

GLOBAL GEOPOLITICAL CHAOS

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Abstract: *The author considers the topic of this article to be significant for the public interest and highly important for Romania, as well as for the Member States of NATO and/or the European Union.*

In the late five years, the political evolution produced on the world scene mainly by the great powers (US, Russia, and China) and some emergent powers (Turkey, Iran, Brazil or others) have acquired real potential to endanger the global peace, including the security of European countries, EU member or non-member states.

In this intricate and fluid context, Romania has to be very careful and focused to counteract, along with its Allies, the risks and threats coming from such state actors with obvious aggressive posture.

Keywords: *United States of America, the European Union, geopolitical chaos, Asia, Europe, South America, North America.*

In the last decade, views expressed by politicians, politico-military analysts, economists, technology specialists, financiers, etc., regarding the meaning of world development, the dangers that may occur in the short, medium and long term in the life of the planet have been made public. These views have been and are expressed in treaties, encyclopedias, in-depth studies, books and articles published in foreign policy and geopolitical journals, mainly in countries with relevant economic and military potential on a global or regional scale.

It is quite easy to see that there are major differences in addressing the complex issues regarding the current major trends - geopolitical, technological, demographic, cultural, military, etc., globally and in different regions of the world, with chronic problems in terms of asserting and

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conquering force positions in relation to other states and groups (alliances) of states.

I believe that the differences in approach can be explained by the authors' affiliation, their honesty and correctness, as well as by the operational means of scientific research instruments in the field of history, geography, geopolitics, demographic and migratory movements, as well as environmental and economic-financial phenomena.

From the study of some works mentioned in the selective bibliography from the end of this material, most Romanian and foreign authors focus on the study of world developments after 1989 and on some short- and medium-term forecasts with a projection to 2030-2040 years.

Among the Romanian authors, I should emphasize, in particular, those who analyzed, in a professional manner and with solid arguments, the world phenomena, in the **LUMEA Series - 2005, 2007, 2009, 2011 and 2013 (Political and military encyclopedia) coordinated by Teodor Frunzeti, Ph.D. and Vladimir Zodian, Ph.D.** and edited under the aegis of the Romanian Scientists Academy. To this work of multi-criteria analysis also contributed authors who published in the "**Journal of Military Sciences**", edited by the Romanian Scientists Academy, as well as those who made their opinions known in the "**Geopolitics**" journal (in particular through some works from the last ten years).

I express, again, the opinion that the above-mentioned materials offer valuable expertise to the Romanian politicians, the active military personnel, but also to the businessmen and even to the general public interested in the issues of global and regional security.

Among many foreign authors, I should stop at a well-known name, **the director and founder of STRATFOR (private agency for geopolitical analysis) - George Friedman**, who in his work "*The Next 100 Years: A forecast for the 21st Century*"¹, expresses shocking views on world developments, until the end of the 21st century. Although the paper was published in the US in 2010, we can see that now, in 2019, some developments are confirmed in the case of **US, Russia, China, Turkey**,

¹ George Friedman, *Următorii 100 de ani – previziuni pentru secolul XXI*, Editura Litera, București, România, 2012.

Poland, Brazil, Japan, and of some state actors from the **Middle and Near East**.

As usual, **Europe** seems stuck in the project, being absent and partially disinterested in what is happening in the world now.

The chosen title of this article “**GLOBAL GEOPOLITICAL CHAOS**” has its explanation in recent developments, after 2014, in almost all regions of the world.

Two recently published materials, though short and without citing other authors:

- Yascha Mounk, *Foreign Affairs*, „*Ultima bătălie a dictatorilor - De ce noii autocrați sunt mai slabi decât par*”²,

- Dorin Popescu, „*Două șampanii la rece (Washington și Moscova)*”³,

bring to the public some real dangers for world peace from two important state actors - **the United States of America and the Russian Federation**.

These two states are accompanied by the recent aggression of **China, Turkey, North Korea, Iran and other countries** dissatisfied with their current geopolitical situation.

