

## GEOPOLITICS AND NATIONAL SECURITY IN THE GLOBALIZING WORLD

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### **Abstract**

*The article analyzes the impact of geopolitical factors on the conceptualization of national security in the globalization era. How does this impact differ from one type of state to another? The author holds that the trend toward the development of postindustrial societies in the contemporary world, which is living through a period of globalizing transformations, weakens the effect of geography-related factors on security. A question is raised of how sustainable this trend is; an attempt is also made to retrace factors contributing to the restoration of dominant influence of geopolitics in the way security is perceived in the states of the globalizing world.*

**Keywords:** *geopolitics, security, globalization, traditional state, post industrialism, postindustrial society.*

### **Introduction**

The contemporary world and the state as its part are living through changes that are normally comprehended from the standpoint of globalization. These changes have inevitably affected the concept of security, and the extent to which security is influenced by geopolitical factors. In the absence of globalization, the problem of delimiting the concepts of security and geopolitics would have been less important. In the postindustrial states, security and geopolitics are interconnected in a different way from in the traditional states.

So far, the contemporary world is still preserving its diversity, even though there is an obvious trend toward the development of “unified globalization standards.” Rather, this is the only historical stage at which the industrial, preindustrial, and postindustrial states co-exist side by side. At the same time, the states’ historical movement toward post industrialism is accompanied by noticeable shifts in security, the most significant of them being associated with re-consideration of traditionally dominant geopolitical factors of national security.

### **Geography and Security for the Traditional State**

Anyone analyzing the role of geography in national security inevitably comes to grips with the question posed by the historical evolution of each state, as well as the ideas about security. Definitely, the social and political systems of states progressed from the preindustrial to the postindustrial stage together with readjusted ideas about the threats and the role of geography. Under Louis XIV, the French ideas about security differed greatly from what this nation thinks about its security today. This observation is not limited to the relatively secure contemporary European states.

It was not so much their geography that changed as the political component of their relations with the neighboring states. There is any number of theoretical explanations of this. Some academicians point to intensified and qualitatively different trade and economic contacts, as well as to interstate relations and so-called complex interdependence [5, 21-22]. Others point to the emerging intersocial contacts of trust, mutual respect, unity, and the “community feeling” based on the internal sociopolitical, institutional, and socioaxiological development of states [3, 5]. From the empirical point of view, this relates to the states/regions normally described as Western or, to be more exact, to those that belong to the Western civilization. Today, Western Europe and North America are the most graphic examples of the already developed regional interstate constellations. On the whole, however, the states located in less successful regions (South Asia,

the Middle East, and Central Eurasia) also have their share of changed perceptions of security, albeit of a less radical nature.

The impact of geography on the conceptualization of security and the relevant behavior of the states are best illustrated by Nicholas Spykman's famous formula "geography is the most fundamental factor in foreign policy because it is the most permanent." [8, 41]. The relative stability of the states' geographical context imposes more or less immutable ideas on society about its vulnerabilities and threats, as well as about the mechanisms it should use to prevent the threats or at least reduce the risks. We tend to agree with one of the theses on which the classical geopolitical doctrine rests about the different political lines of island (maritime) and continental (land) powers, which also betrayed themselves in their rivalry. This is graphically demonstrated by the traditional stakes they placed either on navies (maritime powers) or on land forces (continental powers). Helford Mackinder goes even further by ascribing inborn ideals to the two types of powers [6, 433].

The traditional states are affected to the greatest degree by their geographical context, which determines the stable perception of security, and corresponding securitization of threats and vulnerabilities, i.e. geosecuritization. This means, in theory, that any state that moves away from traditional sociopolitical and economic organization undermines its geosecuritization.

For better comprehension of the development of the state from the traditional to postindustrial stages, as well as the changes in its perception of security, it is essential to turn to the typology used by Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver based on the identification of three types (development levels) of states: premodern, modern, and postmodern. The authors distinguish three types of sociopolitical development of contemporary states: premodern states (with a very low level of inner sociopolitical cohesion and state organization, weak governmental control over territory and population); modern states (with strong governmental control of society, limited openness, sanctity of sovereignty and independence complete with their attributes—including territory and borders, placing stakes on self-sufficiency, self-assistance, and national identity), and postmodern states (a moderate attitude toward sovereignty, independence, and national identity, economic, political and cultural openness when dealing with the outside world) [2, 23-24].

The state structures of the premodern states are fairly amorphous with respect to the range of the subjects they control, which means that there is not enough centralization and sustainable perceptions of national security (including those related to geography). In the premodern state, the ideas about threats differ from one domestic group to another for the simple reason that they do not originate outside the state, but are generated by rivaling subnational groups.

The modern and postmodern states, on the other hand, have physically, institutionally, and ideologically strong state structures, which means that they are centralized enough and are fairly consistent when it comes to assessing national security threats. The impact of geographic factors, or rather the perception of geography-related threats and vulnerabilities, differs from country to country.

This means that the modern state is much more inclined toward geosecuritization, which is explained not only by the specifics described above: indispensable development priorities, such as sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity, and self-sufficiency. It should be said that the regions with modern states normally consist of modern states, which means that all of them, or at least most regional states, share development priorities and strive to achieve similar goals. Theoretically this can create the following situation:

1. To strengthen their independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity, these states will build up their might (in the military sphere, as well as in other spheres), which will develop or intensify the security dilemma in their relations. Placing stakes on the continued closed nature of their societies (in an effort to isolate them from the outside world or, rather, from one another) will contribute to the general atmosphere of mistrust and mutual threats and exacerbate the security dilemma.

