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SECURITY ELEMENTS OF MODERN GEOPOLITICAL ENVIRONMENT AND SERBIA

Abstract

In the last decade of the 21st century, international relations have been going through an extremely turbulent end of a 30-year long domination of “unipolar world”, and even more turbulent beginning of today’s completely new geopolitical world order. The very transition has proved both exciting and extremely chaotic since its final outcome has been almost impossible to foresee. Moreover, by predicting the way this global process might end, leads us to an even more certain conclusion that final geopolitical and security frame of the world has never been more uncertain than today. However, despite such obvious uncertainty, some principles can be clearly perceived, for which reason we are now able to identify some of them. The following three are the most significant ones: the end of absolute “western domination” that was completely intact during the nineties of the last century and relatively intact during the first and the second decade of the 21st century; necessity of adhering to both new-old geopolitical powers which have regained their importance as a result of complex development inside these countries (primarily Russia and China, but others as well, like India) and in a world as a whole; ongoing geopolitical conflicts during which a new geopolitical and security architecture of the world is being shaped. Under such circumstances, Serbia is inevitably going through a very dynamic period in terms of defending its basic rights and interests, situation in which it has been in ever since the early nineties of the last century. However, downside of this process is that it is still very much palpable, and thus affects the Serbian society as a whole, whereas advantage of the said process is that Serbia’s position has been improving every step of the way, for which reason it is becoming more and more important on a geopolitical stage. Whether such situation will remain, is something that clearly depends on Serbia’s society and maturity of its political elite. The aim of the work is to show that the world order is in the middle of the reshaping or reforming process that

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bring many challenges to the world nations. These challenges are opportunities as well, so it is up to every single nation, including Serbia to position itself in such newborn world order. Main methods used in a work are descriptive, comparative and historical method, while observation method has a primary supportive role in a whole research.

Key words: *security, geopolitics, challenges, Serbia, future.*

INTRODUCTION

The beginning of the nineties of the 20th century marked not just the beginning of a new decade, but also the end of one political era that had lasted since the end of World War II. This political era is most commonly known as the “Cold War” that was waged between two superpowers at that time, the USA and the USSR (Bugarcic, 2014). Symbolically, the fall of the “Berlin Wall” meant the end of the “Cold War” political era (International Commission of Jurists, 1962). Moreover, it was an official, but still partial end of communism as a ruling political ideology prevalent in many parts of the world. Communism was a very specific political order with certain social and economic systems that ensued. Political systems that kept communism as their main ideology after the nineties, primarily China, were not capable of becoming an equal partner to the only remaining key ideology at the time, known as “liberal capitalism” predominantly invented and created in the USA. The impact of the fall of communism was such that certain political theorists considered that moment in history as “the end of history” (Fukuyama, 1989). Such position very soon became dominant not only among theorists, but also among leading politicians across all liberal democratic capitalist systems around the world. Such systems, which are very well organized within the military alliance, known as the NATO, and within the political alliance known as “transatlantic project”, both planned and conducted their political strategies on the world stage in a certain way and in certain directions. International political actions were supported by the western soft power alliance that was almost beyond reach for the rest of the world. In some cases, it was not only soft, but brutal, since obvious military pressure is something that usually follows a strong political campaign of the alliance. The key target has always been Russia, as the biggest country in the world, with the potential to challenge the power of both the USA and the NATO, as well as Russia’s traditional political and historical allies in the world, especially

partners from the former “Warsaw alliance” (Bugaric, 2014). To boot, Serbia has always occupied a significant place, especially during the nineties when the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (which consisted of only Serbia and Montenegro at the time) fought against NATO military forces in 1999. The war broke out as a result of mutual misunderstanding and political disputes between Serbia, on the one hand, and the USA and its allies, on the other. Even though, democratic changes in 2000 changed the political system in Serbia, a formal partnership between Serbia, the EU and the USA failed to produce much desired practicality. Twenty years later, Serbia is still far away from joining the EU as a political association of certain European countries. The NATO has not even been considering our accession to their organization, whilst many people in Serbia are still trying to deal with painful memories associated with this organization.

