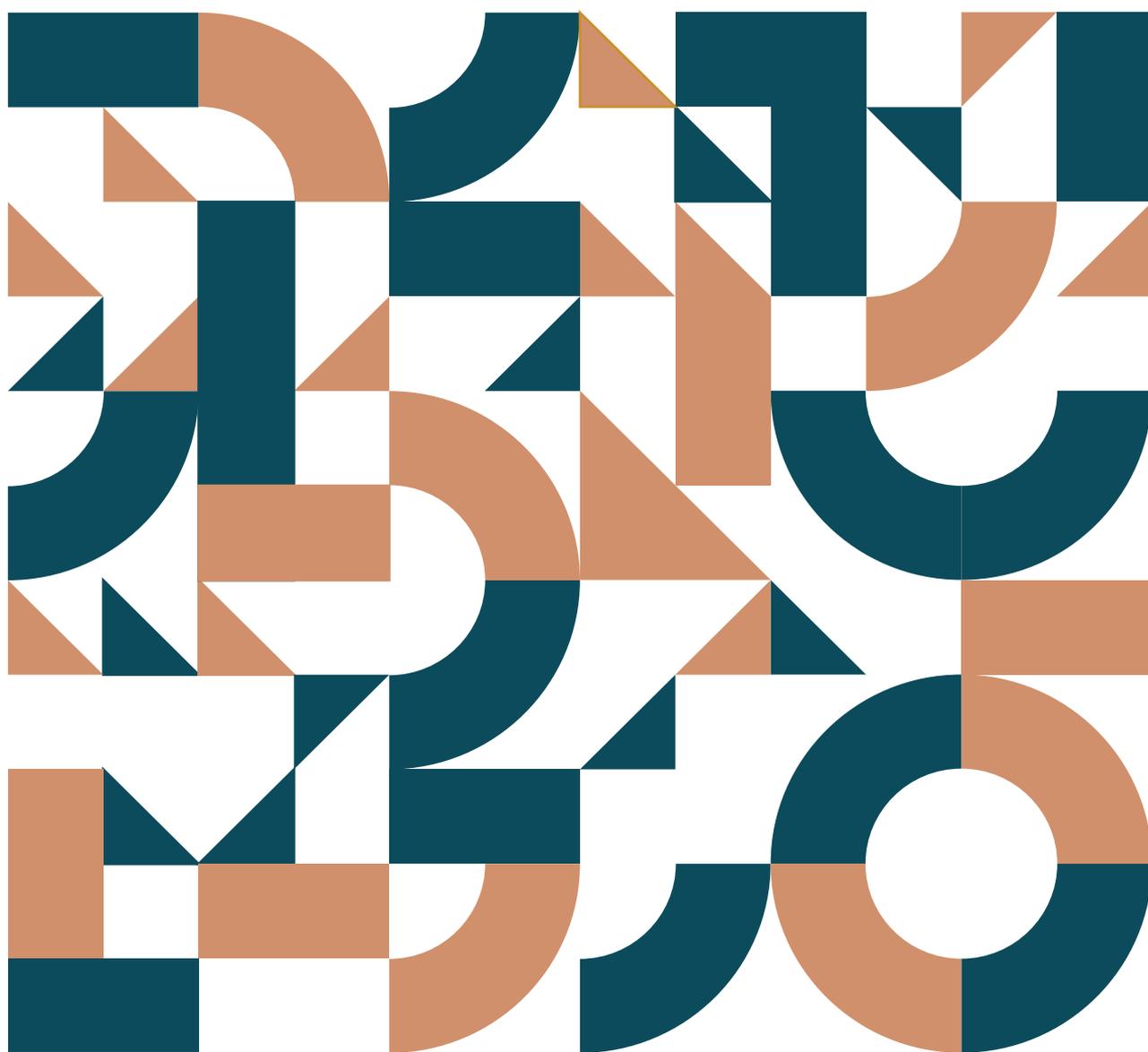


Geopolitics: Methodological Introduction

WORKING PAPER - DECEMBER 2022



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Geopolitics: Methodological Introduction

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3

Geopolitics as we want to make use of it is an analytical tool.¹ Its purpose is to place factual data at the heart of inquiry and arrange them in a meaningful order, so as to offer - or at least attempt to offer - a key to better understanding how the world we live in works; for a correct understanding of how the world works is a necessary (if not sufficient) condition for changing it. There is no guarantee that a correct analysis of a situation will produce a winning policy, but it is near-certain that a wrong analysis will produce a losing policy.

