

A NEW POWER STRUCTURE OF THE WORLD

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Abstract: *Since old times, the source of power policy was represented by inequality between states. Throughout almost the entire history there have been states which imposed themselves more than others and not few times in detriment of others. In the past one would talk about empires and great empires. Empires are inherently politically unstable because the subordinated parts prefer almost all the time greater autonomy and the elites of the mentioned parts act almost all the time to acquire greater autonomy. Thus, empires do not collapse but rather disintegrate, usually very slow but sometimes extremely fast.*

Key words: *Power, tendency in the evolution, history*

“Mica enciclopedie de politologie” defines **power** as “a social fundamental phenomenon which consists in the capacity of taking decisions and of securing their achievement by using different means of persuasion and constraint; power is expressed in an asymmetrical relation (ruling – subjection and/or domination – subordination) between the factors at whose level it takes place.”¹

The players on the political scene apply power in relationship with the others in two ways: first, “by using power directly in order to impose change in the competitor’s behaviour”, which means using military force, and the second way of applying power is the indirect one, which uses cultural and institutional attraction of a player to the other, in order to change the latter’s behaviour.²

Since old times, the source of power policy was represented by inequality between states. Throughout almost the entire history there have been states which imposed themselves more than others and not few times in detriment of others. In the past one would talk about empires and great empires. Empires are inherently politically unstable because the subordinated parts prefer almost all the time greater autonomy and the elites of the mentioned parts act almost all the time to acquire greater autonomy. Thus, empires do not collapse but rather disintegrate, usually very slow but sometimes extremely fast.

In modern times, especially in the 20th century and in the present, they speak of *great powers*, whose main characteristic consists of military, economical and ideological domination or all of them together.

It is known that the end of the Second World War brought from a geopolitical point of view the division of the world in two big areas: the free and democratic world (the West Block) and the closed and undemocratic world (the East Block), each of them having a pillar, namely the United States of America and respectively the Soviet Union. A bipolar world which will resist for almost half of century, meanwhile each of the two great powers striving to extend the sphere of influence and not few times resorting to armed force, in extremely violent conflicts, such as the ones in Vietnam, Afghanistan, Somalia, Iraq and so on.³

The events which took place in the last decade of the 20th century led to the transformation of the bipolar world (the USA and its allies – the Soviet Union and the communist camp) in a unipolar world, with a single *superpower*, the USA, many times called “the world policeman”. In this uni-polar system the USA was considered “a new empire”; succeeding in putting together the political capacities with the military and economical ones as well as with the cultural influence in a way which makes it stand out compared to other international centres.

¹ *** „Mică enciclopedie de politologie”, Ed. Științifică și Enciclopedică, București, 1977, p. 373

² S. Neagu, „Geopolitica. Universul puterii”, Ed. Meteor Pres, București, 2008, p. 49

³ S. Neagu, op.cit., p. 363

Surely the United States of America will remain in the humanity history as the last great power. But this does not mean that it will put an end to the fight of acquiring the world supremacy yet it is hard to believe that another state will be able to gain such a huge power, taking into account that the number of players increased and power becomes more and more diffuse.

The present is represented by the architectural reconfiguration of power relations from a bipolar global system, in which existed only the USSR and the USA as superpowers, to a system uni-polar, represented by the USA, or multi-polar. We are confronted with two fundamental models, multi-polarity and bipolarity to which was added another one after the collapse of the Soviet Union – uni-polarity. The first is usually defined by the presence of at least four important players, whose capabilities are compatible. According to K.N. Waltz, a system composed of three great powers could automatically become a bipolar one, by eliminating one of them. Although Randall Schweller tried to legitimate the existence of a distinct three-pole system, starting from the reality of the interwar world, his initiative comes up against obvious methodological and conceptual difficulties. In the first situation of reconfiguration of power relationships in the international security environment there is a single superpower, the USA, which is capable and has to respond to the challenges at the beginning of the millennium and even to the defiance and sometimes to the objections manifested by the regional powers, in progress at present.

Uni-polarity is the most complicated international system, first because of its rarity. Usually the appearance of a hegemonic tends to be counteracted by the other players but it is not impossible, because a structural theory (uni-polarity) can only indicate tendencies, not concrete results, which depend on the players' interactions. The respective system is difficult to define. The possible hegemonic has to be compared to every player separately, or to all of them. Starting from the same figures, from the first situation would result the existence of uni-polarity, whereas in the second we would have to do with a multi-polar system.

