



Geopolitical concepts: definition and importance

Abstract: In practical terms, geopolitics is manifested through geopolitical concepts. These concepts are strategic perceptions based on geographical (socio-geographical and physical-geographical) and political indicators relevant for shaping certain goals. This paper explains the definition and importance of geopolitical concepts, as well as the necessary conditions for their legitimization. In that context, to understand certain geopolitical concepts (i.e., to understand the constants on which concepts are based), it is necessary to know the long-standing historical processes which also form collective strategic perceptions. Illegitimate geopolitical concepts cannot be successful, nor can they last in time, which is essentially opposite to the objectives of geopolitics. That is why a conclusion is imposed that successful geopolitics may not be based on any *ad hoc* actions, but they imply strategic deliberation, long-term planning and a multidisciplinary approach in ensuring interests of the state and the nation creating the state.

Keywords: geopolitics, geopolitical concept, geopolitical environment, order, USA, Russia, China

The increasingly frequent use of the term *geopolitics* in the past decades has caused understating of different things under geopolitics, where events and processes that in fact have very little in common with geopolitics are declared as geopolitical phenomena. Not every politics is geopolitics and, to call certain politics – geopolitics, it must be

manifested through designed and rounded geopolitical concepts. In order to understand geopolitical concepts, it is also necessary to explain the concepts of geopolitical subjects, geopolitical processes and geopolitical order. Together, these elements structure the geopolitical environment (as shown in Table 1).

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Geopolitical subjects	States and non-state actors that bring their own geopolitical concepts and affect the order and processes in that manner
Geopolitical processes	Events affecting the establishment of the order and may be initiated by the implementation of certain concepts
Geopolitical order	The pattern establishing the hierarchy and thus reserving the place for each subject in relation to others
Geopolitical concepts	Long-term projections of the subjects directed towards increasing power and ensuring a more important place in the order

Table 1. The structure of the geopolitical environment (Kilibarda & Mijalkovski, 2006, pp. 18-20)

Each geopolitical concept differs in a certain geopolitical environment. Therefore, these projections must take into account other elements, rely on the realistic perception of power and goals of other subjects, proper assessment of own place in the established hierarchy and perception of the development of key processes.

Analyzing the geopolitical environment and the position of the USA at the beginning of the 21st century, Saul Cohen, for example, states that in the post-Cold War world, “certain renunciations are necessary”. “Modern geopolitics should not be confused with the classical geopolitical „worldview referring to the struggle between land and naval forces or with the long-discredited German geopolitics (*Drang nach Osten*, the author’s note)”. This American theoretician also recommends that modern geopolitics should not be identified with the concepts of *Containment*, *Domino Theory*, *Linkage* and the “most important member of the group” (*Lynchpin*) because these ideas are related to the deterministic use of the

geographical space in the formulation of the US foreign policy. According to him, these concepts were simply embedded in the Cold War real politics with the aim of promoting US expansionism in global proportions at one historical moment. In the post-Cold War approach, it is more opportune to follow Henry Kissinger’s advice that refers to ensuring own position in the context of preventing the emergence of a regional power that might threaten US domination in certain parts of the world, or several different states with global ambitions, whose association might create effective balance of power in international relations. Cohen suggests shifting the focus on the home politics of potential “challengers” and their direct surrounding, with inevitable isolation or problematization of the national security question in case it is necessary (Cohen, 2003, pp. 2–3). At the moment of the publication of this proposal, the USA remained the only super-power with no equal rivals in global proportions and with the secured position of the most important factor of

regional security in all parts of the world that are relevant for national security. There was no need to spend resources to an extent and in all those “critical spots” as during the Cold War period because there was no longer “Soviet threat” to be parried. Weapons have changed, a new order has been established and it is possible to act differently towards other subjects and their concepts.

