

# **Global Redistribution of Geopolitical Power**

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**Abstract:** Contemporary security challenges, risks and threats are characterized by increased dynamism and global coverage. The dominant tendency on the world stage is the global redistribution of geopolitical power. Because of this trend, there is destabilization (economic, political, military, etc.) of certain regions in the world and emergence of many crisis hotspots. This is clearly evidenced by the conflicts (wars, military interventions, coups) that have taken place in recent decades in various parts of the planet, with global consequences. One such consequence is the growing awareness of the existence of common and indivisible interests at the international level. Is it possible to anticipate the basic outlines of the new world order on the basis of current events that indicate a global redistribution of global power? To what extent will the world as we know it change? Is a new geopolitical cycle beginning? Is this the beginning of the creation of a multipolar world? In the paper, we are looking for possible answers to these questions.

**Keywords:** geopolitical power, globalism, redistribution, multipolar world, armed conflicts.

## **Introduction**

The world is constantly changing, and more and more rapidly. “Nothing in the world will be the same again” is a sentence that sublimates contemporary changes and events in the world and is often uttered in the discourse that tries to explain global events and processes. What is it that “will not be the same”? What is the new thing that is coming and that is benevolently defined as “nothing” for now? The differences and controversies that appear in the interpretation are the result of different ideological starting points and methodological frameworks. On this basis, several theoretical paradigms were created, which have their own specificities but also similarities. Therefore, any critical review of the most significant geopolitical changes in the world of the first decades of the 21st century should take into account the theoretical concept

from which one starts when observing and interpreting what is happening in the rapidly changing world.

There are numerous phenomena from which the geopolitical assessment of the consequences of global phenomena, caused by the strengthening of the power of the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China, should be based, which require a new geopolitical architecture of the world. In this way, for example, Great Britain's referendum decision to leave the European Union has little effect on the weakening of the geopolitical position of the European Union. The dynamic of global applications of geopolitical power opens numerous questions such as: What dilemmas does the world face in conditions of such fluid geopolitics? What is the reflection of these events on the future of the world? Taking into account global trends and current world processes, is it even possible to anticipate future events and the consequences of competition for the global redistribution of geopolitical power? Are these processes unstoppable?

Our efforts in this paper are aimed at trying to offer possible answers to the offered questions, without pretensions that these answers are final and unquestionable.

### **Theoretical paradigms, interpretation of geopolitical phenomena and processes**

The German historian Ulrich Menzel (2001) indicates that the contemporary history of the theory of international relations can be divided into four periods. The first period (from the early 1940s to the late 1950s) is characterized by a debate between representatives of idealistic and realistic conceptions of international relations, with representatives of the realist theory prevailing. The second period (from the early 1960s to the mid-70s) is known for the discussions between methodological traditionalists of realist provenance and scientists of different theoretical orientations, whereby scientism prevailed, although it did not suppress the understandings or reduce the influence of classical realism in international politics. The third period (from the mid-70s to the end of the 1980s) is characterized by conducting theoretical debates between neo-directions of different theories of international relations (neo-realism, neo-liberalism, neo-institutionalism...). Neo-realism has survived as the dominant theory of international relations even though all other theories can be seen as rational choice theories. During the fourth period (from the beginning of the 1990s to the present day), strong debates took place, in which poststructuralist/postmodern theories cast doubt on the basic assumptions of classical theories on international relations.

One of the most famous classical geopolitical theories that considers the confrontation of two basic powers – maritime (thalassocratic) and terrestrial (teluroctatic) – is Helford Mackinder's as it is expounded in the article "The Geographical pivot of

History” of 1904 (Mackinder 1996). In it, “natural distribution of world power” is regarded as the basic cause of global conflict. It gives an advantage to land power that enables control over a strategically important part of the Eurasian landmass Pivot Area as the pivot region of Eurasia. According to Mackinder, this region represents the “seat of world power”, which is the basis of the geopolitical imperative for dominance over the continent, but also for global dominance. According to this geopolitical pattern, this region is mostly under the control of Russia. Around it is the Inner or Marginal Crescent which consists of “Germany, Austria, Turkey, India and China”. Farthest from the geographic axis is the Outer or Insular Crescent which consists of “Great Britain, South Africa, Australia, the United States, Canada and Japan” (Mackinder 1996: 191). In this understanding of geopolitical power relations, it is possible to search for many answers that the numerous conflicts of the 20th and 21st centuries have asked.

