

## GEOPOLITICS AND CONTEMPORARY INTERNATIONAL REALITY: KNOWLEDGE, INTERPRETATION AND PREDICTION

**Ioannis Th. Mazis**, FRSA, AMOPA

National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece

### *1. Summary and Introduction*

Knowledge of the geopolitical reality has been, is and shall be a challenge for political and spiritual leadership. The dominant actors in the globe are equipped with notable centers of research and study concerning the geopolitical reality. In this manner and taking into account the geopolitical models that derive from research they are able to plan their relative hegemonic or dominant international strategies.

The current reality, though, is characterized by a tendency of revision concerning those traditional hermeneutic models of the Cold War period, a period during which known and 'safe' answers were provided for all social, political, economic and philosophical matters. These traditional 'holistic' models, which were applied on specific state actors and groups of state actors, were two: i) the socialist model and its dialectic opposite, ii) the liberal model.

These two philosophical and ideological axes were complemented by the geopolitical model created by Nicholas J. Spykman (1893-1943), according to which there occurs a worldwide antagonism between Land Powers (Warsaw Pact, Soviet Union and satellite states) and Sea Powers (US, Great Britain, Japan, NATO and satellite states). This division led to the geopolitical, ideological, defensive, economic and therefore geostrategic alignment of the participating states into two clashing worlds, i.e. the Eastern and the Western world.

This dominant division was adopted by the relevant elites of the various state actors that were part of the international structures of the International Power Poles. This phenomenon was prevalent throughout the 20th century and was manifested also in the relevant political cultures, dominant ideologies, as well as in the geostrategic approaches of the aforementioned International Power Poles and their respective satellites.

#### *1.1 The past hegemonic bipolar geopolitical model and its political application by the Bipole London-Washington*

As we mentioned earlier, the division proposed by N. J. Spykman is based mainly on the inescapable geographical factor which in turn creates a corresponding ideological starting-point<sup>1</sup> which is useful for self-identification, but also for inter-identification among distinct actors. This division was perceived as natural by the two dominant -till the late 20th century- hegemonic systems of collective security.

The hermeneutic value of this political-ideological holistic approach was shattered in November 1989 when its most emblematic icon, the Berlin Wall, came tearing down. In the following years there have been many upheavals and changes in situations that were once considered stable. The social, political and spiritual elites attempted to formulate a new method of international distribution of power, as well as new 'hermeneutic algorithms' concerning the new realities. The political elites along with their instrumental scientists, i.e. the mandarins of the prevailing world order, realized that the ideological constructions of the Cold War era and the existing power distribution were obsolete; the political certainties of the past and the bipolar system of 'warm peace' and MAD (Mutually Assured Destruction) were also things of the past.<sup>2</sup>

---

1. The term ideological starting-point refers to the term *fixation* proposed by Ioannis Th. Mazis. The present term is used for the non-specialized reader.

2. <http://www.airpower.maxwell.af.mil/airchronicles/apj/apj97/win97/parrin.html>

The Western 'instrumental thinkers' focused on the vacuum of power<sup>3</sup> that surfaced in the geographical complex of the former USSR and its European and Central Asian satellites. Zbigniew Brzezinski has been the main proponent of such an approach. Since the so-called West prevailed in the antagonism between the East and the West, it should therefore take advantage of that vacuum, first by integrating the Eastern European states into the EU and into NATO and then by extracting the Islamic states of Central Asia from Russian dependence. These actions were consequences of Spykman's model, according to which the US should strive to at least preserve its leading hegemonic role at an international level.

The process of integration of states that once were members of the Warsaw Pact unfolded itself from May 2004 till July 2013; in this decade eleven new states became members of the EU, eight of them being Eastern European states (Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia) and three of them being former Soviet Republics (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania). In this manner the EU reached 28 member-states, 22 of which are also NATO members, a fact revealing in itself.

It is thus evident that the attempt to create a Rimland (using Spykman's term) that shall surround and contain the Land Power of the Russian Federation is an ongoing process, even after the end of the Cold War. This Rimland is controlled by the Sea Powers and bears a mainly Anglo-Saxon political identity. The last missing piece for the completion of this Rimland that shall surround the New Russian Empire is the region of Ukraine. It is interesting to note that Brzezinski had already proposed (or one could say 'predicted') the extraction of Ukraine from Russian influence back in 1978 by stating that such a repositioning of Ukraine could well occur by 2015.