After the breakup of the Soviet Union, Russia mostly avoided confrontations with the USA and the EU, satisfied with its interests being appreciated in political negotiations about resolving crises in certain regions (the Balkans, the Caucasus, Tajikistan, Moldova) and it took part in the implementation of peace treaties which were essentially created by the USA, relying on the NATO and the EU. However, it transpires that this approach did not stop the expansion of the NATO eastwards, which was seen as a huge threat in Russia. Therefore, at the 43rd Munich Security Conference (*Münchener Sicherheitskonferenz*) in 2007, Vladimir Putin announced a turn. “On that occasion it was practically announced that Russia would focus on establishing balance of power in international relations, and leave itself the right to act just as the USA in certain international crises. Reporting from this conference, Ljubinka Milinčić wrote: “The Russian president’s speech, which lasted more than an hour and a half, with its directness and occasional sharpness, almost shocked the politicians used to diplomatic ways of acting in gloves, particularly because it largely exceeded everything seen so far – there are many who compared this speech with Khrushchev pounding his shoe on the delegate des in the United Nations. Putin spoke about numerous problems of today’s era, but will be remembered chiefly for his

accusing the USA of an attempt to rule the world, the NATO of provoking Russia, and OSCE of turning into a “vulgar instrument serving the interests of one state or group of states. At one moment he addressed Gates [Robert Gates, US Secretary of Defense, the author’s note] and reminded him that Russia and the USA had signed an agreement about reducing nuclear potential to 1,700–2,200 missiles. Then he told him: “Russia fulfils its obligations. Can the new US minister say that the USA is not hiding excessive missiles in the storehouses, under the pillow or under the duvet?” He surprised many when he explained that he knew about the USA developing new nuclear weapons, but since it would not admit it, he would pretend that he did not know it. “However, what we do know is that you deploy your missiles in our proximity, and you are saying that they are not directed against us. Well, then our weapons are not intended for you either!” Putin also reminded of the words by Werner, the NATO General Secretary, in Brussels on 17 May 1990. “It is a fact that we will not deploy the NATO army outside the territory of the German Democratic Republic gives the USSR firm guarantees of security. Where are those guarantees, Putin wondered” (Milinčić, 2007, pp. 6–7). What Putin implied by this was soon to be seen, in August 2008. Russia immediately admitted unanimously declared independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which was also the answer to the US action in Kosovo in March of the same year.

Geopolitical concepts are always oriented towards achieving certain political goals in the precisely defined geographical area. Of course, the goal itself may also be changing the geopolitical order or preventing the implementation

of geopolitical concepts of the others. India, for example, “shows an ambition to coordinate activities in a broader regional framework and to strike balance both towards China’s influence and towards activities of the USA in South Asia. Moreover, to find an adequate answer to the establishment of the Chinese-Pakistani partnership, India developed the same type of relations with Japan. After the meeting of India’s and Japan’s prime ministers in November 2016, it was pointed out that between these two countries “there was a high degree of mutual bringing closer of political, economic and strategic interests, which provides a permanent basis for a long-term partnership”. Therefore, India’s great strategy is something simpler to understand than that of China, and it includes significant reliance on political power, since India is imposed as a political leader in this part of the world. Apart from its strategic partnership with India, Japan has taken several steps towards increasing political power. For a long time, Japan used to base its foreign on so-called Yoshida Doctrine, named after Shigeru Yoshida, the first post-war Prime Minister of this country. It was founded on three main elements: “Continual reliance on the alliance with the USA, which ensured security to Japan, putting an emphasis on economic relations with foreign countries for the sake of recovering domestic economy and keeping a low profile in international politics. Externally, this doctrine was based on the lack of military power. The government was forced to accept the international environment as a given fact and to hope that the US security umbrella would persist”. However, from the second half of the 1990s, changes and orientation could be detected

towards a “multi-layered approach” in foreign policy positioning. It means using “internal resources” and “external classification” to respond to new security challenges in the Asian-Pacific region. The instrument for implementing the new foreign policy includes strategic partnerships established with Australia, India and Vietnam. China’s growing power potential poses a threat to Japan, while the USA’s decreasing power makes Yoshida Doctrine non-functional to a certain extent. Although Japan was the key country for establishing the Trans-Pacific partnership, which points to the maintenance of the high level of relations with the USA, additional measures are undertaken for the sake of ensuring national security” (Proroković, 2018, p. 619).

Nevertheless, in determining goals and aspirations towards their achievement, it is also necessary to ensure their legitimacy. Why do Americans care to keep the dominant role in the world? How much does it cost them? How do the Chinese look at the loans given by official Beijing to many other countries, from Tajikistan to Serbia? Does it mean that all problems have been solved in China, and now it can also “export the capital”? Does the recognition of the equal status to their state by other most important geopolitical subjects (for example, the USA, China and the EU) mean something to Russian citizens? Do they have the reason to support such goals? Why would the Japanese accept to allocate larger budget funds for spreading the cultural or political influence in Southeast Asia? This money can also be used for some other purposes in Japan itself.

