

CHAPTER I

Geopolitical determinants of the international order

1. Geopolitics and globalization

Two broad areas dominate the discussion on the contemporary international reality, like the two sides of a coin – geopolitics and globalization. The first means the traditional connection between powers in time and space, while the second refers to an intensification of contacts among people on the global scale through manifold forms of exchange.⁷

Geopolitics is enjoying a renaissance in the spheres of ontology and cognition. This concerns the relationships between geographic features of the international environment and political processes going on in the world. It is still a contentious issue whether geopolitical facts or geopolitical mental constructs count more. For a long time, it has been known that politicians of many states, and of great powers especially, build various geopolitical spaces, manipulating ‘geographic facts’ for the purposes of their own policies and strategies. This phenomenon has become particularly fashionable in recent years as old power arrangements have decayed and the international balance has begun to teeter.

In contrast, globalization is the greatest force driving change in the power arrangements of the world.⁸ Changes in how people communicate and interact with one another are causing radical technological and social transformations. They are also conducive to societies becoming more active politically, to changes in the subjective condition of humanity, which Zbigniew Brzeziński has called a “global political awakening”, and to the appearance of global problems of survival.⁹

⁷ P. Marber, “Globalization and Its Contents”, *World Policy Journal* 2004–2005, Vol. 21, No. 4, pp. 29–37.

⁸ J.A. Scholte, *Globalization: A Critical Introduction*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York 2005.

⁹ Z. Brzeziński, B. Scowcroft, *America and the World: Conversations on the Future of American Foreign Policy*, Basic Books, New York 2008.

Many researchers overestimate the significance of either globalization or geopolitics, since in reality they condition and supplement each other. Geopolitics reminds us of 'old' models of conduct in the international system, based on hegemony and subordination, and concerns the most important issues affecting the global distribution of power.¹⁰ In this sense, it is focused on processes relating to the global balance of power, in which the most important role is played by actual or potential great powers.¹¹ Globalization, on the other hand, anticipates growing interdependence, a ripening of processes of cooperation and integration. While this is not exactly new, it has certainly intensified in recent decades.¹²

The technological revolution has reduced the importance of physical space, including in international relations. Growing economic interdependence is having a calming effect on geopolitical tensions. The world's largest economies – those of the United States, the European Union and China – are so strongly interconnected that it does not pay to heat up conflict among them. A war between the great powers is unthinkable. The growth of one of them depends on the strength and prosperity of the others.¹³ Few are those today who think of their power in terms of territorial expansion. The idea of conquering foreign lands has lost any sense. It has been replaced by a whole arsenal of economic instruments for ensuring that the globalized economy rules out any return to a geopolitical rivalry according to past patterns.

A new phenomenon in the globalized world is the internationalization of all problems of social coexistence. Be it terrorism, the proliferation of nuclear weapons, contagious diseases, contamination of the natural environment, economic crises or water shortages, none of these issues can now be solved without cooperation and coordination among many states. And if we include the growing power of the non-state players in international life, we see just how difficult such coordination can be, and the prospects for mutual understanding on the global scale can seem to dwindle.

Against this background, questions arise: How can globalization help smooth over geopolitical divisions when they are still being maintained?

¹⁰ Given the complex conditions in the international environment, geopolitics must take account of many more factors than when natural dimensions prevailed, particularly geographic location and spatial distances and extents.

¹¹ B.R. Nayar, *The Geopolitics of Globalization: The Consequences for Development*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2008, p. 7 et seq.

¹² M.M. Weinstein (ed.), *Globalization. What's New?* Columbia University Press, New York 2005.

¹³ M. Doyle, "Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs", *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 1983, No. 34, pp. 205–235; 323–353; R.N. Rosecrance, *The Rise of the Virtual State: Wealth and Poverty in the Coming Century*, Basic Books, New York 2000.

What new players and new processes of globalization are changing the power arrangement, breaking down old power constellations, harmonising models and values, or creating a pluralism of ideologies and world views in the international environment? In other words: under the influence of globalization, how is the interpretation of geographic space as an 'object of desire' in the policies of states, and especially the great powers, changing?