To make use of geopolitics essentially means to analyze politics through the study of its constraints. By constraints we mean the limits (or *conditioning factors*) imposed by reality on different interests and on different political actors. In other terms, geopolitics identifies the limits of action, i.e., the obstacles that stand between the will and the execution of the will. That is, to put it another way, what is possible and what is impossible to do or, better still, what is impossible to do without hurting oneself unnecessarily.

The evolutionary line between “classic” and contemporary geopolitics can be summarized schematically in these terms: for the “founding fathers” of geopolitics, geography represented the essential constraint, the given and non-negotiable precondition of every possible political action; in contemporary geopolitics, essential constraints - that is, the given and non-negotiable preconditions that political actors necessarily have to deal with, whatever their intentions - are numerous: geography, certainly, but also economy, demography, military strength, infrastructure, institutions, alliances, historical heritage, traditions, social psychology, ideology, religion, and so on. And, as Dutch-born American scholar Nicholas Spykman rightfully noted, “It is their simultaneous action and interaction that creates the complex phenomenon known as ‘foreign policy’.”²

The difficult task of social scientists, according to Spykman, consists precisely of finding “in the enormous mass of historical material, correlations between

1 — While the notion is on everyone’s lips, Groupe d’études géopolitiques is launching a series of high-level publications in which academics propose technical but clear approaches to the field of geopolitics. This methodological introduction is the first contribution.

2 — Spykman, “Geography and Foreign Policy, I”, *The American Political Science Review*, Volume 32, n. 1, February 1938, pp. 28-50.

conditioning factors and types of foreign policy.” The main difficulty lies in the fact that these factors differ for every country; they always have different weights, which combine in different ways depending on space and time. Only their mutual relationship - their combination - can help us to make sense of the object we study and to make sensible assumptions about why an object has become what it is and what it may become in the near future.

Scholars of geopolitics must first place the studied phenomenon within its historical depth or try to track down the elements of its continuity with the past. In a certain sense, continuity and discontinuity are the skeleton of political life; various conditioning factors are its flesh and blood.

Historical depth is what Fernand Braudel calls “longue durée”: long-term historical structures that are characterised by the extremely slow, almost imperceptible, often underground evolution³. In other words, they are historical phenomena, seemingly suspended in the past, but capable of re-emerging decades, centuries, or even millennia later. It is for example surprising to see how the Ottoman (Sunni Muslim), Safavid (Shiite Muslim) and Mughal (Sunni Muslim) empires occupied in the early sixteenth century nearly the same geographical space as empires with very different political and cultural characteristics that existed ten centuries earlier: Byzantine (Orthodox Christian), Sassanid (Zoroastrian) and Gupta (Hindu/Buddhist).

But “longue durée” is not fate. History is also made of broken continuities (in which elements of fragility persist, though, as do risks of relapse). German history is a good example: when the Congress of Vienna united Prussia - aristocratic, military, Protestant, and eastward-oriented - with Rhineland - a bourgeois region of commerce and trade, Catholic and rooted in its Carolingian heart - the unlikely but yet miraculous potion was created from which fifty-six years later the German Empire emerged. The long and wearing (albeit successful) process of defining a national interest somehow defused the two regions' apparent incompatibility, transforming it into complementarity (even if the intrinsic fragilities remained). According to some, the division of the German world into Western Germany, Eastern Germany and Austria after World War II made the country return to its most genuine geopolitical identity: a new border separated again Catholic Carolingian from Protestant Prussian Germany, and Habsburg core lands were finally recognised as historically foreign to the Pan-German myth⁴. It is a plausible and certainly suggestive theory; but this return to the original geopolitical matrix did not prevent another rupture in 1989, which prompted the re-emergence of another, albeit much more recent, continuity: that of a unified Germany. Continuities and breakups overlap and replace one another incessantly, and they cannot be ignored.

Geopolitics is often accused of determinism and fatalism (among other

3 — Fernand Braudel, “La longue durée”, *Annales : Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, an XIII, n. 4, octobre-décembre 1958, pp. 725-753.