## *1.2. The knowledge tool in interpretations of international balance*

Our intention in this section is to emphasize the gap of knowledge that underlies contemporary methodological approaches by the dominant elites of the International Power Poles, regarding the methodological tools applied in interpreting international turmoil. This gap of knowledge has led the metropolitan political elites in an ongoing fluctuation between the already outdated holistic hermeneutic models of the past and the new selective attempts which have not yet been formulated in a coherent model.

The first issue that is of concern to the metropolitan elites is the need to have an intimate knowledge of the cultural and economic model, according to which they may locate the structural elements of the New Paradigm, based on the assumption that is their aspiration.

We should also note that these attempts are intertwined with the necessity to select a Research Program that shall not bear the burden of bias and normativism, of ideological prejudices that have been turned into theory. These prejudices are related to the theological, metaphysical 'globalization', a phenomenon that consists of turning long established historical and cultural identities into hybrid forms, while at the same time the actors favoring globalization remain unseen, hiding between the barrier of normativist political correctness and the instrumentalisation of 'human rights'.

A scientific and methodologically sound attempt to create a Research Program that shall address the contemporary international balance should include knowledge of Modern Systemic Geopolitical Analysis (MSGGA). By applying MSGGA researchers can formulate a sterilized and sober approach on empirical data, through which they shall be able a) to discern the patterns of power redistribution in its current historical context and b) to predict to a degree tendencies of power redistribution between the antagonistic International Poles of Power.

Power is defined by the author according to MSGGA as the resultant net force that derives from the structural combination of four pillars that function as its underlying components:

- i) the Pillar of Defense-Security,
- ii) the Pillar of Economy,

---

3. N.o.A: A condition that exists when someone has lost control of something and no one has replaced them (<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/power-vacuum?a=british>)

- iii) the Pillar of Politics and
- iv) the Pillar of Culture-Information.<sup>4</sup>

Hermeneutic application of MSGA forms the only valid methodology that can offer insight into empirical data, into the ontology of inter-state antagonisms and as a consequence into their fundamental and essential characteristics. Thus MSGA can on a meta-theoretical level evaluate the hermeneutic validity of the initial hypotheses of the hard core of the said Research Program, having scrutinized them according to an alteration between verification and falsification and thereby reexamining the historical norms of the past in the testing environment of the geopolitical interpretative and predictive method.

Until today the unsuccessful method applied by international hegemonic metropolitan centers consisted of the attempt to transplant their value system –manifested in the pillars of Security, Economy, Politics and Culture- on the regional state actors which were or should lie under the ‘metaphysical’ influence of those centers. Such an approach disregarded and still disregards the fact that their own value system could not be successfully transplanted in a different social, economic and cultural framework; as a result there occurred ‘monstrosities’ and reactions by the hybrid framework.

This approach has intensified differentiation of existing potential between the metropolitan centers and their regional corresponding state actors in the fields of political, social and cultural development, thus creating the background of rising and intensifying conflicts. The metropolitan centers themselves face a peculiar situation in their interior: due to economic internationalization and integration of large-scale units, their small- and middle-sized national units are confronted with the fact that their productive and technological capabilities are not adequate for the giant scale of the intensively internationalized market. The new horizontal international forms of centralization of economic units create a new social class of ‘neo-proletarians’, the rise of which destabilizes the internal political-economic and cultural system of the metropolitan centers.

This ‘new proletariat’ is characterized by a high level of educational attainment and therefore cannot be analyzed according to standard Marxist models of interpretation. The political-economic elites of the metropolitan centers react to the rise of this ‘new proletariat’ by ‘exporting’ their internal problem and by extracting resources and economic surplus from the vital space consisting of the state actors lying under their influence. As a result there occur international economic crises and political instability. This reaction aims to secure those resources that shall maintain the elevated economic level of consumer metropolitan societies, in order to avert manifestations of social disorder and eruptions. If the metropolitan societies lack those necessary resources, then they aspire to expand their geopolitical spheres of influence by attempting to forcefully incorporate new state actors. Still, it seems that the international system cannot bear the burden of these attempts aspiring at economic, political and cultural hegemonism.

Extraction of surplus at an international level that occurred during the Cold War in a ‘mild’ more or less manner –as was achieved by Western social democracy and the Soviet imperium- has been transformed into a system of ‘warm’ conflicts and of violent supra-national integration. The metropolitan societies face considerable challenges of subversion regarding their security and their economic status. Internationalized market in the post-industrial age leads to proletarianization of working masses of societies around the globe, thus contributing to their social and political radicalization.