If we look carefully at the **World Map**, we find that outbreaks of social, economic, financial, military instability have appeared and are developing on all continents, and, encompassing them all, a global geopolitical crisis appears with clear trends of chaos. We will make a summary inventory as follows:

In Asia:

- **China’s files** with Taiwan, Hong Kong, with the artificial islands in the South China Sea, as well as recent cravings for Nepal, in competition with India;

- **Russia’s actions** to strengthen its military bases in the Arctic Ocean (at least 17 major airborne bases) and in the Pacific Ocean from Vladivostok to the Bering Strait;

² Yascha Mounk, *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 98, no. 5, pp. 138-150, 2019 (In Romanian at: www.hotnews.ro/12.10.2019).

³ Dorin Popescu, www.contributors.ro/global-europa, 29.10.2019.

- **Increased aggressiveness of Iran** towards its neighbors, increased influence of this state in the area (Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, United Arab Emirates, etc.), as well as irresponsible actions against Saudi Arabia and free maritime movement through the Persian Gulf;

- **Complex and chronic file** of strained relations between India and Pakistan, both being nuclear powers;

- **The danger posed by Dictator Kim Jong Un** to his neighbors and beyond (North Korea has become nuclear power with the support of China and Russia);

- **Turkey's attack on Syria**, under the pretext of protecting its borders, a fact favored by the encouragement from the Trump administration (at this moment much of Syrian territory is controlled by Turkey and Russia's military forces);

- **The insurgency of radical Islamism** in the Middle East;

- **The massive exodus** of hundreds of thousands of people from war zones (Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan) to Europe, with major negative effects on the countries of this continent.

In Europe:

- Russia's annexation of Crimea and the generation of armed conflicts in Eastern Ukraine;

- Quasi-total control by Russia of the countries of the North Caucasus;

- Georgia's economic and cyber military aggression;

- **Russia's threats** to use the huge military force against the Baltic States, Poland and Romania, without NATO and the EU to protest in any way;

- The total control of Russia in the Republic of Moldova;

- **Russia's interference in the Western Balkans**, resulting in the destabilization of the young states and culminating with Serbia's attraction to the Eurasian Economic Union, controlled by the Kremlin. In fact, Russia is giving Serbia huge quantities of weapons as a gift, although this state is not threatened by anyone;

- **Russia's energy blackmail** on European Union countries, dependent on gas and oil imported from this country, some 80% (e.g. Germany);

- **Actions of disinformation** against democratic states, as well as continuous cyber-attacks, operated by the same eternal aggressive state;
- **Russia** has had and has actions to influence the electoral processes in the target states (Brexit case, US elections, Germany, Italy, France, etc.).
- **Massive espionage actions** against all EU and/or NATO member states (including against Romania);
- **Fraternal division** of the Black Sea space between short-term friends Russia and Turkey;
- **Numerous other destabilizing actions** of Russia, unknown to public opinion in European countries.

Africa:

- Most African states are failed societies crushed by corruption and extreme poverty;
- The countries of the north of the continent of Africa are marked by the recondition of radical Islam and tribal conflicts, generating the exodus of tens of thousands of people in the European states, especially in those of the developed west of Europe;
- Against the backdrop of instability and corruption in African states, aggressive penetration of Russia and China takes place on the continent, using political, economic, military and other means, under the gentle-contemplative eyes of the US and the European Union;
- Serious degradation of the environment because of the intensive exploitation of natural resources, the massive deforestation, for the exclusive use of some transnational companies;
- Development of epidemics among poor and deprived populations with minimal medical assistance. These epidemics can become a serious danger to the world.

South America:

- The states of this continent are facing a sharp split of their societies, between the super-rich (few) and the very poor (most of the population in these states);
- There is a strong rise of far-left parties and leaders (Venezuela) and far-right leaders (Brazil), while in other countries of the continent there are

broad social movements generated by poverty and corruption (Chile, Peru, Colombia etc.);

- In Venezuela there is an official military presence of the Russian Federation and consistent support in providing weapons and other military equipment;

- The situation in the Amazon Forest is exacerbated, by the extension of the caused fires and by the massive deforestation, with catastrophic consequences for the whole world;

- The US seems to be no longer interested, politically, economically and militarily, in this continent, leaving the place to Russia and China.