2. Placing stakes on the mercantile strategy of economic security will undermine economic interdependence among the regional states. This will prevent the emergence of the “complex interdependence” mechanism, which, according to Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, reduces the threat of war.

3. The policy of strengthening national identity, ethnic and cultural isolation, and limited ethnocultural mobility in the ethnically and/or religiously heterogeneous regions will increase the conflict potential both inside the states and in their relations with one another.

This creates a more or less clear picture: the modern states have to accept the lot of living in the Waltzian World [9; 10; 11], the world of wars, balance of power, and self-help, in which external (military) threats dominate on the national security agenda. This makes the closest neighbors, the size of one’s own territory that permits adequate defense, natural obstacles, which might prevent an aggressive war on one’s own territory, an outlet to the sea, and many other geographic factors critically important.

### **Geopolitics and Security for the Postindustrial State**

Surely, the globalized world is a world of predominantly postindustrial or postmodern states. This world reveals or, at least, presupposes a cardinaly different picture. Any researcher will probably find it much more difficult to support his theoretical constructions with empirical data: as distinct from the preindustrial and industrial stages, this stage is far from being completed. It was relatively recently that the world crossed the threshold of the postindustrial stage, which means that an assessment of the impact of the geography-related factors on the security perceptions in the postindustrial state and the specific features that place them apart from the two other types will necessarily be more speculative.

The movement toward postindustrialism was accompanied by a gradual movement away from the traditional national security paradigms, as well as the de-securitization of certain threats and vulnerabilities from which these paradigms had emerged in the first place. Significantly, it was the military threat (the main one within the traditional approaches to security) or the war and aggression that were mainly affected by de-securitization, while the economic, environmental and sociocultural threats gradually moved to the fore. Surely, this also affected the perception of the vulnerabilities. Threats and vulnerabilities are not merely interconnected they form the key parameters of the assessment of national security [1, 112].

We all know that any threat is really dangerous under conditions of certain weaknesses or inadequate development of one of the security sectors, which creates vulnerabilities the perception of which is as stimulating as the perception of threats. The modern, or industrial, state that operates using traditional approaches finds it natural and logical to remove or decrease military threats. This means that it should also work toward decreasing its vulnerability in the face of external aggression. Kal Holsti describes vulnerability within the traditional approach as “potential avenues for military invasion.” [4, 84] From this it follows that vulnerability in the face of military threats is largely geography-related vulnerability, while the state’s efforts to reduce such threats primarily stem from the conceptualization of geography.

The postindustrial states that shift the accent from the traditional military aspects of security to the economic, environmental, and social sectors are shifting their attention from the factors (geographic factors included) that determine security in the military sphere to the sectors that look more security-related at any given moment. For example, 100 or even 50 years ago, Switzerland looked differently than it does today (when it joined the postindustrial epoch) at its stronger neighbors (where the classical parameters—territory, population, resources, industrial potential, etc. - are concerned) and the natural obstacles (the mountains that made military aggression less possible).

Qualitative changes in the postindustrial states’ economic and political regime played a key role in de-securitization of the military security sector. Postindustrialism, together with other economic dimensions, made the key sources of the states’ material prosperity transnational and

de-territorial. The same happened to the postindustrial states' political regimes: functional democracy developed into the political regime paradigm.

By developing the commonly accepted thesis about the peaceful nature of democracies, Max Singer and Aaron Wildavsky offered an interesting explanation of the fact that the post-industrial democracies are less inclined toward aggressive wars than the traditional industrial states: "High-quality economies also tend toward peace because they greatly reduce the importance of some of the things that people used to fight about. Modern mass wealth does not come from physical resources, which can be taken from others and must be defended; it comes primarily from people's productive behavior, from a society and culture that encourages productive relationships. Countries become rich essentially by learning how to develop attitudes and relationships that enable people to work productively.... One implication is pervasive: it does not make sense to sacrifice people to get territory or raw materials because people are more valuable" [7, 17-18]. This means that countries which seek continued prosperity of their societies (this happens under conditions of functional democracy) that are not territorially generated and therefore should not be protected against encroachments and the military-strategic vulnerability of which should be reduced are less exposed to geographic factors and their impact on the national security agenda.

However, it would be too hasty to believe that geopolitics no longer affects the current security ideas in the postindustrial states. Though its impact on this process has lost some of its former urgency.

Geography remains more or less topical in the postindustrial states - it has not been removed from the political and security agenda altogether. In the short-term perspective, energy or, rather, access to its sources (particularly gas and oil) will remain the link between geography and security. This is true not only of the postindustrial states. Energy as a whole is coming to the fore as a security and geopolitical factor. The states with traditional societies are much less exposed to the energy-related content of geopolitics and security in the sociopolitical sense than the postindustrial states. The largest share of energy resources is found in states that have not yet reached the postindustrial stage, which means that until the postindustrial states create profitable alternative energy sources they will inevitably remain involved in the struggle for the traditional energy sources and the geographic territories on which they are found.

### **Conclusion**

The processes of globalization in the contemporary world and the early postindustrial development stages demonstrated a trend toward de-securitization of the geography-related factors along with appreciable easing of military threats and vulnerabilities. Today this still remains to be one of the key features of the security sphere of the postindustrial states, which distinguishes them from the traditional states.

It would be appropriate to speak of sustainability of this tendency, if not a few "but's" – irreversibly reducing energy resources of the planet, rise in consumption and related impetuous and universal securitization of energy problems. The postindustrial states have not yet learned to reproduce oil and gas reserves, the basic element of the contemporary energy sphere. They remain territorially-conditioned, which adds a geopolitical dimension to the rivalry over access to them. This, in turn, makes it possible to newly comprehend interrelation between security and geopolitics in the world moving toward globalization.

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