The collapse of the existing geopolitical system (world order) marked the demise of realism as the dominant political theoretical paradigm, but also the weakening of real politics as a practice in the last decades of the 20th century. This led to a reexamination of the concepts of classical geopolitics that had been ruling until then.

American political scientists Hans Morgenthau and Kenneth Waltz in their works *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (1967) and *Theory of International Politics* view international relations as a world in itself. Their realistic theory of international relations is based on the principles of anarchy, force and power. The early 1990s saw the relatively nonviolent end of the Cold War world order, and this theory was unable to explain that significant geopolitical event.

Two other American authors Charles Kegley and Raymond A. Gregory (2012) in work *The Global Future: A Brief Introduction to World Politics* indicate a peculiar failure of the real politics paradigm and believe that the reconstructed idealistic paradigm should be the new basis for the theoretical constitution of a new world order.

Ulrich Menzel (2001) believes that neo-idealism failed to take the theoretical initiative in questioning current international relations, but a kind of reconstruction of the real politics paradigm and classical geopolitical conceptions took place. He sees in geopolitical events and processes a “special form of power politics” in a dichotomized world, in a world where the dominant conflict is The West vs. the Rest. American political scientist Samuel Huntington was one of the first to do so in his famous 1993 essay on the clash of civilizations and in response to numerous criticisms, his book of the same name would later follow (Huntington 1997).

Huntington’s thesis on the clash of civilizations was written as a response to Francis Fukuyama (1989, 1992), and namely, to Fukuyama’ thesis that, after the end of the

Cold War, the world has reached the end of history, and that we are entering the post-ideological and post-geopolitical era of international politics.

The term “West” implies Western civilization, which includes Western Europe, North America, often Australia, Japan and North Korea. Statistics say that about 12% of the world’s population lives in the West, while 88% live in the rest of the world. The redistribution of economic wealth is uneven and in favor of the West, which inevitably implies a contradiction between the West and the rest of the world. From this comes the uneven distribution of geopolitical power, the world economic crisis, but also the way in which globalization is managed. It is therefore clear why so much effort is being made to maintain such a state of power imbalance Kishore (2015).

American political scientist John Mearsheimer (1992) believes that Huntington’s answer to the neo-idealists was supported by other representatives of political realism, claiming that the world still remains in an anarchic order, apotheosizing the national interest and the struggle for survival as the key contents of interstate politics. Similarly, the Italian scientist Stefano Guzzini (1998) believes that Huntington tried to introduce Islamic and Confucian civilizations into the global clash of civilizations with the help of ideological Cold War arguments.

In addition to the realist theory of international relations, classical geopolitical theory has come under scrutiny. This was influenced by numerous phenomena such as the process of globalization and changes in the concept of power relations, i.e. changes in the relationship between space and politics, or deterritorialization (Dalby & Toal 1998). Therefore, classical geopolitics began to search for arguments to justify its purpose and refute the opinion of the criticism of the theory that geopolitics has faced its end (O’Tuathail, Dalby & Routledge 2007).

In his book *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives* (1997), Zbigniew Brzezinski explains the American imperial strategy (geopolitical plan) based on the real politics paradigm of controlling Eurasia.

Critical geopolitics is one of the contemporary approaches to the interpretation of international relations. The term “critical geopolitics” is considered to have been first used by Simon Dalby (1990) in his book *Creating the Second Cold War: The Discourse of Politics*.

