

# THE FORMATION OF A MULTIPOLAR WORLD ORDER IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS IN THE XXI CENTURY - REVIEW OF THE BALKANS

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**Abstract:** The formation of a multipolar world order in contemporary international relations in the 21st century cannot be considered without the geopolitical and geo-economic context in which global processes take place, but also the post-Cold War order in which the germs of world movements towards multipolarism were formed. Ever since the 70s of the 20th century, the modern capitalist system embodied in the power of the Western world has been engulfed in the irreversible process of its resignation after a series of economic, social and moral crises of the neoliberal model of development in the world. In order to avoid the irreversible processes of creating a multipolar world and a fairer world order, the response of the Western (Anglo-Saxon) elite of the United States of America and Great Britain is accordingly long-term planned to preserve the core of their own world domination in the general crisis of the capitalist system and come out even stronger and richer from all the projected processes. Hence the Great Reset - the geopolitical agenda of the World Economic Forum, "green policies" and numerous ideological matrices, which aim to dominate the full spectrum in the system of world relations.

In the world context, this means energy poverty throughout the XXI century, food crisis - increase in world hunger, removal of all forms of social control - states that will take care of their own population and manipulation based on engineering and control of media and digital technologies in the creation of a new post-liberal world order . The way out of the historical detour can be in opposing the corporate-technological dystopia and the development of a fairer and safer world order, a multipolar world order, led by the BRICS and SCO countries and the Eurasian powers Russia and China. The solutions for the Balkans are on the trail of major geopolitical transformations in the world, the economic integration of the Balkans and the geopolitical reconstruction of the post-Yugoslav Balkans.

**Keywords:** *geopolitics, multipolar order, international relations, Balkans, Great Reset, energy security, green policies.*

## INTRODUCTION

At the end of the 20th century, the previous bipolar order in the world, dominated by the two superpowers the USA and the USSR at the head of the military-political and economic and political organizations that they managed. With the collapse of the bipolar world order, the era of the Cold War ends, the Warsaw Pact

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self-abolition, the disintegration of the USSR, the SFRY, geopolitical changes resulting in the collapse of the Yalta Agreement and the Versailles Peace Treaty occur.

Since the 70s, the world capitalist system has been engulfed in the irreversible process of its economic decline. In the USA, the monetary gold base was abolished, and then the Western financial oligarchy injected a huge mass of fictitious money (without material backing) into the connected economies of Western countries. A huge imbalance has been created between the mass of fictitious financial values (securities, financial derivatives), on the one hand, and limited real values, on the other. Western countries have not stopped investing fictitious money since the 80s in their own military-industrial complex, which ensured enormous conventional military power and monopolistic control of world economic and energy trends. In the second and third decades of the 21st century, the accounting balance of the West demands that all fictitious money be finally and accounting balanced and justified by confiscation of the huge real value of the material goods of Eurasian countries, first of all the Russian Federation, but also the Islamic world, China and India.

The world in the third decade of the 21st century is not divided into two camps as it seems at first glance. It is a conflict between the West and the majority of the world, which consists of BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) and a circle of like-minded countries, which represents the new reality of the formation of a multipolar world order.

In the geopolitical realignments of the first decades of the 21st century, a process that has already begun, the Balkans have their foundation in the geographical positioning of “Eurasian features of fusion and interpenetration” in their history, civilization and culture. The Balkans essentially belong to the Slavic Orthodox civilization of the Byzantine cultural circle and are geopolitically located in the area between Central Europe and Russia and Asia Minor (Turkey). Essentially, the Balkans should be an independent pole of power in a geostrategic sense, not a periphery of the European Union, but an equal participant in real power and economy, a bridge between East and West, Eurasian countries, the Islamic world and Western Europe.

## **POST COLD WAR ORDER - TOWARDS A MULTIPOLAR WORLD**

The geopolitical changes that occurred after the fall of the Berlin Wall were presented to the world through the construction of a better and safer world, especially on the soil of the European continent. Not long after, everything was turned into an anti-American mood that flared up in Europe in the mid-nineties of the 20th century. The fact that the United States has always been an empire, whose ultimate goal is the gradual assumption of hegemony in world politics and international relations, has been overlooked. From the fall of the Berlin Wall to the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, the United States undertook ten major military interventions, one every fifteen months. (Hiro, 2010) At the same time, Noam Chomsky believes that Great Britain is the main American partner in building a new world order according to Western Anglo-Saxon standards (Chomsky, 2007).