4 — This theory is supported by Saul B. Cohen, who believes that “the boundary zone that divides the East from West Germany” was the same zone that separated Frankish from Slavic tribes in the Middle Ages (Geography and *Politics in a World Divided*, New York, Random House, 1963, p. 79).

allegations) because it insists on the importance of pre-existing factors. According to the apologists of “free will,” to represent politics as something that depend on a series of existing circumstances means ignoring the role of conscious human beings in forging their own destiny. The opposite is true: it is only by recognizing, evaluating and studying material and psychological circumstances, as well as by relating them one to another, that human beings become truly aware of the reality in which they live and can aspire to become the architects of their destiny. Paraphrasing Hegel, one could say that freedom is the awareness of necessity.

The unification of Germany in 1871 represented a break in continuity most importantly in terms of its relationship with its neighbours: a united Germany in the heart of Europe, strong enough to exert pressure on its neighbors, could not but encourage the emergence of hostile coalitions. If political leaders in Germany - today, as it happened in 1914 and in 1939 - disregarded this crucial conditioning factor in the name of “free will”, they would expose the country, the rest of the continent, and the entire world to the risk of a generalised conflict. Since 1949, German political history has been dominated - albeit with breaks, accelerations and slowdowns - by the awareness that the country needs to dilute its strength in a larger political unity, possibly controlled and directed by others (NATO, headed by the United States, and the European Community, headed by France). The awareness of this necessity and of its somewhat unpleasant and onerous constraints has allowed Germany to create the context in which it could progressively return to being one of the world's most prosperous countries.

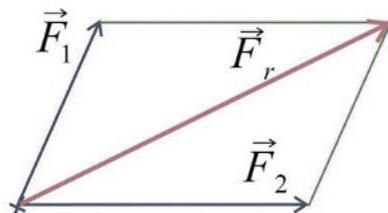
In the real world, the conditions in which politicians operate are largely pre-determined, while their ability to determine those conditions is limited. Harm De Blij, speaking about the pre-existing conditions that shape every individual (language, faith, food, garb, health, education, behaviour, traditions, etc.), and therefore their will, calls them “accumulated geography”⁵.

In the real world, every will (not only political) is diverted from its initial direction each time it encounters an obstacle or another will. When organizing a picnic or preparing to go skiing, one can decide, in the name of free will, not to be conditioned by the “weather forecast” factor. But if it rains heavily at your picnic destination or the snow has not fallen in the mountains, you will be free neither to picnic nor to ski.

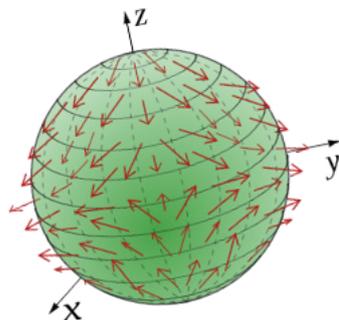
The same applies to politics, which is a relationship between unequal forces: since every force, that is, every interest or every “political will” is modified by an encounter or a clash with other forces of different weights, the final outcome of their relationship will always differ from the initial direction. In other words, political will is modified by entering into a relationship with other political wills. *Mutatis mutandis*, it is similar to the field of physics, where force is a vector quantity that has its own direction, but when it enters into combination with other vectors of different directions, its initial direction is modified. As

5 — Harm De Blij, *The Power of Place: Geography, Destiny, and Globalization's Rough Landscape*, Oxford-New York, Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 3.

shown in the illustration below, F_r is the resultant sum of two forces F_1 and F_2 , and its direction is neither that of F_1 nor that of F_2 :



Of course in real life, and particularly in politics, the forces that come into contact with each other are so numerous that the most satisfactory graphic representation would be that of the vector field on a sphere:



The vector determined by the encounter or the clash (sum or difference) of several forces will never go in the direction desired by only one of those forces. At the end of World War II, for example, the United States - despite the fact that it alone produced half of all goods in circulation on the planet, held two-thirds of the world's gold reserves, dominated the financial markets and had a nuclear monopoly - could not shape the world the way it wanted to do. Other forces on the international vector field, while much weaker, were able to modify its trajectory. The same mechanism, moreover, was active in the processes of internal determination of U.S. foreign policy, making it anything but coherent and linear.

This representation of the relations between interests reveals, among other things, that there can be no "great arcane plan" to direct world affairs. If every political will is inevitably "diverted" from its initial course when it encounters other political wills, then the "Elders of Zion", the "Illuminati" or the "two hundred families" - or any other imaginary or even real power - has no chance of determining political events. This will not, of course, persuade a conspiracy theorist; conspiracy theorists can be convinced of nothing but of that which they already believe (and whoever tries to convince them otherwise automatically becomes part of the conspiracy).