Geopolitics was essentially a creation of the Northern hemisphere (the West). European empires dominated the South, from Latin America and Africa to Australia and Oceania. Over the past 500 years, Western know-how has literally fused the globe together,¹⁴ with the result that, by the end of the 19th century, external expansion came to be replaced by an internal consolidation of the international system. In the 20th century, the 'North' split into two opposing camps, while the 'South' the post-colonial 'Third World' emerged.¹⁵

With the end of the Cold War, the hope arose that states would move towards economic integration, which would put an end to geopolitical rivalry.¹⁶ It turned out, however, that states seek economic integration and adapt Western institutions or models of conduct not to withdraw from the geopolitical struggle, but to engage in it more effectively. The great powers, which are undoubtedly the engines of globalization, promote the values of peace and prosperity but at the same time are determined not to lose any opportunity to increase their influence at the expense of their international partners. This means that globalization has only modified, not eliminated, geopolitical rivalry.

The beginning of the 21st century has seen a revolutionary change in how world geopolitics (and its derivatives: geostrategy, geoeconomics and geoculture) are considered. The West once dominated the whole world, now the centre of gravity is shifting to the East and the South. Along with the rise of non-European powers and a relative decline in the importance of the United States, the initiative in shaping the international system is being taken by China, India, Brazil and Eurasian Russia.¹⁷ There is no doubt that these are the biggest beneficiaries of globalization and the transition to a market economy. At the same time, through what is known as

¹⁴ A. Toynbee, *Civilization on Trial*, Oxford University Press, London 1948, p. 23.

¹⁵ P. Kownacki, *Trzeci Świat a polityczny aspekt globalizacji gospodarczej [The Third World and the Political Aspect of Economic Globalisation]*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe ASKON, Warszawa 2006.

¹⁶ W. Zank (ed.), *Clash or Cooperation of Civilizations? Overlapping Integration and Identities*, Ashgate, Burlington 2009.

¹⁷ K. Mahbubani, *The New Asian Hemisphere: The Irresistible Shift of Global Power to the East*, Public Affairs Press, New York 2008.

the demonstration effect, these countries have a positive impact on other countries in Asia and Africa, and offer new opportunities (financial, investment and commodity markets) for the world's most developed countries.¹⁸ Geopolitically speaking, this has been the most groundbreaking development in modern times, though economically one should probably take a cooler view of this psychological shock. A restrained view should be taken of today's rise of Asian powers, since in the past they also had a significant share in the global economy, but this did not mean they determined the fate of the world. In 1820, at the dawn of the Industrial Revolution, China's economy comprised 30% of the world economy and India's about 15%, compared with 23% for Europe and less than 2% for the United States. By the middle of the 20th century, the two Asian giants had but an 8.7% share in the global economy, while the United States had reached 27.3%, and Europe 26.3%.¹⁹ Today, they owe their current growth to globalization – specifically, to the liberalization of world trade.

The essence of the psychological shock connected with geopolitical change is well expressed by the idea of “Chimerica”, coined by Moritz Schularick and Niall Ferguson to describe the complicated relations between China and America. If we accept that something like Chimerica exists, then it occupies about 13% of the surface of the Earth, it is inhabited by one quarter of the population of the world, it produces more or less one third of global GDP, and its combined economy generated more than half of global economic growth in recent years.²⁰ The economic crisis brought about an improvement in China's position to the detriment of America's,²¹ which meant far-reaching geopolitical changes involving a “great reconvergence” of East and West.²² China, still maintaining high economic growth, may not only overtake America in terms of GDP, but may also take the initiative in various areas of the world, from the Shanghai Cooperation

¹⁸ In this context, it is worth mentioning China's expansion into Africa, which must inevitably lead to friction between those powers that have traditionally had their own policies on Africa (Great Britain, France and the United States).

¹⁹ These data should be approached cautiously, for the absence of economic consolidation in China and India, and the quality of their potential, did not make them world powers in the 19th century. L. Cohen-Tanugi, *The Shape of the World to Come: Charting the Geopolitics of a New Century*, Columbia University Press, New York 2008, p. 6.

²⁰ N. Ferguson, M. Schularick, *Chimerica and global asset markets*, <https://www.jfki.fu-berlin.de/faculty/economics/persons/schularick/chimerica.pdf> (20.09.2019).

²¹ G.J. Ikenberry, “The Rise of China and the Future of the West: Can the Liberal System Survive?”, *Foreign Affairs* 2008, No. 1, pp. 23–37.

²² D. Scott, *‘The Chinese Century’?: The Challenge to Global Order*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York 2008.