The formation of geopolitical concepts takes place not only through looking for answers to the

and citizens' anti-system positioning could also be seen manifesting in line with the circumstances and personal readiness for sacrifice. Unlike these examples, Bulgarians kept their positive attitude towards Russian influence, which could not be changed even by the NATO membership, just as in Montenegro. The increasing American-Russian confrontation after the escalation of the Ukrainian crisis in 2014 led to all the NATO members being forced into implementing the US geopolitical concept (which can essentially be labelled as *Containment*, regardless of Saul Cohen's advice) and, accordingly, undermining their bilateral relations with Russia (participation in military exercises at Russian borders, voting for political resolutions in international organizations directed against Russian



interests, introduction of sanctions, expulsion of diplomats etc.), but it remained an open question as to what extent such decisions of Bulgarian and Montenegrin authorities were – legitimate. There was no reasonable answer to the question *Why are they doing it?* in every aspect (answers were reduced to usual phrases about “the allies’ duties” and “the allies’ solidarity”, but it is not known that anyone in

these two countries thoroughly explained in what way Russia threatened their security, which was the main reason for their joining the NATO and, even less, how it would contribute to their better positioning in the geopolitical order in the long run). From these illustrative examples, it becomes clear that if it is easier to answer the first two questions, then the third one entails a longer debate.

Geopolitical concepts	
What?	Definition of the goals affecting geopolitical processes and shaping the geopolitical order.
How?	By designing strategies and tactics thanks to which the defined goals are achieved in the given geographical area
Why?	For ensuring national security, creating conditions for economic growth and maintaining social stability

Table 2. Three questions in forming a geopolitical concept

The answer to the question *What?* refers to goals. Goals are general – long-term oriented, individual – medium-term oriented in relation to positioning towards certain questions and geographical regions, and current – short-term oriented in relation to specific situations. Table 3 shows the case of defining and classifying the goals of the USA and Russia in the second half of 2020 in relation to the Azerbaijani-Armenian war over Nagorno-Karabakh. Current goals of both sides were determined “on the go”, towards individual goals and in line with the general projection. The USA saw this war as a chance for further problematization of the relations in the South Caucasus region, which would force

Russia into direct involvement in the armed conflict (Armenia is a member of the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Eurasian Economic Alliance together with Russia); afterwards, it was easy to assume Turkey’s reaction as well (the strategic agreement on military cooperation with Azerbaijan). This was the continuation of the “campaign” for destabilizing Russia’s border territory (and beyond), initiated practically immediately after the breakup of the Soviet Union, and for implementing preparatory activities for the admission of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to the NATO. By containing Russia and preventing the spread of the Russian influence across the border, the “ranking” is prevented of the

largest country in the world among great powers and the legitimization of its status as one of the centres in the multipolar world. To achieve the general goal – maintaining its dominant role in the world politics, the USA must push challengers “out of the game”;

and that is why individual goals are defined and, for the sake of their achievement, all opportunities are taken and, accordingly, current goals are defined in specific situations. It goes without saying that Russia’s goals are completely opposite.

Goals	USA	Russia
General	Maintaining the dominant role in the world politics and slowing down the transformation of the structure of the world political system towards a multipolar structure	Legitimization of the status of the equal great power and accelerating the transformation of the structure of the world political system towards a multipolar structure
Individual	Exerting a constant and continual pressure on Russia’s borders to prevent the spread of the Russian influence in the surroundings and to prevent the legitimization of this challenger’s status of an equal great power	Intensification of cooperation with the countries in the immediate surroundings, involvement in joint political initiatives and increasing the scope of economic and cultural exchange with the aim of the Russian influence penetration
Current	“De-freezing” conflicts with the aim of directly involving Russia in the war and thus creating conditions for the outbreak of a larger-scale and longer armed conflict	Quick end of the war with the consent of both sides and involving Turkey in order to prevent the outbreak of a larger-scale and longer armed conflict

Table 3. Geopolitical goals of the USA and Russia in relation to Nagorno-Karabakh in 2020

The answer to the question *How?* covers strategies and tactics. Strategies refer to general and individual goals, implying a general plan of actions to be implemented, while tactics for individual and current goals refer to the implementation of specific tasks, thanks to which the probability of achieving general goals will be larger. Both strategies and tactics are integral part

of the acting of the subjects’ institutions. Strategies are directed towards a deeper and more comprehensive distribution of power in a certain geographical area, while tactics are directed towards creating the ambience for realizing it. The observed strategies and tactics, visible in the US acting aimed at implementing the geopolitical concept, are shown in Table 4.