The second tendency in the evolution of global security background can be represented by the development of capacities and interests of certain regional powers which include state or non-state players on two continents, Europe and Asia.

The existence of several power poles imparts certain tendencies to the international relationships, in the neorealist view. Alliances are flexible and of short duration but the forming of coalitions represent an essential way to ensure security.

Taking into account the systemic factors, it is hard to say whether uni-polarity is more stable in comparison with bipolarity and multi-polarity. Conflicts can be overcome, especially if an involvement of the superpower is anticipated. On a long term, the inner balancing would change the international order but the dominant power can decide to preventively isolate and to weaken the potential rivals. If it does not succeed, forming a counterbalancing coalition is also possible.⁴

Among the regional players in the international security environment we mention the European Union, China, Russia, Japan, Pakistan, India, and Israel and so on and so forth.

The disappearance of the communist states generated the possibility to reacquire the national identity by the states in the centre and the south-east of Europe. This new reality included the appearance of certain conflict situations, some of which developed and determined the break out of armed conflicts with dramatic consequences.

The states in transition towards democracy and market economy are players whose main characteristics are represented by a weak political and economical life which can constitute sources of instability in the international environment.

The major political events at the beginning of the third millennium are marked by the NATO and the European Union enlargement, the break out of the "war against terrorism", all these constituting fundamental coordinates in the process of change and manifestation of the actual security environment.

⁴ Zbigniew Brzezinski, „*The Eurostrategic Trial – Lining with China Europa and Rusia*”, The Center for Strategic and International Studies Press, Washington D.C., 2001.

Both NATO and European Union member states go through positive changes in the political, economical, military, social and financial fields, which lead to international détente and cooperation, as major factors in ensuring the construction of the new security structure.

The current power distribution within the international security environment made it possible to remove the danger of armed confrontations of huge proportions but despite this fact a series of new and unprecedented challenges and threats appear and generate new tensions and crises.

The United States have held the dominant position in the international system, enjoying significant advantages at military, economical and demographical levels. The basis of its armed forces is still represented by its advanced technology, nuclear arsenal and Naval and Air Forces.

In their turns, the middle powers invested in developing the inner power resources but without achieving major leaps. The Russian Federation massively invested in its armed forces which however register major deficiencies, especially at conventional level. China continued its economical development, allowing itself to follow a military modernization program, as well as India. The European Union has not succeeded yet in reaching the necessary political unity so as to play a major role in the international relationships, an often declared objective, but presently without significant practical consequences.

Within the international security environment, the European environment represent something different compared to other regions in the world. The uniqueness of the European security environment consists in the possibility to demonstrate and secure the achievement of political and economical integration on short and medium term, by assuming certain common ideals and values.

At the opposite pole of the European environment there are certain regions and zones of the “third world” which rise very serious problems for the international community: demographic explosion, poverty, starvation, terrorism, civil wars and so on.

At the beginning of the 21st century, the globally important players in realizing the international security environment are the United States and Europe.

According to Zbigniew Brzezinski⁵, the basis in realizing the new security structure of the world resides in the relationships between the USA and Eurasia (which includes besides Europe and Russia, China and Japan).

The specialists in the field identified two triangles of Eurasian power:

- USA, Europe, Russia;
- USA, China, Japan.

In each of the two triangles, one of the powers, respectively Europe and Japan, relies on the idea of security and stability in the international life, whereas one of the other powers in turn, respectively China and Russia, remain open and interested in the possible geopolitical changes.

Romania’s action on the global and regional plan in order to promote its security interests requires the clear understanding of the global security implications in the national security.

The new approaches regarding national, regional and global security show that there is a close connection between globalization and security.

In the international environment different risks appear – among which terrorism, corrupted governments, ethnic tensions, insufficient resources, geopolitical rivalries, drug traffic, organized murder, traffic in weapons and the tendency to proliferate mass destruction weapons – which find a favourable place to affirm in this region.

The democratic world “tends to become, paradoxically, more and more exclusivist and interventionist” which supposes a resizing of fundamental values, such as independence and sovereignty, which will have to be promoted in a context which in the classical meaning tends to deny them.

⁵ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *op. cit.* Born in 1928 (in Poland), American political analyst, researcher in the field of politics and geostrategy, professor of foreign policy at Johns Hopkins University (Baltimore, USA), former National Security Advisor during Jimmy Carter administration from 1977 to 1981 and member of the Center for Strategic and International Studies’ board (CSIS).