From a strategic point of view, the United States of America, ten years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, is completing the first part of its strategic plans. They impose a model of economic transition on the former countries of the socialist bloc, which will put those countries in a neo-colonial position in relation to Western multinational corporations. With that model of economic transition, the energy sector in

Russia found itself in the hands of powerful oligarchs, through whom Western corporations spread their own strategic interests. State giants for oil and gas exploitation in a short time become the property of private capital, while the military capacities of the Russian Federation have been brought to the lowest level since the beginning of their construction. This opened the possibility for the United States to eliminate the agreement on the non-expansion of the NATO alliance to the east of the European continent, which was reached before the unification of Germany and the dismantling of the eastern socialist system.

The second part of the American plans refers to the isolation of Russia, which is the main strategy of the Western bloc led by the United States during the Cold War. The plan is to eliminate Russia, even though post-Cold War Russia was no longer an ideological opponent of the Western bloc. The new post-Cold War order was not envisioned as a society of free nations, which realize international relations in accordance with international law and United Nations documents, but as a global order with Anglo-American hegemony and total control of all countries of the world.

NATO's military encirclement of Russia continues with open interference in Ukraine's internal relations, through the Orange Revolution organized by American services and the seizure of power in Ukraine by pro-Western structures. The goal is to introduce Ukraine into NATO, and to turn Russia to realize its geostrategic interests in Asia and to confront China and India. The Western plan under the leadership of the American nomenclature was implemented according to the precisely established geopolitical rules of British and American strategists. Even in the Great Chessboard of Zbigniew Brzezinski, it was defined that Ukraine represents a geopolitical pivot and the key that determines the character and size of Russia as a Eurasian power (Brzezinski, 1999).

No less important step of the American nomenclature in weakening Russia is its neutralization as a nuclear superpower. The nuclear capabilities of the Russian Federation from the time of the USSR are in excellent operational condition and show the image of Russia as a military superpower. The nuclear potential of the USSR was preserved and moved to the territory of Russia, which is the legal successor of the vanished Soviet state (Primakov, 2010). At the same time, the construction of an anti-missile shield in Eastern Europe is an attempt by the US-NATO to neutralize Russia as a nuclear superpower, with which the construction of a new post-Cold War order by Western Anglo-Saxon standards could begin. The American administration in the first decade of the 21st century ignores the fact that there is a strengthening of new powers on the world political stage, first of all Russia, China, but also others. In Munich in 2007, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced the return of Russia to the stage of world politics as a military superpower. The United States of America is accused of building a unipolar world, which is the result of American unilateralism in international relations, disrespect for international law and the norms of the United Nations.

The great economic crisis of 2007 shook the United States and the whole world. By abolishing the last forms of regulation in the financial sector in the 90s years of the 20th century, American Wall Street became a place beyond any control of the American state. Financial derivatives were created from stock exchange shares, new financial derivatives from old ones, insured packages of shares with falsified data, as well as mortgage loans, which increased the total turnover of the financial sector and

enormously enriched the already rich owners of Wall Street and their main business managers. The financial system, which David Harvey called capital accumulation by extortion, had a devastating impact on the American economy (Harvey, 2010). In 2008, the financial system began to collapse, and the culmination of the fall was marked by the bankruptcy of one of the largest Wall Street banks, Lehman Brothers. The financial system of America, as the bearer of the model of neoliberal capitalism, was saved by measures that most closely resembled the measures of socialist states. The invisible hand of the first economic theorists like Adam Smith, which according to the Chicago School of Economics was supposed to self-regulate free markets, became the visible hand of the Washington administration and then-President George Bush. Thousands of billions of dollars of government money are directed to save the financial sector, thereby shifting the debt to taxpayers, while moving the debt limit of the American government.