September 11 terrorist attacks in New York led to a phase of brutal military operations undertaken by the USA and its allies in some major Middle East countries, i.e., Afghanistan first, and Iraq later (Kellner, 2004). By neglecting the UN Security Council as a main world organization in charge of the world peace and security, the USA and its closest allies bombarded and invaded both countries within a relatively short period of time. On the other hand, in parallel with these war campaigns, the same alliance gathered around the USA by supporting so-called “Color Revolutions” in many significant countries worldwide, starting from Georgia, Libya, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Syria and many other countries (Lipinski, Shukurlaieva, 2014). Much less involved than the USA itself, the European Union remained the most reliable ally of this superpower in its military campaigns around the world. In some of those countries, the European Union led a military campaign as the NATO’s primary member, thus supporting the bombing of Libya during the first couple of days of the civil war in this country (Stavridis, 2014). The only country that had been putting up relevant, significant and serious resistance to the NATO alliance in the war waged on Serbia in 1999 was the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and its army. Despite such resistance, the NATO won this unconventional battle and Serbia was forced to give up part of its territory followed by massive exodus of more than 200,000 Serbs from the province Kosovo and Metohija. However, what soon came were first organized and systematic global challenges to undisputed domination of the USA and NATO over the rest of the world in 2007 and 2008 accompanied by two international events that soon followed. The first one was the Munich Security Conference held in 2007, and the second one was the unilateral violent aggression of Georgia against its breakaway

provinces and international military peacekeepers in 2008 (Austin et al., 2007). Although these events failed to produce decline of western dominance that had been indisputable up to that moment, they most certainly hindered it significantly. The western supremacy that was universally accepted as such, started to decline together with them and with an unknown potential outcome on the world stage. The only certain and most discernable result of this turning point in the world today is the acknowledgement that the new world order would never be the same. In place of unilateralism, the new world order has to be based on multilateralism as a landmark of future life on this planet without supremacy of any single state or alliance, either western or similar. The maturity and mutual respect between new world powers will shape already created multilateralism that some of the current world powers have been persistently trying to ignore as a result of their past-imperialism. However, some strong international political events in the world today have already laid the foundation for the new multilateralism order, therefore any opposite attempts are simply senseless and with no chance of success. The most relevant ones are as follows: the end of indisputable western dominance from the past, the necessity to respect new geopolitical security multilateral powers, and finally modern geopolitical conflicts.

THE END OF UNQUESTIONABLE WESTERN SUPREMACY

The model of indisputable western dominance in the world was the result of the end of the “Cold War” and clear victory of western civilization over autocratic regimes that existed in less developed communist societies before the nineties of the 20th century. These systems could not discern reality nor recognize the needs of ordinary people in these communities. Even though these autocracies were formally against the western democracy, the biggest damage they inflicted was the one on its own people and societies in which they prevailed for almost half a century, i.e., between 1945 and 1990. The system was so self-destructive that for a short period of time it stirred up feelings of dissatisfaction in ordinary people who were trying to grapple with both the system and its politicians compare to the hardships they had to endure during Nazism as the most evil political system in history (Солжењицин, 1918-1956). Under such circumstances, any western value seemed more advanced, attractive and desirable in these former communist countries, The capitalism itself seemed to be a desirable society organization form found appealing to ordinary people in these countries even though, in reality, there