Organization to Africa and Latin America. Yet these are largely products of the imagination of the West today. The fact is, China remains one of the poorest countries in the world. Its ambitions to be a superpower cannot eliminate what it lacks socially, technologically and militarily. The Middle Kingdom longs to emancipate itself, to achieve a position of equal weight to that of the United States, but this is highly unlikely to come about in the foreseeable future.²³ And so the Group of Two concept of creating a new international dual order led by the United States and China remains firmly within the realm of hypothesis. Along with such thinking goes the vision of Asia as an area of permanent rivalry fuelled by unresolved conflicts from the past. Compared with NATO, the regional security system in Asia is loose, with a low level of institutionalization and with many structures of various degrees of political and strategic importance. In Asia, there was no symbolic conclusion of World War II (between China and Japan, Japan and Russia), no Cold War (the division of Korea, the separate existence of Taiwan). Territorial disputes continue, and there are deep ideological differences and religious extremism and fundamentalism (Pakistan, India, Iran, Afghanistan). Growth in power by one country immediately evokes a reaction by others in the form of their seeking an external protector to offset the threat of domination²⁴. The relations of Japan, China, Pakistan, India, Saudi Arabia and Turkey with the United States should be seen in terms of a balance of power.²⁵ The United States will long remain the arbiter and guarantor of Asian regional stability, mollifying the ambitions of China, India and Japan.²⁶

The dynamic economic growth of the Asian powers has conjured up a “mirage of an Asian century”, although we are still a very long way from Asian political and economic hegemony. Above all, the colossus of Asia lacks geopolitical cohesion and geostrategic consolidation. In the coming decades, we can expect progress in these areas and in Asia’s importance as one of the pillars of the international order, but we should not take this too far, since the region does not have a high level of political unity and is

²³ J. Clegg, *China’s Global Strategy: Towards a Multipolar World*, Pluto Press, London-New York 2009.

²⁴ The history of Asia abounds in examples of rivalry for dominance and leadership among the biggest powers. China and Japan have fought many times over Korea; the USSR has allied itself with India and Vietnam to keep China in check, and China has supported Pakistan against India. China’s latest successes have already brought Japan and India against it.

²⁵ Y. Funabashi, “Keeping Up with Asia: America and the New Balance of Power”, *Foreign Affairs* 2008, No. 5, pp. 110–125.

²⁶ D.E. Sanger, *The Inheritance: The World Obama Confronts and the Challenges to American Power*, Harmony Books, New York 2009.

unlikely to develop into something like the European Union. Asia's increasing importance *per saldo* should bring more opportunities than threats. The continent's economic growth is not only bringing hundreds of millions of people out of poverty – it is also increasing demand for Western goods. Internal cracks are allowing the United States to effectively control the geopolitical influence of potential rivals such as China and Russia. There is hope, then, that Asia's successes will create the competitive pressure the West needs to set its own house in order – without falling prey to false propaganda or hysteria.²⁷

Many observers of the international scene are inclined towards the traditional vision of an international order based on polycentrism and inter-polarity.²⁸ New models for a regional balance of power are being perceived that anticipate the creation of various constellations that counterbalance each other.²⁹ In the post-Cold War world, centrifugal and differentiating processes are overshadowing centripetal and unifying ones. Globalization is not on the wane, but is becoming increasingly mixed with traditional geopolitics; paradoxically, in this way the former is revitalising the latter. Thus, we see two spheres forming in parallel: the peaceful sphere of economic integration and multilateralism, which can be described as 'post-modern internationalism', and the sphere of confrontation between individual (national) and collective (integrative) centres of power against the background of the 'war on terror', civil wars, nuclear proliferation and other issues. Maintaining a balance between these spheres constitutes the biggest challenge for the West, which, even if it is unable to prevent a redistribution of power ("a new hand"), should do everything in order to consolidate the majority of states in defence of the achievements of Western civilization.³⁰

Differences in the amount of power states have puts their self-reliance and independence at risk, especially in an era of intensive interdependence. For this reason, the more independent states there are in the world, the greater the scope of action enjoyed by the strongest states of an imperialistic nature. Fortunately, no power has ever yet managed to conquer the

²⁷ Ali, S.M., *U.S.-China Relations on the "Asia-Pacific" Century*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York 2008.

²⁸ G. Grevi, *The Interpolar World: A New Scenario*, "Occasional Paper", European Union Institute for Security Studies, 2009, No. 79.

²⁹ T.V. Paul, J.J. Wirtz, M. Fortmann (eds), *Balance of Power: Theory and Practice in the Twenty-first Century*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA 2004.