The international environment of the 21st century is characterized by substantial changes which need the adaptation of classical criteria of analyzing international security. The new challenges to security generated by the superposition of certain events such as globalization and fragmentation come in addition to certain classical forms of regional risks and vulnerabilities. Traditional centres of tensions still exist but their way of development is influenced in an intrinsic way by the appearance of some cross-border and unconventional risks, such as terrorism, organized crime and proliferation of mass destruction weapons.

In the light of the above mentioned, an issue made public many times comes back to the world attention, namely the *New World Order*. Many people believe that the new world order will be polycentric: China will remain essentially a regional power, Japan will manifest more nationalistically, the European Union will have no influence beyond its boundaries, India will develop to the point of rivalling with China, Russia will rise and an Islamic caliphate will become a geopolitical force.⁶ To the same effect, Henry Kissinger remarked that “the international system of the 21st century... will include at least six great powers – the United States, Europe, China, Japan, Russia and probably India – together with many small and middle countries.”⁷

But all these presumptions ignore the reality that the USA, the European Union and China already hold the biggest part of the world power and will do whatever they can to stop the others to undermine it. Russia, Japan and India cannot assert themselves globally from a military or other point of view because they are not superpowers but rather acrobats whose support or lack of support can facilitate or delay the domination of the three superpowers, without entirely deterring it.⁸

As for Islam, it lacks any diplomatic coherence, lying on vast regions influenced by the gravitation of the main superpowers, instead of converging towards a whole. Islam is considered a source of instability in the world for it has no dominant centre. The states aspiring to rule Islam – the Saudi Arabia, Iran, Pakistan, Turkey and possibly Indonesia – are competing for the influence in the Muslim world; none of these states has a powerful enough position to mediate the conflicts within Islam and also none of them is capable of acting with a high hand in the name of Islam in order to solve the conflicts between the Muslim and non-Muslim groups.⁹

In the next two or three decades the International Community will experience a profound reorganization and will become a multi-polar and regionalized world. On the strength of the actual tendencies of globalizing life, international events, analyses and programs, *possible progresses* which will change the world structure can be highlighted:

- The formation of a three-pole system: North America, Europe and South-East Asia. A series of under-state groupings will develop simultaneously with the three existing world poles of power; they will be structured according to ethnic-religious criteria and they will be dominated by Mafia clans which will incline to take hold of the economic-financial key factors and to replace the official powers. Globalization will facilitate the changing of these structures into over-state and transnational groupings.

- The Asian pole will have the most fulminatory evolution and China will probably become its leader. Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong, Korea and Vietnam will gather around this country which will acquire a status of great power.

- Several regional powers will be able to develop at the junction of the contact zones between the controlled areas and the three power poles, and these regional powers will also become the expansion target of the three “great” countries; Russia will move towards such a status and a recovery of its economy on medium and long term is envisaged.

- The USA will remain the main world model of democracy and development but a decrease of its influence and presence in Europe is possible, under the circumstances of an increased manifestation of the European Union as a factor of progress and civilization.

⁶ Parag Khanna, „*Lumea a doua. Imperii și influență în noua ordine globală*”, Ed. Polirom, Iași, 2008, p. 17

⁷ Henry Kissinger, „*Diplomația*”, Ed. All, București, 2007, p. 21

⁸ Parag Khanna, op. cit., p. 17

⁹ Samuel Huntington, „*Ciocnirea civilizațiilor și refacerea ordinii mondiale*”, Ed. Samizdat, p. 242

- The growing without precedent of terrorism and organized crime will determine a new philosophy of approaching the risks and threats against stability and security. Under these circumstances, the International Community will try to bring all the forces and states responsible, including Russia and China, in the fight against terrorism, in order to protect human and universal values, democracy and human rights.

- Romania, Central European country, situated from a geostrategic point of view in “the buffer zone” between Western Europe, the Russian Federation and the Balkans, will distinguish itself in the influence sphere of the European power pole. Even if Romania will become part of the European and Euro Atlantic political, economical and security structures, due to its position it will constitute a link with Russia, with its zone of interest, as well as with the critical area in the Balkans. Under these circumstances, the European and American interests in Romania will blend with the Russian ones, even if the latter will not be contradictory but concurrent with the former.

Last but not least we mention the *cross-border character* of the problems with which mankind is confronted today and which makes numerous states to be affected and in consequence these problems cannot be solved in an individual, unilateral manner. No state or superpower can approach global problems on its own, so decisions concerning foreign policy and global security present an increased complexity, requiring an international way of organization which regards the defence of the major humanity values – peace, stability, welfare and human rights.

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