---

4. i) (2013) I. Th. Mazis, “L'analyse Géopolitique Systémique: Propositions terminologiques et Définitions Métathéoriques selon l'exigence Métathéorique Lakatienne”, *Géographies, Géopolitiques et Géostratégies Régionales*, Vol. I, (1), 2013, pp. 21-32 [ISSN: 2241-6927 PRINT & ISSN: 2241-6935 On line] ii) (2014) Nicholas J. Daras • John Th. Mazis, «Systemic geopolitical modeling. Part 1: prediction of geopolitical events », *GeoJournal*, DOI 10.1007/s10708-014-9569-3 Springer Science Verlag, Dordrecht 2014 iii) (2015), Nicholas J. Daras -John Th. Mazis, “Systemic Geopolitical Modeling. Part 2: Subjectivity in Prediction of Geopolitical Events”, *GeoJournal*, Spatially Integrated Social Sciences and Humanities, vol. 80, no 4, 2015, ISSN 0343-2521, *GeoJournal*, DOI 10.1007/s10708-015-9670-2, Springer Science Verlag, Dordrecht 2015].

These supra-national masses view the metropolitan hegemonic centers as the source of their plight. Their objections to the metropolitan centers do not revolve only around political and economic structures, but extend into matters of ethnic and cultural identity. In this matter the metropolitan hegemonic centers are being suitably turned into ideological scapegoats, into 'totems of hate', thereby facilitating the rise of racism and of nationalist hate. Confrontation between regional and metropolitan state actors is no longer carried out according to rationalism, but is turned into metaphysics of rivalry leading to religious and political terrorism. Thus the cycle is concluded; the new supra-national integrative forms shall have to choose the form and the qualitative aspect of their societies, the type of their relations with each other. These matters are suitably addressed on a theoretical level by the metropolitan political and economic elites.

### *1.3. Irrelevance and inutility of Cold War political semiotics in the contemporary era*

Assuming that the ideological division between the leftist ideological and economic centralism and the liberal economic, political and cultural worldview was once a valid political and hermeneutic notion during the Cold War confrontation between the two Power Poles (Eastern and Western), such an analysis nowadays raises serious concerns regarding the validity of these terms, especially after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the instrumental use of the Islamist movement in the ongoing antagonism between Land Powers and Sea Powers.

Islam presents a formidable demographic power; in 2010 Islamic population world-wide amounted to 1.6 billion, i.e. 25% of world population. According to *Pew Research Center*, Islamic population shall grow to 3 billion by 2050 thus equaling world Christian population. Islamic populations are characterized by a steadfast metaphysical adherence to their religious beliefs. The 'Western' hegemonic pole has unfortunately chosen to instrumentalize Islam by orienting it against the Eastern hegemonic pole and then against Islamic societies themselves leading to intra-state and inter-state conflicts, international instability and war. Western elites did not take into account or actually project a desirable program of new supra-national structures or worldviews that can answer modern challenges in Ecology, Energy, Labor and International Security. 21st century marks the end of ideological fixations and ideological constructions, actually the end of mass fantasies. Still, the question remains whether this has been understood by the hegemonic actors.

The new paradigm that emerges could be identified as Synthesis; a synthesis of economic and political methods, a synthesis of social views and cultural elements. Such a synthesis shall unfold itself after a thorough quantitative and qualitative analysis of international political, economic, cultural and defensive data has been achieved, i.e. after a thorough geopolitical analysis has been completed. This proposed synthesis shall aim at human prosperity and international justice, necessary preconditions of international security. At this particular historical point the underlying structure of such a Synthesis is, as always, of economic nature.

Free-market economy forms the necessary precondition of the said Synthesis. Existence of alternative economic structures, such as the Chinese model, does not alter this conclusion, as China is also moving towards a free-market economy. Developments in information are related not only to capital transfer and investments, but also to cultural contacts between various state actors and their relevant supra-national groupings (defensive, economic, political and cultural). Cultural integration can be advanced through such supra-national institutional entities leading to new supra-national units that shall be based on a common cultural background (the EU for example). These new groupings in turn shall have accepted the necessity of common economic policies in service of a notion of greater good, thereby eliminating cultural differences that were inherently of confrontational nature. There shall be overlapping of cultural elements between the various groupings, a procedure that shall form the connecting bridge for further interaction and osmosis between solidified and unified geopolitical complexes. This osmosis, in its own right functioning on an economic and cultural level, shall lead to the creation of a global conscience based in principle on the values of justice, tolerance, peace, security and order.