The entry of the Russian army into Georgia represents the second event that irreversibly shifted American power, a country that had already taken a place in the priorities of American military armament (Filimonović, 2010). Along with Ukraine, Georgia represented levers for confronting Russia in the post-Soviet space. Russia intervened in the protection of two Georgian provinces, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, thus putting the Georgian government on the verge of a *fait accompli*. The reaction of the United States and Western countries in the conflict in Georgia was absent. Russia returned to the stage of the great game of global power and politics in the world, and on the other side, the end of American hegemony was evident (Hiro, 2010).

## **GEOPOLITICAL AGENDA OF THE GREAT RESET**

At the World Economic Forum in 2020, the concept of the Great Reset was announced, starting from the “UN Sustainable Development Strategy 2030” and its goals, such as a sustainable solution to climate change. Added to this are covid 19 - experiences of the fight against the pandemic, that is, the “reset” of the labor market, the way of doing work - online work from home and retraining of the workforce in accordance with the current economic situation. One of the creators of the concept of the Great Reset, Klaus Schwab, at the 50th conference of the World Economic Forum, presented three basic components of the Great Reset, which relate to creating the conditions for a “share economy”, whatever that means, building an economy in a more “sustainable” way based on on more “green” public infrastructure projects, while the last component of the Great Reset agenda is about fusing automation and robotization in modern industry with new technologies and network communications.

In the book “Covid 19: The Great Reset” by Klaus Schwab and Thierry Malleret, the specific methods of the proposed general reset are not analyzed, but a theoretical elaboration of sustainability is given by considering the current crisis processes, before the Covid 19 pandemic. Composed of three parts, three reset levels are analyzed in the book. The “macroreset” that has already taken place under the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic during the first half of 2020, the areas of economy, society, geopolitics, technology and the environment are analyzed in the first part of the book. In the second part - “microresetting,” the analysis of the consequences of “lockdown” on individual companies, economic branches, industrial systems, as well as the abil-

ity to withstand crisis shocks, is carried out, while the third part of the book refers to the individual level of resetting (Schwab & Malleret, 2020).

The concept of the Great Reset caused different reactions in the public, from affirmative to extremely negative, and the main Western media New York Times, Guardian, BBC actively implement the agenda of the Great Reset, while liberal-minded intellectuals lined up for its operationalization. On the other hand, intellectuals of the illiberal ideological profile of Western provenance exposed the concept of the Great Reset to criticism, calling the concept of the Great Reset a project of the World Economic Forum, which, with the help of the corona virus, works to make the rich in the world even richer, and the poor even poorer. Eurasians see the Great Reset as a new globalist course that includes: control of public consciousness on a global level - the “culture of cancellation”, which is an introduction to the control of networks under the control of globalists, the transition to an ecological economy - the rejection of the industrial structure, the replacement of the workforce with cyborgs and the global application of advanced artificial intelligence. (Dugin, 2021).

In this regard, the post-industrial models of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, ecologically sustainable production in the developed world, are being pushed, while the model of deindustrialization (destruction of industry and its development), giving up resource extraction or paying huge taxes for carbon emissions - decarbonization - is being imposed on developing countries. That model predicts that carbon taxes will further burden developing countries and, crucially, stop their development. It follows that if developing countries want to transform themselves post-industrially, they are forced to buy clean technologies from Western companies for large sums of money (which they do not own), thus creating a new debt slavery in the world. It also follows that whoever cannot pay carbon taxes or buy permits for its emission cannot burn fossil fuels. Whoever does not burn fossil fuels for the needs of the population and the economy, must import expensive energy from renewable sources. The concept of the Great Reset and the implementation of green policies is creating energy poverty in the world. The planned post-industrial model of development, i.e. the realization of the concept of the Great Reset, developing countries will be particularly affected, which returns them to colonial subjugation.

According to the geopolitical agenda of the Great Reset, the formation of a “world government” composed of unelected experts, technocrats and business magnates, gathered from supranational forums and global international organizations is planned. Governments of sovereign states should be under their domination and limited in their own decision-making.

The current unipolar order under the domination of the United States of America should replace the global form of government and at the same time not allow the construction of a multipolar order in the world. The building of supranational structures of groups of states with common values and interests is being promoted, and those values are western, postmodern and postliberal - globalist. According to the geopolitical agenda of the Great Reset, the formation of the “Great Concert” of the powers of the XXI century is planned, which represents a more flexible form of cooperation than existing international organizations, with the aim of preventing the possibility of vetoes in the existing system of international relations, especially in the United Nations.