Goals	Strategies and tactics
General	Strategy: Spreading influence by accepting the thesis about the US exceptionality in global proportions and increasing other subjects' dependence on the US military, economic and political power
Individual	Strategy: Preventing the emergence of challengers that may threaten the domination at global or regional levels Tactics: Creating asymmetrical partnerships through bilateral or multilateral arrangements. Influencing the immediate surroundings or home policy of the challengers who refuse the asymmetrical (unequal) status.
Current	Tactics: Designing international standards, forming international organizations that will serve the achievement of general and individual goals, excessive borrowing of other subjects, conducting colour revolutions, inducing interstate and interethnic conflicts in geographically neuralgic spots, the use of military forces etc.

Table 4. Strategies and tactics in the implementation of the US geopolitical concept

Specific decisions are made in line with the geopolitical logic and must contribute to the achievement of individual goals and make the general goal more feasible. In compliance with it, foreign and security policies are determined, where improvisations are not desirable, although they are present to a larger or smaller extent.

The answer to the question *Why?* is somewhat more complex. As it has already been described, it refers to legitimacy. The concept of legitimacy is organically related to political science. "A legitimate order is the one accepted by citizens who believe in its justification, usefulness, solidity and justice" (Stančić & Gujančić, 2014, p. 138). Legitimacy "primarily means acceptability, permissibility, justification and the like" (Gujančić, 2013, p. 248). If citizens or the interested political public do not accept certain decisions, the established order or normative

acts, it is impossible to speak about the existence of legitimacy, even when everything has been done within legal frameworks. Therefore, something may be legal without simultaneously being legitimate.

Geopolitical concepts need to be justified, acceptable, solid, just and permitted. As such, they will be broadly accepted, supported, and they will motivate society to support then and participate in them. For explaining legitimacy in the context of establishing and implementing geopolitical concepts, there is a useful thesis by Max (Maximilian) Weber about the existence of three types of legitimacy of authority: rational, traditional and charismatic (Stupar, 2010, p. 44). For this German thinker, as Mihailo Đurić explains, rational authority is the rule of "impersonal law"; traditional authority is based on "the faith in the holiness of the existing social norms", while charismatic authority has only a transient

nature and is characterized by the absence of rules, and it is not established either on the rational or on the traditional (Đurić, 1987, pp. 149–155). Of course, Weber's typology is intended for examining other phenomena, so that legitimacy of authority within a society is described, and the use of this parallel is conditional. Just as Weber used these abstract-analytical constructions for sociological research of certain phenomena, now they will be used for examining the legitimacy of geopolitical concepts. Furthermore, just as authority is most often based on the combination of these two types of legitimacy, the acceptability of geopolitical concepts is also ensured in this way.

The first way of the public or society supporting a certain concept is by observing rational reasons. On the one hand, the rational may be explained as useful. If an action brings indisputable benefits, if the gain is certain, the public will support it. On the other hand, denying support leads towards re-examination of the correctness of defined goals, which may also result in the transformation of the long-term geopolitical concept and the alteration of the existing frameworks. If such acting causes clear harm and gains are not quite certain, then it is rational to support the decisions of the institutions or the elite without bringing the achievement of current goals into question. Usually, great interest of the public may be detected in relation to the questions considered vital. To the Serbian public, the "Kosovo question" is vital; to the Armenian public, it is the relationship with Turkey and Azerbaijan; to three Baltic republics, it is the "Russian threat"; to the Pakistani public, it is the relationship with India, and to the Palestine public – it is Israel! How much is the Portuguese public interested in the events in Belarus? Probably very little or not at all! Why did Portugal introduce

sanctions to Aleksandr Lukashenko in the autumn of 2020 and joined all the restrictive measures introduced by the EU to the officials in Minsk (EU, 2020, pp. 1–6)? Because something like that is rational. The lack of interest can also be a rational choice when an alternative is the re-examination of the established goals. To the Portuguese public, Belarus election was an occasion too small and uninteresting to open up the major process of re-examining the geopolitical concept of the entire EU. In fact, when legitimacy is explained by rational reasons, the public follows the attitude of the elite and institutions that define goals and determine geopolitical concepts.