³⁰ S. Gill, *Power and Resistance in the New World Order*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke-New York 2008.

whole world,³¹ and the British Empire was the last on which the sun never set.³² Despite its worldwide military presence, the United States is not able to dominate everywhere. In fact, the world is “uni-multipolar” (Samuel Huntington), with America at the head of a group of strong regional powers (many powers but one superpower).

John N. Gray, a political philosopher, maintains in turn that the world is neither unipolar nor bipolar nor multipolar. In his opinion, such categories are ill-suited to describing modern reality. Today, one cannot rule out even the most surprising alliances, for many of them are tactical in nature: the United States gave the example by creating a ‘coalition of the willing’; India become involved with the US against China, at the same time signing an agreement with Iran on energy policy. At the same time, according to Gray, the West has lost its supremacy. It is no longer leading. And after Iraq, the assertion that Western institutions maintain international stability can only evoke bursts of laughter.³³

This position is in line with that of Richard Haass on ‘non-polarity’. Haass believes that the international order that is emerging will not be dominated by one or several states, but by dozens of non-state players exerting various types of influence (regional and global organizations, large corporations, administrative regions and units within states, metropolises and megalopolises, information agencies, ‘militias’ or private armies, religious organizations, drug cartels and others).³⁴ This has been called a “new Middle Ages”, a depolarized world without great powers.³⁵ In such a highly diffuse international system, the United States will remain the greatest single centre of influence, but its global position will become relatively weaker.

Great powers have always sought to have their own vision of the international order and to foist it on others. If we accept that such an attitude is a criterion of independence, then Russia recovers its ability to create its own vision by countering American ideas. As much as the United States tries to launch a universal democratization, including through the use of force, Russia believes that every sovereign state has the right to choose its

³¹ Arnold Toynbee showed that every great empire has suffered from the mirage of immortality. R. Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1981, p. 28.

³² N. Ferguson, *Empire: The Rise and Demise of the British World Order and the Lessons for Global Power*, Basic Books, New York 2002.

³³ J.N. Gray, *Gray's Anatomy: Selected Writings*, Allen Lane, London 2009.

³⁴ R.N. Haass, “The Age of Nonpolarity: What Will Follow U.S. Dominance?”, *Foreign Affairs* 2008, No. 3, pp. 44–56.

³⁵ T. Akihiko, *The New Middle Ages: The World System in the 21st Century*, The International House of Japan, Tokyo 2002.

own model of government.³⁶ This means that the Russians are standing on the ground of the classic principles of international law, and appear, paradoxically, as defenders of the *status quo*, while the United States has become a revisionist power. According to public opinion, especially since the annexation of Crimea in 2014, the opposite is true.³⁷

2. Characteristics of the transition from the Cold War to the post-Cold War order

The actual international order invokes a state of polyarchy in the international environment³⁸ and complex interactions between states involving both cooperation and rivalry. It encompasses institutions of power and control (states, international organizations), various types of management and administration (international regimes, global governance) and the system of political and legal norms (the rules of the game, international law). Apart from these, geography and technology (especially military technology) always have a key role to play, and enable us to understand the spatial and functional location of the various actors in international life.³⁹

20th-century models of the international order were based on a dialect of conflict and cooperation. During the Cold War, the international order was frequently associated with maintaining the *status quo*, as the maintenance of a power arrangement between opposing blocs that was stable, if unjust. Many smaller and weaker players had to respect the hegemony of the superpowers, since it guaranteed a balance in the international system as a whole.

The post-Cold War order is undergoing continuous transformation. No permanent models have yet emerged. Longings for a stabilized order are understandable, but unjustified, for the battle for leadership is still

³⁶ S. Bieleń, "Rosja we współczesnym świecie" ["Russia in the Modern World"], *Europejski Przegląd Prawa i Stosunków Międzynarodowych* 2009, No. 2, pp. 5–26.

³⁷ I. Oldberg, "Is Russia a Status Quo Power?" *Ulpaper* (Swedish Institute of International Affairs) 2016, No. 1.

³⁸ The term "polyarchy" was coined by Robert Dahl (*Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*, Yale University Press, New Haven, CT 1971) to describe structures and processes in democratic systems. In reference to international relations, the first to use the term was Seyom Brown (*New Forces in World Politics*, Brookings Institute, Washington, DC 1974). In the Polish science of international relations, the word was first popularised by Józef Kukułka in his book *Problemy teorii stosunków międzynarodowych [Problems of the Theory of International Relations]*, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Warszawa 1978.