The new American administration (under Joe Biden) is completely on the line of realizing the concept of the Great Reset. The American administration, in implementing its own foreign policy, starts from the following assumptions, that global interests are above national ones, strengthening the structures of the World Government and its supranational structure (political and economic), the expansion and strengthening of NATO, the deepening of democratic changes in the world (which practically means the worsening of relations with all power centers in the world that are against globalism and that are looking for their own paths of independent development).

Essentially, the Great Reset represents the reanimation of globalism, which is a kind of ideology of postmodern capitalism, with certain modifications adapted to the current times. It is a project of the Great Reset - a double update of global plans in the West and its re-projection to the rest of the world, and in fact it is a consequence of the failure and concealment that this modernist project is in irreversible stagnation.

### **ENERGY SECURITY - A KEY ISSUE**

Energy security is a key issue of modern international relations, considering the available quantities of the world's energy reserves and their consumption. In overall world relations, energy has a strategic dimension and cannot be understood only as an attempt by an individual country to achieve self-sufficiency in energy supply. According to the definition of the World Energy Council, energy security includes "the state of availability of energy in the quantity and quality necessary for existing economic conditions" (Institute of Energy Strategy (Russia, 2001). Energy experts, geopoliticians advocate the point of view that the energy transport infrastructure and the strengthening of ties and relationships in the relationship producer-consumer are irreplaceable conditions in achieving energy security.

The essence of contemporary geopolitical realignments in the world probably throughout the 21st century is the continuous energy crisis, which will mark the fourth technological revolution at the global level, but also affect the regional and world positioning of individual countries, regions and entire continents. A time of energy poverty is coming in Europe and the world, which will last throughout the 21st century, with the fact that countries that do not properly and timely respond to the energy and geopolitical challenges in the coming decades will be particularly affected.

There is no responsible energy policy in Europe and the European Union, and the main reason is that the European Union - European countries do not lead an independent energy policy in their own interest, but the European energy market is in a chaotic state. The characteristics of irresponsible energy policy in the European Union are:

- does not gradually switch to alternative energy sources,
- the problems of climate change are dealt with by speculation in the European Union,
- energy problems are underestimated in reality,
- investments in the extractive branches of the industry are reduced by design,
- unbalanced decisions are made in the energy policies of the European Union.

The first phase of the start of the green transition in the European Union has just been completed, and according to the prices of electricity and gas in 2021 and 2022, the energy policy of the European Union is unsuccessful. Analyzes by numerous experts from universities and scientific institutes, as well as the Production Gap Report, a document of the United Nations Environment Program - UNEP, indicate that fossil fuel production in the world will continue to grow for at least another twenty years. According to Russian analyses, the share of oil and gas in the world's energy mix will be reduced from 85 to 65 to 70 percent, and not to 20 to 30 percent as predicted by some experts. Russian analyzes are aligned with the analyzes of the Saudi oil giant Aramco and OPEC, which estimates that oil and gas will dominate the world by 2050. According to these analyses, natural gas will begin to record more significant growth between 2035 and 2045, when the demand for oil is expected to stabilize (Balkan Magazin, 2021).

On the world stage, a global conflict has been taking place between the Western bloc - NATO led by the United States and the majority of countries in the world, led by Russia and China. Western power centers want to maintain their dominant position in the world, i.e. that developed Western countries (and their leading elites) become even richer after the resignation of neoliberal capitalism, while countries and peoples who do not belong to Western civilization sink into even deeper poverty.

The green agenda represents a new ideology of large Western multinational capital, by which Western countries that have completed their industrial development using coal and oil and cheap electricity, are now preventing underdeveloped countries from using these energy sources for their own development. Those who polluted the planet with carbon dioxide during their own industrial development in the 19th and 20th centuries present their ideology - the Green Agenda, that there has been enough industrial development, that this development based on fossil fuels is not allowed to other, non-Western countries. Western developed countries that used their own natural energy resources, "emptied" their mines, created new green technologies that are much more expensive and are trying to force other countries in the world - non-Western - to buy, use and produce expensive electricity with these green technologies .