North America:

- The United States, under the Trump administration, are conducting a chaotic, unpredictable, emotion-based policy, both in relations with neighbors (Mexico and Canada), as well as with alliances and states around the world;

- President Trump has made numerous controversial statements about the role of NATO and the importance of Article 5 of the Alliance Treaty, creating astonishment and irritation to the NATO Member States;

- The Trump administration seems to love and encourage autocrats and dictators like Putin, Erdogan, Kim Jong Un, etc.

- The United States have triggered major trade disputes (which can quickly escalate into trade wars) with China, the European Union, Canada and other states of the world, actions that can contribute to a recession of economies and to trigger a major crisis;

- This great economic and military power has withdrawn, without too much explanation, from the Paris Agreement on the environment, despite warnings from the international scientific community;

- In the USA, they have launched an aggressive anti-immigration policy, an action that culminated with a wall on the border with Mexico (useless and penetrable by agile Mexicans) built with Pentagon funds (!?);

- In domestic politics there is a deepening of the division of American society, many requiring a dismissal of President Trump;

- All these situations and events mentioned above (and many others) seriously undermine US prestige and encourage major or minor dictators to undergo destabilizing actions, including military, in sensitive areas of the

world (Eastern Europe, the Black Sea, the Middle East and the Near East, Southeast Asia, Africa, South America). The example of abandoning Syria at the hands of Russia and Turkey is eloquent.

The above-mentioned inventory of political, economic and military developments is by no means complete. The intention is to show to those interested that in recent years important movements and transformations have taken place, which can endanger the peace of the world, with major geopolitical implications on the fragile world balance.

In this point I find it useful to bring to your attention some of the appreciations of the author Yascha Mounk (Foreign Affairs, no. 5, 2019)⁴:

- **The last decade** has been a good one for the dictatorship. The global influence of the most powerful countries with authoritarian rule, China and Russia, has grown rapidly. For the first time since the end of the 19th century, the cumulative GDP of autocracies is now equal to, or exceeds, that of free democracies. Even ideologically, autocrats seem to be on the offensive: at the G-20 summit in June, for example, Vladimir Putin gave up his usual false claim that Russia stands up to the standards of liberal democracy, stating instead that modern liberalism is “obsolete”.

- **In the opposite direction**, the last decade has been terrible for democracy. According to *Freedom House*, the world is now in its 13th year of a global democracy recession. Democracies have fallen or been eroded in every region, from Burundi to Hungary, Thailand and Venezuela. Most worrying is that democratic institutions have proven to be surprisingly fragile in countries where they once seemed stable and secure.

- The rise of Donald Trump in the United States, Matteo Salvini in Italy and Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil have shown that the populists can win in some of the most prosperous and traditional democratic states in the world. And the rapid erosion of democracy in countries such as Hungary and Venezuela has shown that populists can even turn their countries into competitive authoritarian regions or even dictatorships.

For those interested, I think the article authored by Yascha Mounk should be studied as a whole.

⁴ Yascha Mounk, *Foreign Affairs*, no. 5/ 2019.