Another way of legitimization is ensured by insisting on traditionality. Tradition is heritage, a set of material and spiritual knowledge and experiences on which the identity of a culture relies. If rational choices are most frequent for practical decision-making, then traditionality dominates when we speak of the conceptual dimension of geopolitical concepts. Naturally, tradition changes, but it changes through several interactions, and it is only when new knowledge and experiences become generally accepted and stand the test of time, that the old is rejected or transformed. Maintaining tradition is quite important because of social stability, which is the prerequisite of development and, consequently, the determination of geopolitical concepts. Traditions have also succeeded in forming practice in many religious, and hence the difference between certain nations and societies from the same "religious circle" in practising religious rites, even in interpreting certain teachings. As a matter of fact, traditions observed in the broadest terms lead to divisions inside the Cristian bloc into eastern and western branches, just as the Mohammedan world is divided into Shiite and Sunni!

A great return of the religious and unavoidable in the geopolitical in all post-communist countries, including China, where, for example, contrary to the Tibetan and Uygur spiritual diversity, Confucianism was offered from the official level as a specific quasi-religious substitute, speaks volumes about the rooted traditions and the ability to preserve tradition, customs and (historical) memory despite all prohibitions and repressive measures during half a century.^[2]

Donald Trump's victory and all the consequential events that followed in the USA also speak in favour of the thesis that traditions are difficult to change and that for establishing a new system of values, it is not enough to institutionally promote new patterns (opposed to the previous tradition) and to conduct a campaign directed towards their acceptance. A large number of the US citizens (in the 2020 presidential election, it essentially transpired that the US society was divided into two equal blocs) did not accept new patterns regarding family values, legalization of same-sex marriages, implementation of a gender equality policy, and even those regarding the prohibition of racial discrimination, which proves that the decisions made for decades were legal, but their legitimacy was brought into question.

The conceptual arises from the traditional, and on this basis images are created about friends and enemies, unimportant and important matters, the permissible and the impermissible. Such images shape the geopolitical logic on which geopolitical concepts are defined and distribution of power in space is legitimized. That is why the conceptual can

also sometimes be irrational. In history, there are quite a few examples of the irrational in the formation of geopolitical concepts. The most illustrative one is related to the Nazi regime in Germany. In the political chaos after the capitulation in the First World War, the distorted interpretation of certain historical events and their harmonization with weaker or more conspicuous historical images and rooted perceptions, the ideas were spread of anti-Semitism, Aryan superiority and, therefore, the predetermination of the German-Aryan race (*Volksgemeinschaft*) to dominate over less valuable nations (*Untermensch*) inhabiting the "living space" (*Lebensraum*). In practice, it led, on the one hand, to terrible atrocities and horrible crimes and, on the other, it united previously opposed great powers into a single anti-German coalition. Instead of domination, the irrational positioning caused a total disaster.

Moreover, for example, in February 2021, in the pre-election campaign in Bulgaria, one political party (the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization) addressed the "Macedonian question", considering historical processes through the framework constructed in this manner, and on several occasions it spoke in a rather ugly and inappropriate way about Serbia's position and role in the Balkans. The matter was even worse because the IMRO was led by the former Minister of Defence, and his assessments had "greater weight" and "official importance". At that moment, there was not a single rational reason for disrupting correct and promising bilateral relations between Bulgaria and Serbia, especially because the

[2] The credit for the classification of Confucianism as a religion goes most probably to the European missionaries who recorded religions in non-Christian societies in the middle of the 19th century. Essentially, Confucianism is rather a social and political philosophy with a strong influence on the development of Chinese society, traditions and customs.