"We are all sufferers from history," wrote Richard Hofstadter, "but the paranoid is double sufferer, since he is afflicted not only by the real world, with

the rest of us, but by his fantasies as well”⁶. Therefore, “the rest of us” must ignore the fantasies and concentrate on the difficult task of evaluating the respective weights of conditioning factors and the way in which they interact on the particular field of forces that is politics.

Anyone who plays chess knows that every move offers endless possibilities for the succeeding moves. International relations are like a colossal chess game with far more numerous and much more complicated rules - rules that can change during the course of a game, with many players on the same board and the pieces changing value depending on who plays them. Compounding the confusion, everyone is moving simultaneously without waiting for their turn. The players on this enormous chessboard include not only states but all political actors of different and mutable weights, each of them driven by different and mutable interests (or “political wills”). In order to define the areas of relationship, of mediation and of conflict between various interests, we must first learn to recognise them and to evaluate their weights.

It is a complex task: in fact, interests can be obvious, that is, explicit and claimed as such, but more often they are not immediately visible, either because they are hidden intentionally behind an ideological screen or because even those directly affected by them do not understand their true nature. Examples of the former are the industrialists who demand tariff or taxes against foreign competitors, small traders who demand protection against large retailers, savers who claim higher interest rates and investors who want them lower, etc. Hidden interests, on the other hand, are clothed in ideological disguise to appear as interests of the whole society, not just part of it. One example would be the industrialist who, to protect himself from foreign competitors, launches a campaign against the alleged low quality or harmfulness of rival products, or against so-called social or ecological dumping⁷. Another example would be the small shopkeeper who boasts of better quality than large retailers as well as of the importance of personal relations with customers.

In the political struggle, real interests do not usually appear for what they are because they lack the appeal needed to rally large sectors of society and thus to impose themselves over other interests. The same is even truer of international politics, in which every country seeks to make their citizens and others (or world public opinion) support its national interests without naming them explicitly. This is why, for example, all wars are justified with highly honourable motives: for civilisation, for freedom, against oppression, against terrorism, etc. Virtually every act of international politics, and not just in wartime, has been distorted by ideological motivations. A major challenge for those dealing with geopolitics is precisely to avoid falling victim to ideologies but instead to

6 — Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays*, New York, First Vintage Books, 2008, p. 40 (première éd. New York, Random House, 1965).

7 — “Social dumping” means the export of goods produced at a cost lower than the cost they would have if produced in the target market, essentially due to lower labour costs. There is talk of “ecological dumping” when goods are produced in countries with weaker anti-pollution rules (again with lower costs for the company).

uncover true motivations (that is, the interests at stake).

Finally, interests can be “unconscious”, which are also concealed, but mainly because their nature is obscure even to those involved - as is often the case in mass psychological distress. When the causes of such distress are unknown to those affected, the affected are inclined to seek scapegoats. British voters’ apprehension of the unknowns of the near future has set them against the European Union, but they have managed only to make the future even more gloomy and uncertain. In many parts of the world, confusion has spread like wildfire among voters already anxious about rapid and disorderly changes, to devastating political effect. These “unconscious interests” deserve careful attention by geopoliticians.

“Modern geopolitics” inherited the second half of its name from the discipline that preceded it, not in recognition of the importance of the role of geography in defining the politics of states, but above all because it recognizes that the choices of political actors, and their relationships, are affected by *constraining factors* - that is, by objective conditions which exist before any subjective intervention, and which must be taken into account if one wants to avoid being crushed by reality.

The first person to give substance to this transition from “classic geopolitics” to “modern geopolitics” was Nicholas Spykman (1893-1943). While he held some attachment to “classic geopolitics” because of the importance it reserves for geography and the role of the state as the exclusive actor in international relations, Spykman insisted on the fact that a multiplicity of other factors condition political choices. Geographic determinism, he wrote, pretends to be able to explain “all things, from the fourth symphony to the fourth dimension,” but in reality it “paints as distorted a picture as does an explanation with no reference to geography.”