In his article (“Două șampanii la rece – Washington și Moscova”⁵), **the Romanian analyst Dorin Popescu** shows, with good reason:

- After a five-year hibernation, marked by small episodes rather rebels than warriors (challenges from the Azov Sea, small diversions in Syria), **the Kremlin is on the offensive again on all fronts;**

- From Ain Issa, to Skopje, from Zalate (Donbos), to Chisinau, **the Kremlin’s hybrid geo-tanks are gaining the political influence that post-Crimea isolated Russia seems to have lost in the long run;**

- The recovery of the geopolitically lost territories by Russia is greedily expressed “and the Russian geo-tanks seem to be taking wind speed on all the meridians”;

- “In its always strategic vicinity, Russia returns to the buttons through the poisoned gifts to friends from Berlin and Paris. The permanent delegation of the Russian Federation returns with the right to vote in the Council of Europe, although the causes that had exiled it from the Council remain intact. The Kremlin marks strategic points by negotiating with Germany and France various **cohabitation** solutions in Ukraine (Donbas) and the Republic of Moldova. The cohabitation alleged as a-geopolitical, from Chisinau brings Moscow **de facto back to the buttons** in the political life over Prut. Kiev makes concessions after concessions to obtain a Normandy format in which only Russia and France have what to politically capitalize. Anti-Russian rebels from pro-European enclaves such as Georgia and Armenia suddenly rediscover the mirage of the Empire. **The Russian world does not want to die geopolitically (nor politically) throughout the troubled east of Europe**, while Paris invents new geographies of the Continent, foreshadowing a “Russian Europe” from Lisbon to Vladivostok;

- “**In the Western Balkans, Serbia relapses, strategically moving to the Eurasian Economic Union** (Kremlin geopolitical project) concluding, with it, commercial agreements that close *de jure* the road from Belgrade to Brussels. With the hand of Macron, who recently refused to open negotiations between the European Union and Northern Macedonia and Albania, Russia is volatilizing the structured project of the accession of the Western Balkans to the Union. Russia seems not to have left geopolitically out of the Western Balkans (as the Western press once called

⁵ Dorin Popescu, www.contributors.ro/global-europa 29.10.2019.

it) and it remains with enough matches lit next to their powder barrel. Nor can geopolitics go from there as long as the Balkans remains (at least theoretically) the subject of the next wave of EU enlargement”;

- **“The European construction** is shaken from the ground, and among the fervent demolitionists are easily **deceived figures and pieces of decoration made by the trolls of St. Petersburg**, whose prestidigitation makes rages in the halls of the West. An entire anti-European army ideologically driven by authoritarian and illiberal nostalgia patrols daily in the institutions of Europe, from the European Parliament to the Commission and back, and the building of a powerful Europe is delayed not only by the precious sophistries of (too) proud European leaders, but and through the **devoted hybrid work of laboratories that periodically produce catastrophic effects - such as Brexit - when the soil is fertile**”;

- **“At the Black Sea**, Russia’s policy of destroying European cohesion and reforming regional alliances seems to keep the Montreaux Convention (the Convention on the regime of the Black Sea Straits, 1936) sheltered from inclement weather. **Ankara and Moscow generously share their benefits in the port waters** regularly disturbed by a prow of a lost ship from the North Atlantic Alliance fleets. The Black Sea extended area, a space through which conflicts periodically enter the heart of Europe, does not find its place **in the stunted agendas of European statesmen**, and when the region exists there, the reasons for reinventing the area refer to projects with unilateral benefits, pipelines, contracts and many zeros”;

- **On the military and geopolitical grounds left by the United States in Syria**, regular troops **of Turkey and the Russian Federation** will soon patrol. Russian spokesmen from different corners of the world are in a hurry to announce the US military exit from Syria (and the related Russian-Turkish security agreement on protecting the Turkish-Syrian border security area) as sufficient prerequisites **for the return of the Russian Federation as a global power**;

After 2014 (Crimea and Donbas), there are not so many simultaneous reasons for satisfaction (**champagne and caviar**) **in Moscow**, nor so many multiple fronts that **the tracks of the Russian geo-tanks, rested after long hibernations, slide again**”.

- “It is already clear **that Russian geopolitical revenge is occurring at a time when, in Europe and across the Ocean, the good Homer is**

snoozing. Union's leaders are competing epically in the boudoir scheming of war. Grand Trump is counting on his small glories in the House of Representatives, where the bullet of his political end can come anytime. Everything smells of slime and revenge.

