

New Geopolitical Trends in the Globalized World

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In the present article, the characteristic features of the political aspect of globalization are considered. The consequences of reformatting the global geopolitical space are the following: the decreasing relevance of some geopolitical paradigms, some new characteristics of the geopolitical space, the developing hierarchy of global political actors, the emergence of new geoeconomic and geopolitical axes forming the structure of the global world, new form of structuring the global world whose major constituents are sub- and macroregions, as well as regional systems and subsystems.

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In the two decades since the collapse of the USSR, some *new geopolitical contours have been shaped*. The Westphalian System has undergone radical changes, whereas the dynamic processes of globalization have led to the formation of a global world system.

The late 20th century evidenced the start of a process of reformatting the global geopolitical world. This transformation mainly concerned the economy. Consequently, it was reasonable to regard globalization as the building of an integrated global financial and economic space based on new technologies, notably the information technology.

At the beginning of the 21st century, it became clear that globalization cannot be reduced to the integrated global economy. Globalization is an objective process of building an integrated informational, economic, political, legal, sociocultural and environmental space.

Globalization has a number of aspects: economic, political and sociocultural; they are closely intertwined and complement each other. The latter two aspects of globalization are insufficiently investigated; meanwhile, their relevance is increasing.

Today the geopolitical transformation is often reduced to political and coercive course with 'outbreaks' in certain geographical areas, especially where antagonism between a state and a global power is politicized and dominated by ideology.

Until recently, it was clear that political globalization lagged behind the economic one, which had been developing quite actively. More and more countries became integrated into the global economic space, while the outsiders like North Korea and Cuba risked to remain failed states forever. Today, political globalization accelerates and gains its own dynamics; it catches up with economic globalization. It became possible to speak about the integrated global *political* and economic space, not only about the integrated economy.

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From the political point of view, globalization is characterized by the USA increasing military, political and geopolitical superiority over the rest of the world, since the USSR and its allies do no longer exist and cannot act as a counterbalance, and China has not gained yet power as a potential opponent.

The characteristic features of political aspects of globalization are the following: political communities strive to establish a suitable for them world order; diverse political and ideological systems converge to form an integral whole; a global governance system is going to be introduced in the near future; the doctrine of a 'new world order' is implemented; a financial, political and information system is set up to redistribute global resources for the benefit of the USA and its closest partners; some countries face imminent threats to their security and national sovereignty.

This global geopolitical transformation has its implications. Firstly, *a number of classical geopolitical paradigms are no longer relevant. Geopolitical concepts and categories are replaced by new ones reflecting new global reality (global 'structure', 'architecture', 'hierarchy', and 'framework'). Conventional geopolitical terms ('superpower', 'vassal', 'satellite', 'puppet state', 'rogue state', etc.) are often replaced by the concepts of political global studies ('centre of power', 'poles of multipolar world', 'contenders for centre of power', 'global power', 'regional power', 'regional systems and subsystems', etc.).*

Secondly, new geopolitical features emerge, namely: the world is no longer bipolar, but multipolar; global political processes accelerate; global architecture undergoes changes and transformations, it becomes fragmented and hierarchical; new geopolitical axes appear; and emerging centres of power are concentrated in blocs, they are dispersed and more competitive.

The globalized world is not static. In addition to 'hot' and latent conflicts, there is competition between regional blocs, each of them dominated by a regional power (the USA, the EU, China, Russia, Brazil, Argentina, India, Pakistan, etc.).

Formerly neutral states find themselves involved into the sphere of attraction of the regional leader or have to choose between competing blocs. Countries with significant resources (minerals, energy, strategic location, demography, etc.) attract attention of the leading powers that compete to involve these states into their own sphere of influence and engage them into the regional sphere or political (economic or military) bloc.

Thus, the globalized world is not homogeneous. It is dispersed and fragmented; it comprises the following systemic elements: centres of power, contending centers of power, macroregions or global powers, geopolitical axes, regional systems and subsystems. All these elements together make up the global world *system*.

Thirdly, the global world has its own hierarchy of political actors: centres of power; contending centers of power; economic, political, military and civilization poles. Each of them has its parameters, which can be extrapolated to Russia in order to determine its place in this hierarchy.

The economic parameters are as follows: high rates of GDP and output growth, economic policy efficiency, developed market relations and advanced small and medium business, active investment in the domestic market and investment attractiveness of the region as a whole; developed social and economic infrastructure, best possible life quality and living standards; focus on innovation and high technology; balance between social, environmental and economic systems of the country; sustainability and balance of the region's social, economic, resource and environmental potential, its high competitiveness in the globalized world.

The economic pole at present is the 'golden billion group of seven' and the rapidly developing 'semi-peripheral group of seven'.