were no rational grounds for either such beliefs or expectations. In reality, capitalist societies were so generous to their own people, as well as to many other nations and states in the world as a result of their imperialist policy in the 20th century (San Juan, 2007). However, compared to communist neglect of basic human needs and apathy towards its own people, capitalism seemed like a dream come true to millions of people living in communism. Moreover, both commercial and global political promotion of capitalism further confirmed this belief, as well as a belief in newborn democracies. For almost twenty years, since the beginning of the nineties until the end of the first decade of the 21st century, this western supremacy and attractiveness remained indisputable. Both, Russia, as a USSR successor, and China, as one of remaining communist countries in the world, adopted capitalist economic systems as dominant ones in their societies. To boot, the Russian Federation clearly showed its intention to join the NATO (Davydov, 2000). However, during the first decade of the 21st century some important events started to change a strong positive western democracy image in the world. Here are some of the most important ones: invasion of Iraq followed by false justification and flimsy grounds for the attack, invasion of Afghanistan, as part of the “War on Terror” campaign, open support and participation in the “Colored Revolution” in Georgia, Egypt, North-African countries, Ukraine, Syria and Turkey for the purpose of destabilizing the countries, permanent neglect of some basic interests of other people and states, etc. These events showed another positive side of western democracy, while some theorists believe that they present real background of western imperialism (Sussman et al., 2008; Zanotti, 2016). In their view, some western countries’ primary interests hide behind these events so as to control and subjugate the rest of the world, as well as to get the current international order under their thumb (Sussman et al., 2008). The world economic crisis in 2008 proved such claim. The reason for that was the fact that the response of these countries to the crisis was completely different from the response they requested and suggested from other countries in the world. Such policy of double standards gives way to additional arguments to those who advocate weakness, inconsistency and greed of these countries (Kotte, 2010). More to the point, even though many officials in these countries claimed that the crisis would end swiftly, it lasted much longer. Today, many economists in the world are talking about a permanent economic crisis that is worsening with the COVID-19 pandemic (Jackson et al., 2020). Consequently, the economic and pandemic crisis in the western countries is followed by the crisis of moral, democracy and traditional values. After promoting neoliberal values for al-

most two decades and more, some of these systems, mainly the USA, and some EU countries as well, became embroiled in violent racial conflicts, thus permanently striving to discredit and diminish their traditional values, history and resistance to police brutality. At the same time, illegal migrations, as a world problem, quickly shifted from an initial global support to the world's strong denial, predominantly by the EU countries that accepted most of the migrants at the very beginning of the migration crisis. From the initial systemic support, additionally supported by the non-governmental sector, the EU has opted for a strong formal prohibition on migrants' future influx into the EU by implementing all means necessary. Police, military, paramilitary organizations and other repressive institutions were used to its full capacity to stop further migration flows to the EU, whereas right-wing and fascist parties in western democracies started to grow stronger and stronger. Many irregular migrants and their families lost their lives, either as a result of brutal power or fatal ignorance and neglect (Parkers, 2017). In the USA, the police brutality coupled with fatalities reached social epidemic levels (Rodenberg, 2020). In the EU, social, racial and political protests resulted in massive demolitions of public property, looting and deaths of some participants (Garcia-Arenas, 2019). The gap between ordinary people and political elite, as well as between political parties in these countries, has become an insurmountable obstacle in a mutual political dialog that used to be the main advantage of these countries in the past (Gaskarth et al., 2019). The list of bitter political events quickened a global decline of the current western democracy. Although they still demonstrate the position of global supremacy, it is more the result of inertia or a remnant of the past than the result of their real contemporary economic, military or political power and lure. Their previous self-confidence, especially manifested during the nineties of the last century, is now becoming a discreet aspiration for protection of their own interest. Today, these interests are promoted and protected carefully, without having to threaten with military power, economic sanctions or political isolations that used to be one of the favorite tools of these countries in the past. In regard to some newborn world powers, these tools are simply almost inapplicable. Threatening China with economic sanctions is not possible any more, threatening Russia with military power makes absolutely no sense, whilst ignoring and bypassing international institutions in order to promote one's own interests is not something that is supported by the rest of international community anymore. As a result, we can witness that new multilateralism is predominantly based on new

geopolitical and security factors in the world. They provide the main ingredient to this multilateralism world order.