argumentation in which politicians cited the decisions of Emperor Samuil from the 10th century could not be used for something like that! However, the most interesting thing of all is that such justifications were well received by part of the public. In any case, if something different had been expected, politicians would not have used that trump card in the pre-electoral period. Hence, here there is a top-down influence by part of the public, perhaps rather narrow and small in numbers, but focused on one political question, which led to the definition of certain geopolitical goals aimed at keeping the territory of Vardar Macedonia as a unique cultural area in the Bulgarian sphere. To conclude, it is important to emphasize that historical perceptions, even those based on wrong assumptions or those based on myths, may affect the idea dimension of geopolitical concepts. Regardless of the attitude of the elite or the projections of institutions, regardless of rationality, legitimacy for certain aspirations still exists and it directs geopolitics. This is important because the deconstruction trend, visible primarily in the western part of the world, contaminates science on a large scale. You often cannot see the forest for the trees. Consciously or unconsciously, collectivities and general interests are ignored, frameworks are built insisting on the non-existence of nations and societies as stable categories. Everything is fluid, inconsistent, while the general interest is presented as a simple sum of individual interests. Geopolitical concepts are not always or, more precisely, not only based on direct and practical benefits, but also on the conceptual, which most often comes from the depths of the traditional, historical and religious. Geopolitics as a discipline cannot and must not take into account only the top-down principle in perceiving political processes.

The practical dimension of geopolitical concepts develops in line with the goals related to ensuring national security or gaining certain economic or political benefits. That is why distribution of military, economic and political power in a territory is projected. Hence the direct connection of foreign and security policies, as well as of public policies with geopolitics. Looking from the perspective of practicality, distribution of power towards certain geographical areas is conducted in line with own potentials and in order to parry rivals most efficiently. Geopolitics is a view of the space from the state's perspective. Maintaining the adequate someone else's order or its transformation in order to ensure a better place are projected through geopolitical concepts. Great and regional powers or state systems with a long history of practical acting have capacities and knowledge to project long-term policies towards a certain geographical area. Masterful Habsburg or, in a later phase Austro-Hungarian policy towards East European nations was directed towards changing cultural patterns so as to bring elites closer to Vienna and distance them from Moscow in the long run. Such approaches also affect the conceptual dimension of other nations' concepts, leaving trace and transforming value patterns and shaping geopolitical patterns of others. The period of unipolarity, which continued after the sharp Cold War ideological confrontation, during which new values, new content of universality and global ideas were promoted, based on the concept of political correctness, also left a deep trace in the transformation of geopolitical logic of a whole series of nations and societies.

On the other hand, however, there is also the conceptual dimension of geopolitical concepts as a historical process, as maintaining certain aspirations

and objectives of a series of nations and societies, which may be affected by practical geopolitical concepts to a certain extent, but not completely. How much has the new content of universality and global ideas affected the Muslim societies? Or, in addition, how much has it been affected by communism, which is accepted in part of the Muslim world? There have been certain transformations as, in fact, in the previous historical epochs. The Islamic practice in Bosnia and Herzegovina was grafted onto roots different from those in Pakistan or Nigeria, and their customs are also manifested differently – just as Orthodox Christianity in different regions continued the traditions created in certain geographical and political circumstances. That is why there are differences in the customs between Russian and Greek patterns. Nevertheless, the essence has persisted, the conceptual closeness is reflected in the attachment to the same or similar value patterns, which cannot be altered by the current change of the geopolitical order either. Peoples, nations and societies, with the general interests that are not a simple sum of individual interests, are also geopolitical subjects, namely individuals making decisions or institutions designing geopolitical concepts simply cannot be avoided. On the contrary, others must adapt to them. To be legitimate, geopolitical concepts must be cloaked in the conceptual, which is traditional, ideological or religious, but most frequently ideological relying on the traditional and/or religious. The US geopolitical concepts are cloaked by the idea of freedom and human rights, and they have relied on it ever since Woodrow Wilson's famous speech. Both foreign and security policies in the Middle East may be defined in line with quite specific interests regarding energy security and stability of the dollar system in international

economy, as long as geopolitical concepts are based on the story about human freedoms and rights which Americans brought to the oppressed people of Iran, Iraq and Syria, legitimacy will be ensured. Russian geopolitical concepts, ever since the time of Nikolay Danilevsky, have relied on the development place, the presentation of own uniqueness, Eurasian worldview, so different both from the Western, Chinese, Indian or Muslim ones. Even communists, including the staunchest among them, ensured legitimacy in very difficult situations among the people by resorting to this logic. One speech by Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin, beginning with "brothers and sisters" did perhaps much more for the legitimization of Soviet aspirations than repressions and red terror. Imposition spreads fear and due to it there is a loss of manifestation of the customary in everyday life, but deeper traces of the conceptual can never be erased, regardless of how much they have transformed or adapted.