The following parameters refer to the political pole: membership in the UN Security Council; capability to exercise control over vast geopolitical territory and sufficient power to keep this territory in one's sphere of influence; clear indicators of political self-sufficiency; internal political stability and sustainable development of the state, guaranteed by the relevant size of territory under control and its key (geostrategic) points; sufficient demographic and territorial resources.

The military pole should have the following characteristics: nuclear weapons, which give the state an opportunity to exercise strong influence on other countries and international relations due to the plain fact of its existence and the threat of using armed force, by demonstrating political will and determination to engage in warfare if necessary. However, the fact of possessing such destructive weapons does not fully describe the notion of a 'military pole'. The status of a military power is upheld by a number of concepts (military doctrine, national security doctrine, foreign policy concept, public opinion on the use of force, *etc.*), institutions and methods that define military force as the major political tool of the country. The military pole is represented primarily by the countries that possess or develop nuclear weapons: India, China, Iran, Pakistan, North Korea, *etc.*

The civilization pole is characterized by the following features: distinct civilization identity, potential to exercise sociocultural influence; evident specific features of national mentality; recognizable civilization patterns, filters and barriers in the process of countries' sociocultural integration into the globalized world; consolidation based on the generally shared uniting national idea; protection of national interests, values and ideals; a clearly defined national project. The global civilization poles are China, India, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Iran and other countries with distinct civilization identity and civilization project.

Therefore, the globalized world emerges not as a community of equal states, but as a subordination system and as a rigid hierarchy of regional political systems.

A centre of power in the globalized world is represented by a concept that includes all local characteristics of the existing poles of the multipolar world. It can be defined as country's military, economic, political, sociocultural (civilization) resources that determine its geostrategic, geoeconomic, geopolitical and sociocultural potential and allow it to take an active part in global governance.

It is difficult for a country to achieve this; however, forging an alliance (bloc) with other countries to accumulate economic, political and military resources can give rise to a centre of power in the globalized world. When integration is completed, that is a full-fledged economic, political, military and strategic alliance emerges, such a bloc, which accumulates power and force of a few neighboring countries, becomes a *centre of power* in the globalized world. However, as it is difficult to meet these requirements, the only real example of a centre of power is the European Union.

Contending centers of power are represented by the countries putting together their resources and moving toward establishing an economic, political, military and strategic alliances. Contending centers of power are represented by a number of regional associations such as ASEAN, APEC, MERCOSUR, the CCASG, the Southern African Customs Union and other ones pursuing mainly economic integration.

Fourthly, new geoeconomic and geopolitical axes are formed, and they make up the framework of the globalized world.

At present, the division of regions into developed, emerging and developing ones loses its relevance. A new spatial configuration is being formed in the world economy and it is constituted by the West-East and North-South geoeconomic axes.

This classification is quite arbitrary. The notions of the 'Industrialized North' and the 'Backward South' are not accurate from the geographical point of view. Traditionally, the 'North' includes developed countries with high GDP and GDP per capita and rapid economic growth.

With account of their economic activity, countries of 'the Big Seven of the South' (China, India, Brazil, Indonesia, Mexico, South Korea and Thailand) should also be included into the 'North' group. China can rightfully aspire to join 'the Big Seven of the North' (the G7).

In 2010–2011, Russia ranked 63rd in the Global Competitiveness Index 2011–2012 being behind not only such large economies as Turkey (61), India (51), Brazil (58), South Africa (54), but also behind Montenegro (49), Costa Rica (56), Slovenia (45), Azerbaijan (57), Mauritania (55), Sri-Lanka (62), Indonesia (44), Lithuania (47), Barbados (43), Tunisia (32), Puerto Rico (41), Malaysia (26), *etc.*¹

In addition to the existing geoeconomic axes, during the past twenty years new geopolitical axes have also emerged, for example, the USA – the EU, the USA – Canada – Mexico, Brazil – Argentina, Turkey – Iran, China – Japan – South Korea, South Africa – Nigeria, *etc.*

The geoeconomic and geopolitical axes of the globalized world make up its framework.

Quite an interesting phenomenon accompanies the emergence of some of these axes. When an axis is formed by two countries that are approximately equal in terms of their potential and resources (*e.g.*, Turkey and Iran), when these potentials are added up, a *binuclear centre of power* is formed. This centre of power has two nuclei, Turkey and Iran in this case; and this phenomenon can be referred to as *local bipolarity*.

Fifthly, the analysis of territorial and political space reveals the emergence of a *new form of the structuring* of the globalized world. The notion of 'region' becomes its major structural element. This term is polysemantic and has a number of meanings, interpretations and definitions. For instance, there are economic, cultural, geopolitical, political, philosophical, administrative and legal, *etc.* meanings of the term. The definitions of the term (Political Encyclopedia 1999: 333–334; Mazour, Chumakov 2003: 882, see also Abramov and Kuybar 2008: 249) include regions of all levels (sub-regions and macroregions) and allow considering a country as a region, as a structural unit and as an element of the three-level system of the globalized world.