Preconditions for the stable unfolding of such a cultural and economic integration carried out by specific actors, as well as the necessary elements for its completion, can be summed up as follows:

- i) the principle of reciprocity concerning offering and acceptance of moral and material elements between the various cultures and protection of political and cultural liberties, so that peaceful coexistence of human societies.
- ii) rule of law and preservation of free unimpeded antagonism on an international level.
- iii) free circulation of ideas and compulsory education for all citizens.
- iv) protection of natural resources, of natural reserves and of the environment.

All these preconditions shall have to be fulfilled in an international, supra-national environment with the fruitful cooperation between the various state actors that comprise this environment. Therefore, what is primarily needed is the establishment of an effective -and not hypocritical- supra-national legal framework based on existing international law and perceived by the international community as 'internal law'. Such a legal framework should be equipped with an internationally accepted system of keeping world order through military means, as well as with relevant institutions that shall guarantee application of the new Internal International Law.

International community should promote two basic goals:

- i) synthesis of existing systems of justice administration (international courts) and creation of a globally accepted International System of Justice Administration
- ii) synthesis of existing systems of collective security and formulation of a New International System of Collective Security.

International community is faced with an arduous task that shall last for a long period of time, in order to effectively and lastingly achieve the aforementioned goals. This effort can be only hindered by outdated typological distinctions between the 'Left' and the 'Right', terms invented and applied since the 1789 French Revolution.

What is currently at stake is the whole global configuration and international order; an order based on a multitude of parts. Greece and Hellenism in general can contribute in both an ideological and instrumental manner in this rising global landscape. The inherent ecumenical characteristics of Hellenic culture can function as the conduit that can spread this necessary ecumenical humanitarian spirit on a global level. The integration of Christianity with Hellenism achieved in Byzantine culture, as well as the combination of Latin culture with European traditions in Western Christianity can contribute greatly to this new global humanism. The question remains whether Greek political elites in particular are able to realize 'those exquisite music and voices/that invisible procession' that draws near. Such a self-conscious endeavor determines, defines and explains the ideological approaches that should characterize political actions and aspirations by Greek elites.

Classic Hellenic spirit reinvigorated by Christian spirituality, acting in the framework of Roman legal order and aided by Judean realist cosmopolitanism can form the bridge between the Eastern and the Western worlds. In this milieu there can be no place for racist perceptions or for outdated ideological notions. The new global culture has to discover once again its fundamental values and primary structural elements, if humanity is to survive.

This new cultural keystone, comprised by a self-aware European Union, the US and the Russian Federation, should be set by regional political elites at the forefront of their national and international structures. In this manner political elites shall be able to combine in a coherent whole all elements connecting various cultures and avoid those dividing them. Political elites must rise to the height of the challenges posed by keeping a sincere and honest attitude, based on old values.<sup>5</sup> These values maybe old and sometimes forgotten throughout history, buried in the sands of lost empires, still they have been justified in a historical sense.

---

5. This is the notion of Trust according to Francis Fukuyama and Social Responsibility according to Michel Rocard.

Nowadays, as a New Global Humanitarian Culture is being formed, these values reemerge in our memory and conscience. We should welcome these values, having overcome the ideological fixations of the past.

### ***Bibliography***

- (1995), F. Fukuyama, *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity*, Free Press
- (2013) I. Th. Mazis, "L'analyse Géopolitique Systémique: Propositions terminologiques et Définitions Metathéoriques selon l'exigence Metathéorique Lakatienne", *Géographies, Géopolitiques et Géostratégies Régionales*, Vol. I, (1), pp. 21-32 [ISSN: 2241-6927 PRINT & ISSN: 2241-6935 On line]
- (2014) Nicholas J. Daras-John Th. Mazis, «Systemic geopolitical modeling. Part 1: prediction of geopolitical events », *GeoJournal*, DOI 10.1007/s10708-014-9569-3 Springer Science Verlag, Dordrecht 2014
- (2015) Nicholas J. Daras-John Th. Mazis, "Systemic Geopolitical Modeling. Part 2: Subjectivity in Prediction of Geopolitical Events", *GeoJournal*, Spatially Integrated Social Sciences and Humanities, vol. 80, no 4, 2015, ISSN 0343-2521, *GeoJournal*, DOI 10.1007/s10708-015-9670-2, Springer Science Verlag, Dordrecht 2015].