Critical geopolitics starts from a constructivist picture of the world according to which geopolitical ‘realities’ are “cartographic constructions that use cultural myths and other discourses and thus reproduce each other” and creating the so-called “self-fulfilling prophecies”, i.e. in geopolitical discourses, images of the world are presented as power relations” (Wolkersdorfer, Reuber, & Struever 2005: 3). Critical geopolitics is a geopolitical theory and an analytical direction that does not approach classical geopolitics as a neutral way of observing the relationship between space and

politics, but considers it as an “ideologized and politicized form of analysis” (Kuus 2017).

We decided to observe the process of global geopolitical redistribution from the perspective of critical geopolitics. Therefore, we will try to analyze the contents of key geopolitical changes in this century with the help of critical discourse.

### **The concept of the geopolitical power**

Geopolitics as a science can be defined in numerous ways. We believe that the following encyclopedic definition is the most acceptable for our needs: “Geopolitics is the science of the influence of the nature of a country (geographic position, climate, soil, water, etc.) and its economic, social, political and cultural superstructure on the historical development of a nation and on its international position” (Bihali, Bibic 1968: 320). Theorists who deal with this science do not dispute that politics is the basic building block of geopolitics and that it possesses power that manifests itself as geopolitical power. We will primarily consider geopolitical power as a relationship between social entities (individuals, groups, masses, states, groups of states, etc.) that possess the political will to achieve certain geopolitical goals. At the international level, these are states as the main subjects of international relations and as the main bearers of geopolitical power. Therefore, it is more correct to use the term interstate relations because it is the states that establish explicit mutual relations. States are basic territorialized political communities and as such imply a synthesis of geographic space and politics. That is why it is rightly claimed that the combination of geographic space and politics is the birthplace of geopolitics. International relations theorists believe that geopolitical power in international relations is most often used to create specific relations such as: a) balance for power; b) struggle for power; distribution of power and impact on national will etc.

A qualitative step forward in the understanding of geopolitical power is made by Patrick O’Sullivan (1995). He introduces the term “geopolitical force fields”, by which he tries to mathematically express the relations of geopolitical powers in a certain area.

As with many other things, theorists disagree about the structure of elements and the definition of geopolitical power. As the phenomenon of geopolitical power is structurally complex (composite), researchers’ efforts were primarily aimed at determining its basic content. Thus, the representatives of the realist direction tried to include as many of its elements as possible with a more complex definition. The American political scientist Hans Morgenthau, in his famous book *Politics Among the Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, which was the basic theoretical concept of US international politics for almost three decades, implicitly gives one of the

possible concepts of the structure of geopolitical power. The very concept of power is defined as “man’s control over the thinking and actions of other people” (1967: 11). He pays special attention to the elements of state (national) power, which also includes elements of geopolitical power. He believes that national power consists of nine basic elements (Morgenthau 1967: 12):

- geographical location – the most stable and permanent element;
- natural resources (agricultural land, raw materials, energy);
- industrial capacities;
- military capabilities (military-technological development, armed forces, mobilization capacities, etc.);
- demographic characteristics of the population;
- the national character of the population;
- national morality;
- the quality of diplomacy (“the brain of national power”);
- government capabilities

But the author believes that this list of classic elements of national power does not exhaust its content and that it can be added to the attraction of ideology (political philosophers) of state institutions that realize power (forms of “soft power”). The author considers the mentioned elements as instruments of political power that realize geopolitical interests.

In the absence of a more consistent definition of the phenomenon, we will present the understanding of “geopolitical power as the quantum of resources, potential and ability of a state or another international entity to realize its geopolitical goals in a certain area” (Kolev 2013). Therefore, the territorial moment of power is the essence of geopolitical power as well.

New theoretical considerations and research into this phenomenon will surely offer a more complete definition.

### **Geopolitical overcomposition of the power**

With the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the USSR, the NATO pact remained the only military-political alliance without a counterbalance in military-political influence in the world, while the USA remained the only superpower in international relations (Kolev 2013). NATO is becoming a powerful weapon with which the US creates its foreign policy. In relation to the period of its establishment, from a military-

defense development into a general military-political alliance of the Euro-Atlantic area with a distinct dominance of the USA.