One cannot analyze political actions without taking into account the factors that determine them, and these factors

are permanent and temporary, obvious and hidden; they include, apart from the geographic factor, population density, the economic structure of the country, the ethnic composition of the people, the form of government, and the complexes and pet prejudices of foreign ministers; and it is their simultaneous action and interaction that create the complex phenomenon known as “foreign policy.”⁸

Spykman’s contribution to geopolitics is particularly consequential: international politics is a “complex phenomenon” arising out of the “simultaneous action and interaction” of a long series of factors, including the prejudices of ministers. Thus, geopolitical analysis must identify and measure these factors and examine the relationships between them. And it must do so without being distracted by moral or, worse, ideological considerations.

8 — Nicholas J. Spykman, “Geography and Foreign Policy, I”, *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 32, n. 1, February 1938, pp. 28-50.

Spykman was entirely averse to the idea, then current in the United States, that “the subject of power in the international world should not be spoken of except in terms of moral disapproval”; because for him, the key to international confrontation is *force*. As he put it, “political ideals and visions unsupported by force appear to have little survival value.”⁹ Consequently, “the improvement of the relative power position becomes the primary objective of the internal and external policy of states. Everything else is secondary.”¹⁰ His views on the role of values and morality in politics are extremely clear (and, as it happens, extremely close to those of his German contemporary Carl Schmitt):

The statesman who conducts foreign policy can concern himself with values of justice, fairness and tolerance only to the extent that they contribute to or do not interfere with the power objective. They can be used instrumentally as moral justification for the power quest, but they must be discarded the moment their application brings weakness. The search for power is not made for the achievement of moral values; moral values are used to facilitate the attainment of power.¹¹

This is also clear as applies to the role of alliances:

There are not many instances in history which show great and powerful states creating alliances and organizations to limit their own strength. States are always engaged in curbing the force of some other state. The truth of the matter is that states are interested only in a balance which is in their favor.¹²

... and the same goes for “collective security”:

Any workable system of collective security must rely on the support of the great powers which alone have the means to enforce it. This they will do in terms of their own security and independence. The protective guarantees extended to the smaller states will thus depend less on the existence of an abstract “collective” obligation than on the separate calculation by each of the great powers of its own national interest.¹³

One cannot accuse Spykman of cynicism unless one refuses to see how much more cynical political reality is than any attempt to represent it.

The temptation to systematize and even simplify a complex reality is certainly understandable, but the geopolitical analyst must avoid to give in to it. If one really wants to comprehend the riches of international relations, one must give

9 — Nicholas J. Spykman, *The Geography of the Peace*, New York, Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1944, p. 3.

10 — Nicholas J. Spykman, *America's Strategy in World Politics: The United States and the Balance of Power*, New York, Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1942, p. 18.

11 — *Ibidem*.

12 — *Ibidem*, p. 21.

13 — *The Geography of the Peace*, *cit.*, p. 4.

greater weight to the complex than to the simple; to the contradictory than to the linear; to what changes than to what does not; even better, one must insist precisely on relations: relations between the simple and the complex, the linear and the contradictory, the unchanging and that which undergoes transformation.

Relations among powers are always shifting. Since the “Thucydides trap” phrase has become fashionable, everyone knows it; but it was true even before it. For the geopolitical analyst, the issue is not to know it, but to know why, to know what the mechanisms of the shift of power are.

In his 1987 book, the historian Paul Kennedy advanced a hypothesis regarding the principal cause of these inescapable historic fluctuations. “The evidence of the past is almost always too varied to single out the ‘hard’ and ‘sole’ reason for the rise and fall of each nation.” However, he suggested that a certain number of general conclusions can be drawn from the history of the last five centuries. The first is that

there is detectable a causal relationship between the shifts which have occurred over time in the general economic and productive balances and the position occupied by individual powers in the international system.¹⁴

Put simply: transformations on the economic level end up, over the long term, translating to the political level. If one considers the economic expansion of Asia in the final decades of the 20th century and the first decades of the 21st, one can immediately understand what underlies the variation in “the position occupied by individual powers in the international system.”

The relationship between the transformation of economic weight and the transformation of political weight - the shift of power - has two essential aspects. The first resides in the amount of intrinsically political power contained in economic power: the state that possesses economic power holds important leverage for persuasion - even for threat or blackmail - allowing it to negotiate from positions of force and, often, to obtain what it wants. The second aspect more specifically concerns individual powers within the international system and the transformation of their relationships: when the economic strength of a country grows, its integration into the world market inevitably deepens, to the point of demanding an ever greater role in defining political rules. But as those rules had been established while the country was not yet strong, the demand for change will concern not only the rules themselves but the entire political order that produced them, in order to adapt it to the new reality and its new protagonists.

