direction and priorities of the U.S. security roles. For instance, the budget proposal by the Administration decreases spending on international security assistance which might suggest a smaller appetite for interventions in other parts of the world and hence diminish the U.S.'s role as an inter-regional security provider. Within this category, however, three items record a slight increase in funding: a) non-proliferation, anti-terrorism, demining; b) international military education and training; and c) peacekeeping operations (Epstein et al., 2014). Framing these developments within the conceptual model proposed by Kircher and Dominguez (2010) suggests that there is a slight shift in the United States towards protection, prevention and assurance (Table 5).

**Table 5. Frameworks of security governance and examples of intra-, inter- and trans-regional security roles of the United States**

<b>Frameworks of security governance</b>	<b>Intra-regional</b>	<b>Inter-regional</b>	<b>Trans-regional</b>
<b>Assurance:</b> Post-conflict re-construction, peace-building, and promotion of democracy and integration.	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Afghanistan</li> <li>• Iraq</li> <li>• Middle East and North Africa</li> <li>• Asia Pacific</li> <li>• Latin America</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cybersecurity and governance of Internet</li> <li>• Promotion of human rights</li> </ul>
<b>Prevention:</b> Elimination of root causes of conflict, arms control, and nuclear non-proliferation of arms.	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Egypt</li> <li>• Pakistan</li> <li>• Asia Pacific, including China and North Korea</li> <li>• Russia</li> <li>• Iran</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arms trade embargoes (e.g. China)</li> </ul>
<b>Protection:</b> Terrorism, organized crime and pandemics.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mexico (Miranda project, Security and Prosperity Partnership)</li> <li>• Canada</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yemen</li> <li>• Somalia</li> <li>• Mali</li> <li>• Europe</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Smart borders</li> <li>• Organised crime</li> <li>• Global Health Initiative</li> <li>• Food Security Initiative</li> <li>• Global Climate Change Initiative</li> </ul>
<b>Compellence:</b> Display of military force (unilaterally or multilaterally) to manage regional conflicts	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Iraq</li> <li>• Afghanistan</li> <li>• Libya</li> <li>• Syria</li> <li>• Asia Pacific</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Global War on Terror</li> </ul>

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