At the end of 2008 the National Intelligence Council (NIC) as one of the affiliations of Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) published the “Global Trends 2025” report, which, based on the analysis of numerous data, predicts a sharp decline in American global power over the following fifteen years, and that the leading global role of the US will be taken over by new global actors, among which China stands out in the first place with its rapid economic development (National Intelligence Council 2008). And Michael T. Klare (2009), Professor of World Security Studies at Hampshire College, warned in his work that the erosion of American (super)power is taking place much faster than had been forecast in 2008.

The beginning of the decline of global American supremacy begins in the middle of the first decade of the 21st century when the Russian Federation consolidates politically, economically and militarily and with the economic strengthening of China (second decade of the 21st century). In this sense, Dušan Proroković (2009) believes that the strengthening of certain regional powers and the expression of pretensions to the status of great powers leads to the drawing of clear boundaries of Western civilization.

The strengthening of civilization differences leads to increased homogenization of the countries of the Western Hemisphere. “In consolidating and stabilizing the area of the West, Atlanticism, as well as the area of Central and Eastern Europe, is particularly important. Although the global competition of great powers is a phenomenon of a historical character and is not new, the need to preserve one world center and unipolar order in a globalized world, which tends towards ever closer interdependence and connection, has no real justification for the majority of the world’s countries” (Proroković 2009: 431).

The future process of redistribution of the geopolitical power is also determined by the increase in dissatisfaction of a large number of European countries due to economic and political differences compared to the countries of the first round of the EU, as well as due to the strengthening of the German and Russian geopolitical concepts. Every influence of the East breeds fears in the West of accepting the new values of the Asian liberal concept.

Zbigniew Brzezinski (2001) indicates that, within the framework of a major global geopolitical realignment, a secret German-Russian agreement or a Franco-Russian alliance is also possible. It could appear in the event of a complete halt to European unification, or in the event of a significant deterioration in Europe-America relations.

John Mearsheimer (2009), in his projection of the structure of the international system in the future, points out that in Northeast Asia there are three countries that have a

large population and great wealth, and therefore the possibility of being great powers: China, Japan and Russia. For now, none of them has the status of a hegemon, which does not mean that they will not have those ambitions in the concept of a new world order.

In the geopolitical sense of the new redistribution of power, one of the possible scenarios in Europe envisages a decrease in the influence of USA in relation to the growing influence of Germany as the dominant state, while the order will gradually move towards multipolarity with the participation of other European great powers. This increases the interdependence of many world actors and the marginalization of other countries. Zbigniew Brzezinski points out that many things indicate that current global changes are moving in the direction of changing the redistribution of world power and moving the center of world power from the West to the East (from Europe to Asia, and from the USA to China). He believes that these changes are unpredictable in terms of their consequences, which can result in a challenge to global security. That is to say that during the upcoming process there will be a change in the world order and also a change in the influence of current and future great powers. In this sense, Brzezinski believes that USA will strive to achieve such geopolitical perspectives that could stop the spread of the current processes of dispersal of the unipolar world center and its geopolitical power.

The long-term national interests of China and Russia will bring them closer and closer to greater cooperation to counter geopolitical penetration by the US. The existing antagonisms of the West with numerous Islamic states will influence their increasing rapprochement with China and Russia. The creation of geopolitical crises for the purpose of seizing material resources and the struggle for world domination inevitably initiates antagonisms that grow into conflicts over time. This inevitably gives rise to opposition to such unipolarism of power, that is, to the geopolitical dominance of one center over humanity.

Historical experience teaches us that global geopolitical overcompositions of geopolitical power will most likely lead to its balancing, that is, the gradual weakening of the hitherto dominant pole of power and the shift of the center of world power to the East. This will be followed by the growth of its influence on the global level and the growing sovereignty of individual states.