The decisive factor in the relationship between the powers is thus the displacement of the “general economic and production balances,” but only - and this bears repeating - *in the long run*. If there were a direct and mechanical relationship between economic and political balances, international relations

14 — Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers. Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000*, New York, Random House, 1987, pp. XXIV, XXV.

could be analyzed simply by measuring and comparing a series of economic indicators, and geopolitics, among other things, would have no purpose. It is not true that an economic force labeled x corresponds to a political force x , and that an economic force y corresponds to a political force y . That cannot be true because, as we have seen, several factors contribute to the determination of policy: from geography to chance, not to mention demography, history, law, ideology, social psychology, the personalities of political leaders, etc.

These factors cannot be ignored. At the start of this third decade of the 21st century, China was considered the principal strategic rival of the United States and the leading candidate to succeed it as the world's greatest power. Yet, in terms of per-capita income, weaponry, monetary and financial importance, demography, immigration, scientific freedom, spirit of initiative, as well as creativity, environment, corruption, the rule of law, legitimacy, soft power, global projection, international influence and alliances, the distance between China and the United States was still immense.

We thus see that, to define the state of relations between powers, it is not enough to know their respective economic weights. And yet this factor is the *ultimate cause* of shifting powers. The ultimate cause of the anti-Japanese hysteria that broke out in the United States in the 1980s was that, in 1960, nominal American GDP was 12 times that of Japan's, but by 1990 it was less than twice as large. During the presidency of Ronald Reagan (1981-1989), an opinion poll found that "Japan had replaced the Soviet Union as the greatest perceived threat to the U.S."¹⁵ In the first two decades of the 21st century, China became a strategic rival to the United States and the leading candidate to succeed it because, between 1960 and 2020 the American economy grew by 5.5 times, whereas China's grew by 92 times. Put another way, in 1960, the U.S. economy was equivalent to that of 22 Chinas; yet by 2020, it "weighed" only as much as 1.3 Chinas. The substantial reason of the American anti-Chinese hysteria could be summarized by this simple shift: in the Fortune 500 ranking of the year 2000, there were 179 American companies and 10 Chinese; in the 2021 ranking, there were 135 Chinese companies and 122 American.

This shift not only narrows the margin for economic expansion of the United States but, ultimately, results in a narrowing of its margins for political action, due to the phenomenon of "overstretching," a phenomenon that is at the origin of the fall of some great empires. Kennedy explained it in this way: "Decision-makers in Washington must face the awkward and enduring fact that the sum total of the United States' global interests and obligations is nowadays far larger than the country's power to defend them all simultaneously." That is, the global interests and obligations that the United States could afford to defend with a GDP of nearly \$3.46 trillion in 1960, could not all be defended simultaneously in 1986 with a GDP of \$8.6 trillion, and even less so today despite a GDP approaching \$20 trillion. This paradox is only apparent: while US GDP in 1960 was almost half (46.7%) of the GDP of the rest of the world, by 2020 it had become less than a third (30.8%).

15 — Michael Heale, "Anatomy of a Scare: Yellow Peril Politics in America, 1980–1993," *Journal of American Studies*, vol. 43, n. 1, April 2009, pp. 19–47.

The development at different rates of the political actors inevitably erodes the world order, until the hegemonic power ceases being so, for other powers have developed more rapidly and narrowed the gap separating them. The shift of power is a continuous process, but certain dramatic events mark its breaking point: the “order of Vienna” was definitively buried by German unification in 1871, and the “Yalta order” by the fall of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of the U.S.S.R.

The “general law,” once again, was stated by Nicholas Spykman:

The realm of international politics is like a field of forces comparable to a magnetic field. At any given moment, there are certain large powers which operate in that field as poles. A shift in the relative strength of the poles or the emergence of new poles will change the field and shift the lines of force.¹⁶

The geopolitics of the 21st century will have as a permanent object of analysis precisely this shift in the “lines of force” and its political consequences.