In the European Union, the parties that promote and operationally create the Green Agenda are the green parties, which at the same time create a more political and less environmental dimension of green politics (Sloat, 2020). In Germany, the Green Party comes out of classic "green policies", which relate to the economy or energy. They stand for the programs and ideas of liberal democracy and human rights, which are the ideas and values of neoliberal capitalism that grew on the foundations of the victory of large Western capital over the traditional system of socially established states in the 20th century. The way out of this can be a rethinking of the sovereignty of states and peoples in the global world of the 21st century, which especially applies to countries that do not belong to the Western civilization circle, and which are particularly exposed to various types of pressure from large Western capital.

## **BUILDING A MULTIPOLAR ORDER - NEW FACTORS OF POWER**

The concept of power in the theory of international relations as a prerequisite for the realization of political goals is defined by different interpretations, starting from the fact that "politics is essentially determined by the search for power" (Simić, 1999,

p. 225) to the fact that “power represents the prospects that within the framework of social relations carry out one’s will despite resistance, regardless of what those prospects are based on” (Simić, 1999, p. 225). The imposition of will is the essence of power relations. The power of states in international relations is manifested by traditional factors of power (population, size and characteristics of the territory, economy, army, culture) and factors of “soft power” contained in the national will, diplomacy and support that the government of a country has among its people. The most important indicator of a country’s power when considering the traditional factors of power is its total gross domestic product, which includes the number of inhabitants and the technological-production level of the national economy. Military power is essentially determined by the total gross domestic product of each country as its most concise expression.

The world of the 21st century does not mean only a return to old concepts, when the power of states was based on the control of the land or the ocean, but in modern times it is based on the control of the flows of energy, people, goods, money, data and the roads through which their movements take place and are created. Great powers are creating new geopolitical maps, ie maps of the control of the mentioned flows - a kind of terrain of power that prevents other competing forces from realizing them. In the international arena of world relations, the world is criss-crossed by networks through which great powers exercise influence, and the key areas of power of great powers (and other countries) are: economy, technology, potential for possible climate change, population, military, health capacities and cultural dominance. The most important spheres of interaction with the military potential and the size of the population of the great powers are the economy and technology.

The great powers face each other not only in the military sphere, in which the dominant power is held by the United States of America and Russia, but also by China, but also in the economic sphere. It is about a new geo-economic era, where states for geopolitical reasons set conditions for access to their own market and use instruments (tariffs, quotas, fines) in not accepting equal conditions for market actors (Hackenbroich, 2021). The new geo-economic era of international relations in the world is characterized by placing the economy at the center of strategic plans. Trade agreements are created to contribute to economic efficiency, but also to the connection of countries through their value systems, which enables diversification from the markets of countries with which there are no geopolitical relations.

Significant influence on geopolitics is exerted by technology and technological changes, bringing those who manage science and technological engineering not only development and progress, but also give them the power to influence other actors of international relations. Before their global spread, all technological revolutions lead to a critical asymmetry of power in the world and inequality in global social relations. New technologies are tightly linked to the sovereignty of states, the technological capabilities of great powers to project their own spheres of influence, and the attraction of other states into their technological and civilizational systems. Between the great powers (primarily America, China and Russia) there are complex disputes and competitions in mastering modern technologies: digital infrastructure (5G underwater cables), rare raw materials, industry (artificial intelligence - semiconductors), control of data flows and storage, definition of standards for new technologies. Technologies are at the basis of a vertical (divided) world, from 5G to



virtual computing, which is contrary to what was believed in the past few decades, that technology will bring the world and countries closer together.

A large population represents the foundation of state power and its capacities. A large population does not make a country itself a great power, but in the modern world it is impossible to maintain the status of a great power if it does not have a large population. In many domains, technology has reduced the need for human labor, but population - human capital is still an essential determinant of a state's industrial and military capabilities and its position in the international system of relations. Countries with a large population have a greater opportunity to increase the gross domestic product through internal trade and the specialization of industrial production.