The process of achieving dominance and hegemonization of one gender implies the process of creating another gender that will try to balance its power. As a consequence of the continuation of the cold war, a new arms race is emerging.

At the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century, USA implemented its foreign policy from a position of power. At the basis of such a behavior in international relations is the need for resources and the effort to control them on a



global level. Namely, it is quite certain that the importance of certain resources (wood, drinking water, arable land, energy sources, minerals, etc.) will grow in the future.

The US seeks to prevent the EU countries and Russia using NATO as an instrument. By setting up a missile shield in Europe (Romania and Poland), it is aimed at preventing cooperation of Russia and the EU. In order to achieve its geopolitical interests, the US plans to install a missile shield in South Korea. All this causes a sharp confrontation between China and Russia.

However, one cannot say with certainty how the world of tomorrow will look like. It can only be stated that the world as we saw it until recently will not exist. A new geopolitical cycle begins. Unpredictability is one of the significant characteristics of global relations. It is most certain that the process of emerging of a new geopolitical architecture is already underway. Planet Earth is still an unstable place to live.

## **Conclusion**

The established feature of the great world powers is that their geopolitical and geostrategic interests are long-lasting. When observing the Anglo-Saxon geopolitical conceptions at the global level, which were formed at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, one can see the basic tendency to preserve global dominance as deeply as possible in the 21st century.

In creating of such Anglo-American geopolitical and geostrategic theoretical concept the following three authors are distinguished: Alfred Mehen, Helford Mekinder and Nikolus Spykman. In essence, they see Eurasia as a specific center of the world whose control or conquest implies the preservation of global world domination. All of them, to a greater or lesser extent, emphasize the importance of mastering the peripheral area of Eurasia (Romeland), that is, the “inner and outer semi-ring”. They believe that it is a space of crucial importance for moving towards the “heart of the world”. Their global geopolitical visions are the foundation on which the foreign policy and geopolitical power of the USA (with the support of NATO) is based, as for a long time it was the only global superpower after the Second World War.

The depth and size of the continental area of the “Big Island” (Europe + Asia) dictates its geostrategic encirclement, i.e. the application of the “anaconda” strategy, which implies the geographical, geopolitical and economic encirclement and constriction of the Eurasian land mass from its coasts to the interior of the land and further advancement towards the area of Rimland. In the implementation of this strategy, it is considered to be of great importance to prevent the alliance of Russia and China, but also their coalition with some other European and Asian countries, and especially the partnership with Islamic countries. The expansion of NATO to the east of Europe up to the very borders of Russia, as well as the effort to mobilize the countries of Western

Europe on the wave of the “coming danger” from Russia, are of great importance for USA towards the realization of its global goals.

But the very dialectic of power points to the fact that there is no absolute and forever given geopolitical power. In one period certain states (civilizations) are on the rise or at the very peak of their power, and in another on the downward trajectory of power. When this second period occurs, such subjects of international relations show significant weaknesses in relation to other global geopolitical actors. It is the beginning of the dissolution of the concentration of geopolitical power of one center and the formation of new centers of power. The question arises as to what these new centers of power would be and when they would be formed. The answer to these questions will be given by upcoming events, which are only the manifestation of long-term processes. Could Western Europe be one of those centers of geopolitical power?

What arises from the very nature of geopolitical power tells us that it is a dynamic category in time and space. Every power (even geopolitical) has within itself the germ of its own weakness and as such it moves its “pendulum”. Historical knowledge tells us that it was most often an East-West line: in a certain period, the gravity of geopolitical power was in the East, so its pendulum gradually moved to the West, only to return to the East after some time. Therefore, it can be argued that one of the fundamental geopolitical laws of this shifting of power centers is the conflict between East and West, which in its culminating stages tends to retain power as long as possible, that is, to gain that power as much as possible. In any case, the current international moment is marked by accelerated geopolitical changes and overcomposition of geopolitical power.

From the imbalance of geopolitical power, the world enters the balance of geopolitical power. That is the nature of geopolitical power. So, the battle for the new world order continues.

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