That is why political research cannot be based only on exploring the practical dimensions of geopolitical concepts, which is becoming a concerning standard. Such research must also take into account the historical development of the conceptual, from which legitimacy for any type of acting derives. Moreover, the historical development of the conceptual has always taken place in certain geographical areas with physical-geographical and socio-geographical characteristics. Denying that geography plays a role in determining the conceptual is as dangerous as geographical determinism itself.

From the perspective of international security and world politics, this should be taken into account. The Cold War victory of the West or, more precisely, the USA, opened the doors to a flood of neoliberalism and broad promotion of the hypermodern as the only

mutually complementing concepts. Perhaps it is best summarized in the title of the book about the end of history by Francis Fukuyama. The end of history may also mean the end of the conceptual. Moreover, the transition to the neoliberal paradigm meant that all this had to be seen through the market prism. Everything must have its mathematical expression and numerical value. Namely, in the contest of geopolitical concepts, everything must be explained rationally, point to the practical and applicative, and be paid off quickly. To a certain extent, it also became a new logic, called *New Age Religion* by Gregory Copley. *New Age* began, which will be completely different from all previous historical eras. This illusion that is the anteroom to new conflicts, fierce disruption of international security. International relations were predominantly seen through the prism of own views; the world was measured by oneself and not by others, which, instead of understanding, brought stereotypes. The Western view of the events in Russia was reduced to the conclusion that it was necessary to work with the elite and produce changes by the media pressure. The absence of changes, the inability of bringing down Vladimir Putin's relatively high rating during the second decade of the 21st century, was interpreted by a simple statement that it was due to the institutions led by the individuals defending their privileges. However, the idea of loyalty to the ruler in Russian society is much deeper than that. The process of shaping a centralized hierarchical system proceeded throughout history exactly due to geography, forming the practice that also became part of tradition. The first prerequisite of survival of the nation-creating process in cruel climate conditions in the course of centuries was surviving winter, then protecting from natural disasters and immediate threats, and then ensuring

sufficient quantities of food. An individual could not survive in a cruel natural environment without relying on the collective. Commitment to collectivity is primordial, hierarchy is necessary, while opposition or disagreement with decisions is expressed in a completely different way than in the US society, which is the place of development of different patterns. Once again, Russia's shock by the decisions of the West after 2014 could not be hidden. The campaign about Russia's malign influence was a great surprise. To a certain extent, Russia does not understand the logic of West European nations to whom the threat has always come from the geographical East (or Southeast). Invasions of the Mongols and Huns, the confrontation with Byzantium and then with the Ottoman Empire, had a logical continuation in seeing Russia as an enemy even much before the foundation of the Soviet Union. In that respect, Russia's policy of cooperativeness regarding Western interests, implemented in the 1990s, made very few changes. Within the conceptual framework, it is implied that the threat traditionally comes from the East, and orientalism as such, either Oriental or Eurasian, threatens the foundations of Western civilization. Again, the Chinese projected their approach within the long tradition of meritocracy as the dominant principle and mercantilism as the basis, which is logical in the circumstances when one society, large numbers during a long uninterrupted period, develops in a relatively small geographical area with limited resources, therefore using economy as the foundation of their growing influence and geopolitical projection. To them, it remains hard to understand where anti-Chinese elements have suddenly come from, the struggle against *Chinfluence*, when they decided to overcome disputes through negotiations or even to prevent them through very precise

agreements. They took time to understand that they are not welcome everywhere, exactly due to the differences in the conceptual, although economic relations are built on practical benefits, often mutual.

Power distribution in an area implies actions, whereas each action cause a reaction. Reactions are based not only on the specific answers and institutional acting to protect strategic, economic and political interests in a certain area, but also on the conceptual, which lasts and is manifested in such situations. The basis and causes of conflicting interactions in international relations (and, in the case of geopolitics, in the observed geographical

area) should be sought not only in the conflict of the practical, but also in the confrontations of the conceptual. Speaking of geopolitical concepts, in analyses it is necessary to take into account both dimensions. Without it, a distorted picture is obtained of the processes and a bad interpretation of events.

Comprehensive and successful geopolitical concepts must answer not only the questions *What?* and *How?*, but also the question *Why?* The established goals, primarily the general ones – long-term oriented, and, to a certain extent, individual, medium-term oriented, must be legitimate, no matter whether legitimacy is drawn from the rational and/or the traditional.

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