The liberal international order projected by economic globalization and the Internet, governed by Western liberal democracies and free market capitalism, is irreversibly going into the past (Brown & Carother, 2022). National and global processes of developing the foundations and principles of a new, fairer and safer world order in the world, which represents an alternative to the unipolar world order at the end of the 20th and the first decades of the 21st century, are underway. A new phase of world history is beginning, a new era of building a multipolar order that cannot be stopped (Kliment'ev, 2022).

## **THE BALKANS - GEOGRAPHICAL AND GEOPOLITICAL CHARACTERISTICS**

The Balkans represent a geographical area which natural-geographical predispositions and complex internal and surrounding anthropogenic structure have determined geopolitical dynamics as a basic identifying feature. The paradigmatic sense of the Balkan space is characterized by division, antagonisms, border problems, spheres of interest, national, religious and political exclusivity, mixing of great powers, economic polarization, a kind of dualism of "joining and permeating" and "isolating and separating" (Cvijić, 1991).

The Balkans are separated from the neighboring continental mass (Asia) by narrow and surmountable geographical barriers - the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles, the small Sea of Marmara and a multitude of islands that have a potentially great intermediary role (Ilić & Spasovski, 1992). The intermediary position of the Balkans, the transit role and the geographical position of the intermediate space conditioned the complex national, religious, economic, socio-political and overall civilizational structure of the Balkans. Another factor identifying the uniqueness of the Balkans is its openness to the north, a wide connection with the European continent and variable borders that depend on the applied criteria, historical time, needs, and principles of delimitation. The non-existent physical barriers of such borders allowed for two-way, favorable and unfavorable influences.

The Balkans, both qualitatively and structurally, and territorially, has a dominant geopolitical and geostrategic determination. The Western European and Central European stereotypical and interest-focused focus on the Balkans sees the Balkans as its periphery and a space prone to the chaos of national, religious, political, border and social antagonisms, and as a zone of unstable state-territorial constructions, which are open to external influences from non-Balkan power actors.

The Romanian and Croatian ethno-spatial realities play a cross-border and bridging role in the building relationship between the Balkan Peninsula and the Balkans, but they are the key transforming phenomenon of the Serbian country. Serbian countries indirectly determine the importance and define the position of other Balkan and neighboring areas due to their own transit, intermediary position on the key routes that connect those areas with other parts of the world.

In the Balkans, transformations of the relationship between the factors of global and continental power are being projected, changing their geopolitical and geostrategic position and wider importance, but also producing a feedback effect (Matić, 1994). According to Rustem Vahitov, the Balkan countries are not part of Europe, but enter the Mediterranean or, more narrowly speaking, the Balkan place of development. This results in the unnaturalness of the entry of the Balkan countries into the European Union and NATO, as well as a kind of artificiality of the European Union in its current form, since from the Eurasian point of view it integrates European countries and countries that are outside the borders of European local development (Vakhitov, 2016).

## CONCLUSIONS

On the threshold of the third decade of the 21st century, a global conflict is taking place between two opposing conceptions of the reorganization of the world, the Western and the multipolar – majority part of the world led by the Eurasian powers Russia and China. The global process of dividing the world into opposing economic and geopolitical blocs is being accelerated by the war in Ukraine. There is an ongoing conflict between the West and the majority of the world, on which it imposes its own discriminatory rules for all other participants in the trade and political process and changes those rules at its own discretion. The policy of double standards is being replaced by unilateral actions, which in European countries are justified by democracy, while the rest of the world is not given any explanations other than sanctions.

The processes of creating new horizons of the future, from energy security to food security, are unstoppable and historical. The political and economic dominance of the West is coming to an end, and the world is moving unstoppably towards multipolarism, in which the BRICS countries, along with the United States, will decide on future world processes. Europe is on a downward trajectory as the strength, power, authority and influence of Western civilization fades. Western countries are losing control over energy sources and no longer possess sufficient quantities of raw materials or energy sources.

The Balkans has historically been confirmed as an indicator of major geopolitical transformations and a crisis region due to the Euro-American induced fragmentation of the post-Yugoslav space. The solutions can be in the economic integration of the Balkans, the reconfiguration of the post-Yugoslav space, the reaffirmation of true national identities and the spaces assigned to them, and the consistent application of the principle of delimitation in the geopolitical reconstruction of the post-Yugoslav Balkans.

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