CONSIDERATION OF NEW GEOPOLITICAL AND SECURITY FACTORS

The most relevant position in a new geopolitical and security system belongs to the new, old and reborn power of China and the Russian Federation. The influence of some other powers on the rise is permanently gathering pace. This is exactly the case with India, Turkey, Brazil, South Africa, Iran and other countries, whilst China, which has been considered as the most conservative and autocratic communist regime in the world until recently, has become the major driver of the world economy, as well as the economic salvation for most of western democracies, predominantly the USA, as well as for some EU members now heading into recession (Radulescu et al., 2014). It is the biggest world investor and a desirable partner for most of the world, especially those in the Middle East, Africa, non-EU countries and other (Radulescu et al., 2014). Similarly to China, but in another way, Russia has succeeded in transforming itself from the “poor state” in the middle of nineties of the last century to its current geopolitical status. Even though it has not still fully recovered across all aspects of a modern state, today’s Russia is the only military power in the world capable to confront and threaten the USA military supremacy that has been indisputable for almost three decades now. The state-of-the-art military systems, invented and adopted in the last couple of years, have secured Russia’s global status in the coming decade or even longer, for sure (Beriša et al., 2018). India, with its demographic, technological and economic potential will play a leading role in the world very soon (Radulescu et al., 2014). The same goes for Brazil in South America (Radulescu et al., 2014). Unlike those countries, Turkey successfully prevented another military coup in the country, for the first time in its modern history. Aside from that, Turkey has also become the first NATO country to purchase one of the most advanced Russian anti-aircraft systems despite the NATO’s joint defense policy, thus becoming the first NATO country to do so in a modern history of that military organization (Yegin, 2019). Similarly to them, Syria, as almost disintegrated country has managed to successfully restore its sovereignty and eliminate most terrorist formations in the country that enjoyed the support of many world and regional powers (Ford, 2019). All these states, either independently or in coalition with other countries,

present inevitable factors that shape the security of today's modern world. More importantly, they do so regardless of until recently only remained superpowers after nineties, the USA and the EU. What is even worse for some of these former only superpowers, is that some new reborn powers are permanent members of the UN Security Council, like China and the Russian Federation. Without them, it is almost impossible to solve any existing world conflict today, whereas on the other hand, they successfully change their part of the world by ignoring malicious or some other objections made by these old superpowers. No one can turn a blind eye to these factors in a today's modern world any more. Modern geopolitical conflicts prove that with certainty.

MODERN AGE GEOPOLITICAL CONFLICTS

The war in Syria and Yemen, as well as the War on Terror in Iraq and Iran and fight against internal political destabilization in Iran and Venezuela, are the most eminent geopolitical conflicts today that could substantially determine the security architecture of the modern world. The Syrian war was one of the first in the Middle East with completely different outcome from the one that was expected as the result of inertia from other Middle East conflicts at the time. Almost completely devastated country whose territory failed to be controlled by the central government, Syria succeeded not only to restore its territorial sovereignty, but also to defeat various terrorist organizations, to control and to include the presence of Turkey and the USA in the country and finally to pave way for new economic recovery and development (Ford, 2019). The alliance with Russia and Iran was of crucial importance, whilst Russia's military involvement in the war campaign was of decisive importance for the victory in that war. After Georgia intervention in 2008, this was Russia's first international military intervention in the true sense of the word. More importantly, it was fully in keeping with the international law. Such approach shows the new profile of Russia on a world's geopolitical stage. With such international involvement, Russia returned to the international stage as a reliable partner and ally to those who decided to cooperate with it. That was of crucial importance for this country especially after a decade of long devastation of country by Yeltsin. On the other hand, ongoing Yemen conflict, in its own right, is a conflict of local character and limited scope. However, its importance comes from the fact that relatively small and unorganized group of rebellions successfully fought against a self-proclaimed government in their country and its

main ally – Saudi Arabia with all its financial and military potential and influence in the region (Malley, 2020). Despite its endless resources, its military superiority and a strong support by the USA, Saudi Arabia lost to Yemen rebellions. Furthermore, ever since then, Saudi Arabia has been in a permanent defense even from other rivals in the region such as Iran, Syria, and even Iraq (Malley, 2020). Similarly to Syria, Iran successfully avoided the war with the USA, as well as the internal destabilization of the country after a series of terrorist attacks in their country (Malley, 2020). Its closest ally - Iraq did the same despite the fact it was completely controlled by the USA troops. Iraq secured its territorial sovereignty in fight against terrorists in 2014 and powerful separatist tendencies in the north and south of the country. For the first time since the invasion in 2003, some Iraqi officials have proudly requested the USA troops in the country to leave the country unconditionally, which was almost inconceivable in the recent past, but not only in Iraq but in a whole of Middle East (Blanchard, 2020). Finally, Venezuela, Iran, Syria and Russia in Crimea present a group of countries that defend themselves efficiently from “Colored Revolutions”, as it was the case with Georgia, Ukraine, Moldova, North Africa and other regions in the world, and whose main goal was to introduce certain politics and bring certain politicians to power in these countries. Such geopolitical conflicts, even though not of global scale and size, have a definite global importance that affects the mutual world relations among multilateral powers. The significance of some of them rose, whilst for some declined. Some of them broadened their influence and presence, whilst some of them lost. Reorganization of the world order coupled with both ongoing and new conflicts represent a process that will reshape the world we know today. What remains is a glimmer of hope that damages and conflicts will be minimal, and that the new world order will not be so devastated as to eliminate the hope for a better society in the future.