³⁹ J.J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, W.W. Norton, New York 2001, p. 20 et seq.

under way, constellations of powers are changing, while non-state players are causing more trouble than ever before. States themselves – the main players in international relations – are also changing. Processes that are internationalising society, and globalization especially, are altering the function of the state and increasing competition among non-state players. Globalization is modifying traditional geopolitics, but without any guarantee from states, it is difficult to imagine how the stability of the system can be preserved. A transition period always creates fears for the future. The greater those fears, the more difficult it is to diagnose existing dangers and uncertainties.⁴⁰

Regardless of all the obstacles and uncertainties in the modern world, there are growing hopes and expectations related to the new order. In the past, the order was largely associated with eliminating threats, whereas today there is talk of desirable positive functions of the international order, which is perceived as a source and guarantee of access to many desired benefits and social values. It can facilitate the flow of information and economic resources, ensure respect for human rights, give hope concerning external intervention, open up access to global social movements and international non-governmental organizations, and set cultural goods in powerful circulation. While many of those goods may turn out to be undesirable imports, the governments of states all around the world, as well as citizens, remain enthusiastically open to the idea of globalization.⁴¹

The actual international order always contains both unifying and differentiating elements, cooperation and conflict, war and peace, safety and threats, justice and oppression, symmetry and asymmetry. Observers see certain regularities and rules in that order, while at the same time many phenomena and processes are spontaneous, accidental and elemental, and it is difficult to find any logical connection between them or predictable patterns of behaviour. Nevertheless, that order is always associated with a certain harmony and stability, a desirable arrangement of various elements where rules of the game are in place.⁴² The international order, then, is the result of purposeful activities by many participants, with the great powers at the forefront.⁴³ The actual international order is always the

⁴⁰ J. Symonides (ed.), *Świat wobec współczesnych wyzwań i zagrożeń [The World vs Contemporary Challenges and Threats]*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, Warszawa 2010.

⁴¹ J. Baylis, S. Smith (eds), *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations*, Oxford University Press, Oxford-New York 2001.

⁴² H. Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics*, Macmillan Press, London 1977, p. 3.

⁴³ Georg Schwarzenberger called sovereign states the international aristocracy, and assigned the great powers the status of oligarchies (magnates) among that aristocracy.

result of their political strategy (or more broadly, ‘polystrategy’) – rivalry, cooperation, accommodation or avoidance.⁴⁴ Those strategies can take on the form of the dictatorship of the strongest, they may be the result of coalitions or a negotiated compromise, or they may be spontaneous, a chance conglomeration of various hidden forces and factors reminiscent of the laws of the marketplace (supply and demand, challenges and responses).⁴⁵ Political strategy always involves the use of power (authority) in order to impose, maintain or overthrow order, and analysts draw attention to the structure of the international system as a concentration of power. After the end of the Cold War, discussions on the subject of the polarized world and the division into blocs was overtaken by disputes over growing American hegemony, a result of that one power having achieved an advantage over others.⁴⁶

Taking account of these structural conditions, one can say without hesitation that every international order is a hierarchy, which does not rule out the absence of formal leadership or even a state of anarchy, in the meaning of a lack of government or central locus of control. The greatest threat to a stable order is when one of the great powers seeks to dominate the whole system. This is why coalitions with the participation of many states are important; they strive to maintain a certain constellation of powers that can prevent just one of them from setting out to conquer the world.

Since the end of the Cold War, there has been a return to a kind of idealism (a neo-Wilsonian policy of rebuilding international relations on the American model). Realism has found itself on the defensive, while exponents of neoliberalism and constructivism have begun to demonstrate a faith in transforming the international system, expanding democracy, increasing mutual dependence and strengthening peace through processes of integration.⁴⁷ Supporters of ‘soft power’ exaggerated the influence of the Western

G. Schwarzenberger, *Power Politics: A Study of International Society*, Frederick A. Praeger, London–New York 1951, pp. 6–7.

⁴⁴ Every international order leads to the problem of how to subject global space to political control. J.W. Legro, *Rethinking the World: Great Power Strategies and International Order*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca–London 2005.

⁴⁵ I.W. Zartman, *The Quest for Order in World Politics*, in: I.W. Zartman (ed.), *Imbalance of Power: US Hegemony and International Order*, Lynne Rienner, Boulder–London 2009, pp. 1–23.

⁴⁶ H. Kissinger, *World Order: Reflections on the Character of Nations and the Course of History*, Penguin, London 2014.

⁴⁷ P. Hassner, *La Violence et la Paix: De la bombe atomique au nettoyage ethnique*, Le Seuil, Paris 2000.