A golden rule for those tackling the study of geopolitics is to remove from their grammar first-person verbs, to avoid being distracted by a sense of belonging that is incompatible with analysis. Geopolitical analysts should “denationalize” themselves, at least while conducting their research. This involves: 1) ridding themselves of beliefs, passions and traditions that bind them to their country, region, city, political party, etc.; and 2) taking a critical distance from their own country, region, city, political party, etc. and looking at it from the outside - or from above.

Likewise, when they analyze the politics and the policies of a foreign country, they should closely consider its point of view in order not only to understand its history and mentality from within, but also to understand where its fundamental interests lie, what it would be willing (or unwilling) to do to promote and defend those interests, and which “conditioning factors” might affect its actions. As Winston Churchill said in the House of Commons in 1950, “There is no doubt that trying to put oneself in the position of the other party to see how things look to him is one way, and perhaps the best way, of being able to feel and peer dimly into the unknowable future.”¹⁷

We are regularly reminded that full objectivity is not of this world. While true, this statement is often used as an excuse to use analysis for deceitful partisan purposes. For geopolitical analysts, the impossibility of attaining true objectivity makes it all the more vital that they invest all their energies in *striving* to be as objective as possible. Similarly, they must always try to provide the most accurate possible representation of reality, fully aware that even the best result can never be more than an approximation. For the closer this approximation comes to reality, the more useful it is in finding one’s bearings in the present and in “peer[ing] into the unknowable future”. The physicist Carlo Rovelli tells

16 — Nicholas J. Spykman, Abbie A. Rollins “Geographic Objectives in Foreign Policy I,” *The American Political Science Review*, vol. 33, n. 3, June 1939, pp. 391-410.

17 — House of Commons Official Report, 4th session of the 28th Parliament, London, H.M. Stationery Office, 1950, p. 1333.

us that even the perception of time is an approximation. This does not keep us from getting to appointments, or the train station, on time. Given the many factors involved, their different and constantly changing weights, and their varying ways of relating to one another, it is clear that there cannot be a *single* geopolitical perspective or a *single way* of understanding and utilizing it. Unlike mathematicians, any two geopoliticians will almost surely draw two different conclusions from their analyses.

Every geopolitical analyst has a personal vision of his or her work tools; one could go so far as to say that all applications of geopolitics are equally legitimate, provided they are not distorted by ideological or propagandistic intent. This does not mean, however, that all are equally effective. Their effectiveness, in fact, is measured not by legitimacy but rather by plausibility and therefore by usefulness. A tool is effective only if it helps achieve the purpose for which it was built; and the purpose of geopolitics is to provide a gateway to understanding political events. Therefore, geopolitics does not exist in the singular; there are many geopolitics, and the only applicable criterion is practical on-the-ground testing: whether or not a given analysis allows us to better understand the world.

Since geopolitics deals with international politics, the battleground of colossal interests, a dispassionate analysis is unlikely to produce an outcome that will satisfy our aesthetic and moral sensibilities. Machiavelli warns the prince to:

not make himself uneasy at incurring a reproach for those vices without which the state can only be saved with difficulty, for if everything is considered carefully, it will be found that something which looks like virtue, if followed would be his ruin; whilst something else, which looks like vice, yet followed brings him security and prosperity.¹⁸

This warning stems not from cynicism but rather from a simple acknowledgment of reality as it is, not as one might like it to be. A geopolitical analyst should not fear being labeled as cynical, because reality will always be more cynical than even its coldest, most detached representation.

Cynicism is but one of many charges brought against geopolitics. It is accused of exposing “those vices” while failing to stand up in righteous moral indignation against them. This is clearly ludicrous if you compare it, say, to a medical diagnosis: the doctor diagnoses the disease in order to cure it, not to denounce it with virtuous indignation.

As politics is normally believed to be a field in which “free will” pertains, geopolitics is often accused of demoralizing those who want to dedicate themselves to fighting “those vices” and making the world a better place. The opposite is true: if we want any action to be effective, we must study reality as it is - however horrible that might be - and not as we would like it to be. Only if the diagnosis is correct can we find the proper tools to intervene. Relying on hope, illusive dreams and good feelings will throw our capital of curiosity, knowledge and passion into the hands of those waiting to exploit it in order to perpetuate “those vices”. Thus, enthusiasm will give place to a disillusioned frustration and bitterness, because for every frustrated illusion, there is an equal and opposite disillusion. The only way to act freely is to know the limits that restrain our will. And this is exactly the task of geopolitics.