CONCLUSIVE REMARKS

The contemporary concept of the world security has dramatically changed in the last two decades. Even though these changes have substantially influenced the current world, they still go on and their final result is not clear yet. Nevertheless, one thing remains certain. A new global society will be totally different from the one we know today. Main tendencies that bring us to such conclusion are the evident end of indisputable western supremacy, the rise of new geopolitical and security

powers, and modern geopolitical conflicts in the world. Serbia is a country that endured a lot during the nineties of the 20th century, which was the time of undisputed western domination over the rest of the world. On the other hand, even though the new world order is just around the corner, Serbia has not seen any positive effect of such global transformation yet. However, despite such fact, Serbia should not neglect these new trends in the world. It has to be aware of them and to take them into consideration when paving its way to a new century and its strategic direction for achieving its goals. Additional motive for such approach lies in a fact that with such new global circumstances, its general position in the new world will be much better and its global and regional interests much better protected. How much of this will happen is something that entirely depends on Serbia's society and its political elite who should recognize these trends, join them and coordinate its politics in line with their main directions. Only then will Serbia be able to compensate for negative consequences of a wrong set of global circumstances during the nineties that affected its statehood and most of all people in other former communist countries. Even more importantly, after this opportunity to redefine and reaffirm its position, the new one will arise very soon. The final outcome will not be that promising if Serbia failed to grasp this fantastic opportunity.

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БЕЗБЕДНОСНИ ЕЛЕМЕНТИ САВРЕМЕНОГ ГЕОПОЛИТИЧКОГ ОКРУЖЕЊА И СРБИЈЕ

Резиме

Међународни друштвено-економски односи у последњој години друге деценије XXI века указују на изузетно турбулентан крај једне, скоро 30 година дуге ере, једнополарне владавине и на још турбулентнији почетак једног сасвим новог геополитичког периода савременог друштва. Сам прелаз из једног у други период је довољно узбудљив и хаотичан да је веома тешко предвидети правце могућег расплета, док је само предвиђање коначне геополитичке и безбедносне архитектуре уопште немогуће. Ипак, и поред евидентне неизвесности, поједина начела будуће геополитичке и безбедносне архитектуре се већ називу и о њима се може говорити као о принципима савременог транзиционог друштва. То су: престанак апсолутне „западне доминације“, која била дословна током деведесетих година прошлог века и потом релативизована током прве деценије и још више током друге деценије овог века; нужност уважавања нових-старих геополитичких и безбедносних међународних чинилаца који су такав значај стекли са новим околностима свог унутрашњег развоја и промењеним околностима развоја носилаца „западне доминације“; и геополитички сукоби већег или мањег интензитета као елементи процеса током којег се дефинише нова геополитичка и безбедносна архитектура. У таквим околностима, Србија нужно пролази кроз динамичну фазу одбране својих основних права и потврђивања својих легитимних интереса у којој се налази још од почетка деведесетих година прошлог века. Негативна страна тог процеса је да још увек траје, што се у сваком смислу негативно одражава на српско друштво, док се позитивна страна састоји у томе да се са сваким новим догађајем у геополитичком процесу позиција Србије све више поправља и постаје све значајнија. Циљ рада је да покаже да је актуелни светски поредак усред процеса преобликовања и редефинисања који са собом носи много изазова државама

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и нацијама у свету. Ови изазови представљају истовремено и могућности, тако да је на свакој од нација и држава у свету, укључујући и Србију, да се позиционира у том новом светском поретку који се ствара на начин на који изабере. Главне методе које су коришћене у овом научно-истраживачком раду су дескриптивна, компаративна и историјска, док метод посматрања појединачних студија игра улогу примарне подршке доминантним методима истраживања.

Кључне речи: *безбедност, геополитика, изазови, Србија, будућност*

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