From this point of view, the term 'region' refers to such different in scale and quality structural units as Bavaria, Andalusia, Flanders, the Middle East, the Asia-Pacific region, Eastern Europe, Latin America, *etc.* Thus, the term 'region' is either used to denote an administrative unit within a country (Wales, Corsica, Florida) and is understood as a country's *subregion* or it refers to a group of countries (Asia-Pacific, North America, Europe, *etc.*) and means a *macroregion*; or the term is equal to the term 'state', which in this context can be called a *mesoregion*.

The three-level structure of the globalized world started emerging in the late 20th century. Nowadays, the structure of the globalized world comprises three levels: sub-regions

¹ URL: www.weforum.org/gcr.

(regions within a country), mesoregions (countries), and macroregions, which are new structural units in the globalized world. Therefore, the globalized world can be represented as a *three-level structure* consisting of sub-regions, mesoregions and macroregions, and the concept of 'region' is a basic element of the three-level system of the globalized world.

In terms of structural scale and format, one can single out regional systems and subsystems can be singled out.

Regional systems consist of neighboring states united by a regional leader that is characterized by the presence of a number of poles and initiates integration processes. A regional leader is an economic and/or political and/or military, *etc.* pole of the globalized world. For instance, the regional system (macroregion) of Central Asia comprises five post-Soviet republics: Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan as well as Afghanistan, northwestern Pakistan, and northwestern China.

Regional subsystems embrace parts of adjacent countries, especially adjoining regions. Thus, a trans-border region is formed by neighboring states' parts. The prime example is the Baltic region. Bordering regions of the Baltic countries cooperate successfully. Another example is an attempt of Russia's Far East to integrate into East Asia.

In the globalized world, integration processes are under way; new *large regional systems are emerging* that aspire to become centres of power (or are likely to become centres of power in the future).

A territory becomes a macroregion when neighboring countries develop cooperation in economy, foreign policy and social and cultural sphere; when they set up shared goals and aspire to achieve them jointly; when they develop a strategy and tactic to solve problems they face, which concern all the countries of this regional system.

A *macroregion* is a geographical area that includes either individual countries or international (regional) organizations (alliances) that closely cooperate in economic, trade, political, diplomatic, social and cultural and other spheres and that act as a collective actor in the international arena. As a rule, promotion of such an interaction leads to the establishment of supranational governance institutions.

Geopolitical macro-regionalization of the globalized world is represented in the establishment of regional systems. In other words, such a macroregion can be regarded as a *regional system* comprising a number of neighboring states that are closely connected in terms of economy, politics and culture, share regulating and coordinating institutions and have a country that leads these integration processes.

The post-Soviet region has all the necessary conditions to form a regional system including the independent states' necessity to ensure their security and stability for their regimes, the need for energy cooperation and economic ties, for special trade agreements and the attraction of investments on behalf of the regional leader. These steps are expected to be taken by the country that claims to become the regional leader and eventually are supposed to consolidate regional unity and advance it to the level of an integrated community.

However, the position of the regional leader has its advantages and drawbacks. On the one hand, it promotes the status of the regional power in the global hierarchy. On the other hand, this status sometimes requires forgetting its interests and making significant financial, military, resource and other contributions and investment to support and develop its allies, though economic benefit and financial returns are not guaranteed.

Despite objectively existing opportunities, Russia has failed to keep the regional leader position in the post-Soviet territory and is rapidly losing its status of the regional power. Apparently, this can be explained by the lack of political will in the 1990s and evident difficulties in establishing efficient supranational governance institutions as well as mutual resentment and antipathy towards Russia that was sometimes artificially stirred up by national elites; finally, the competition between centres of powers of the globalized world for the post-Soviet region played a crucial role. The post-Soviet territory attracted increasing attention of the European Union and the USA, on the one hand, and China, on the other hand (beyond the Urals).

So far Russia has not made a full use of available means (economic ones: investment, energy prices lower than on the world market, scrap trade, customs, migration and other barriers; military ones: dumping weapons; methods of soft power, including cultural expansion, *etc.*) necessary to ensure the status of the regional leader. Nevertheless, the project of the Eurasian Union can become groundwork for building a new geopolitical area and a mighty regional system accumulating rich resources of the member countries.

Facts and strategic estimates allow predicting that by 2025 the world will complete its transition to multipolarity, new powers will emerge on the international arena, and economic strength and military might will move from the West to the East. New poles and centres of power will appear to become major international actors and to determine further development of the international community. We have good reasons to hope that Russia will be one of them.

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