- **“The European Union does not yet have the tools to play the global game, despite the ambitions of a global actor that is still circulating around the world, and America seems too weakened by its Trumps own efforts to see clearly what is happening in the real world from a part of the other of the Ocean. The United States can no longer repair the illiberal disorder of the world through heroic commandos and well-targeted raids. We need systemic policies again and not (only) special punctual operations or large stage gestures of some simple actors”.**

- **“For the moment, cautious, Moscow keeps the champagne cold, delaying its opening time. But its hybrid geo-tanks are once again strolling around the world, building without inhibition but quickly, while in Europe's anti-hybrid trenches (the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats) the fight seems to take place as at the Neamtului Fortress between a handful of fighters and regiments of besiegers”.**

- **“A second champagne is still cooling, waiting for its proper moment, in Washington”.**

With the killing of terrorist leader **Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi** yesterday (e.g. - 26.10.2019), President Trump seems to be recovering from the electoral “fist strikes” of his political opponents, who announced an **imminent uppercut in the next half, especially in House of Representatives.**

It is certain that **the operation of Delta Force commandos in northeastern Syria is lifting Trump off the floor.** Its success has in the background an informative control of the area, woven **with crumbs in many years of partnership with the Kurdish forces and other relevant actors in the region.** A success of this kind could be achieved there and now only by the United States”.

- **“On the other hand, it seems difficult to admit that the periodic carrying out of specific counter-terrorist operations can replace, in the scheme of Washington and Western interests, a structured and continuous political, military, economic, geopolitical presence in the territory.**

Especially as instead of this presence, **the eternal geopolitical rival of the West, Moscow, will be introduced**”;

- “We also have many reasons to suspect the great chancelleries of occult understandings and of regional and global reconfigurations of the geopolitical world in which we live. From the new gray curtain left in Eastern Europe, from the reconfigurations of the Western Balkans European project, from the geopolitical chess moves in **the Middle and Near East**, geopolitical architecture is in an accelerated dynamics of reconfiguration. **Moreover, within the Euro-Atlantic world, curtains are beginning to take shape**”.

- “**At the moment the camps remain cautious, and the champagnes - in the ice bucket.** New geopolitical changes are imminent, and the tactical confrontation scene will remain for a while Syria. But turbulence is becoming more frequent, including in traditionally intangible spaces, **from Barcelona to Podgorica, from London to Kiev, from Tripoli to Chisinau, from Hong Kong to Damascus, from Istanbul to Brussels.**

- **The puppeteers raise and draw curtains between scenes and worlds, in a hybrid direction that is urgently required to be decrypted**”.

I opted for the complete rendering of the analysis of the author **Dorin Popescu** because in his text he points out serious developments on the world stage, evolutions that endanger the security of Romania.

How is Romania positioned and what is it doing specifically to be understood the current geopolitical developments and to counter the risks and threats to national security?!

- **In declaration all the main institutions of the Romanian State (Presidency, Parliament, Government, ministries with attributions in the field of foreign policy, defense and national security)** states that Romania is deeply attached to democratic values (!?) and is based on three pillars in its external policy:

- NATO membership and good faith fulfillment of the commitments made;

- Membership of the European Union and implementation of the requirements of the bodies of the Union in the internal and foreign policy, in order to develop the country and to strengthen the rule of law;

- The strategic partnership with the United States (a. n. - the partner must be willing to be involved).

- **In fact**, in recent years, Romania has had a confused and inconsistent foreign policy, due in large part to internal conflicts between institutions and between parties.

- **Some conclusions and possible lessons** for strengthening the defense of the country as I have dared to present them in the *Journal of Military Sciences* number 1 and 2 of 2019⁶, so I do not consider it necessary to resume them.

- What can be said, with solid arguments, is that the situation presented has not changed for the better until today. Perhaps in the new internal political context a visible and absolutely necessary improvement will be possible.

In concluding this material I express the hope that the political and military decision-makers will understand that the defense of Romania cannot be done with politician statements without cover, but with honest and effective work every day.



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