

GEOPOLITICAL COMMUNICATION IN POST-COLD WAR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Veaceslav UNGUREANU¹

¹PhD, Moldova State University, Chişinău, Republic of Moldova

Corresponding author: Veaceslav Ungureanu; e-mail: veaceslav.ungureanu@gmail.com

Abstract

Building a new international system after the end of the cold war turned out to be a complex and multifaceted process, which found its expression in several global developments and scenarios proposed by various scientific schools, opinion leaders and representatives of different cultures and religions. Even if the opportunity to identify certain more constructive and less violent forms of interaction between the international actors is expressed, patterns may bear the imprint of the conflicting logic between the poles, the latter receiving, alongside the traditional realistic treatment, yet another dimension, extracted either from the reflection of new realities or from intellectual speculations. The polarity certainly remains the basic problem of the world geopolitical architecture of the international security, also determining the configuration of the international system structure. Under the conditions of the global anarchy of international relations that define the power's world hierarchy, the existence of the geopolitical hegemony between the major actors is a natural thing conditioned by the need to contribute to the achievement or the impairment of the process of guaranteeing international security, by further maintaining the tendency of extending its sphere of geopolitical influence, intensifying the role of the political and military factor, which has not decisively lost its relevance and topicality, being on the contrary strengthened.

Keywords: *geopolitics, international relations, international system, post-cold war, world order.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The end of the cold war has profoundly shaken the scientific academic world and the circles of specialists in the field of geopolitics, securitology and international relations, depriving them, on the one hand, of topics intensively exploited and scientifically explored in the past, and, on the other hand, making them face new, scarcely known, explained and understood realities, and they were compelled to engage into developing new concepts and solutions necessary for the management and theoretical substantiation of

the post-bipolar actions and processes. It is worth clarifying that neither F. Fukuyama, nor S. Huntington have further developed the ideas that rendered them famous: maintaining the opinion that there is no alternative to liberal economy and democratic norms, the former opted to research other issues, with a predilection of moral nature, while the latter addressed the world geopolitical order from other, mainly realistic, perspectives, one of which being polarity. Therefore, S. Huntington rationalizes on the evolution of the world geopolitical order in the post-cold war era, arguing that after a moment of unipolarity, mankind will go through several decades of uni-multipolarity, while the 21st century will feature multipolarity. We notice that S. Huntington, like certain realists, such as K. Waltz, views unipolarity as a short-term phenomenon and that it will imminently evolve towards a multipolar geopolitical structure, a masterly assertion almost generally accepted in the academic environment (Huntington, 1999).

Pursuant to our opinion, such conceptual evolutions, which are not listed, as a matter of fact, as being scarce, can be explained by rethinking the evaluation criteria, in the sense of sectoral and differentiated approaches of the geopolitical configuration of the world order, identifying the major and influential actors by fields of activity at both global and regional levels. J. Nye Jr. and L. Thurronn plead for a more nuanced treatment of the world order, including the role of the United States of America in the world, in terms of changing the real relations between states in essential areas specific to a great power. According to the presumption of C. Hlihor, the actors' behaviour in the contemporary international relations witnesses a large diversity

and complexity as to the orientation, attitude and intensity of the geopolitical manifestation, with a different degree of involvement in solving problems on the world stage (Hlihor, 2005).

2. GEOPOLITICAL HEGEMONY IN POST-COLD WAR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

H. Kissinger and Zb. Brzezinski continue, in the spirit of the political realism theory foundations, to give priority to the concepts of geopolitical power in the post-cold war international relations, being primarily concerned with defining the reshaping of the world geopolitical architecture of the international security that occurred after the end of the bipolar conflagration. S. Huntington, on the contrary, advances in foreground the civilizational factor based on religions, considering that in the post-cold war world the ideological, political or economic differences give way to those of cultural-civilizational origin, while the behaviour of national states, although the main units of analysis remain in international relations, is decisively influenced not by the geopolitical imperative of conquest, power and wealth, but by cultural-civilizational preferences, similarities and differences anchored in the confessional factor. S. Huntington does not make an essential distinction between the United States of America and the European Union in the post-cold war world, including them in the Western civilization, which is built up on Christianity, pluralism, individualism, and the rule of law, while Zb. Brzezinski and H. Kissinger point out to the differences, in the sense that, according to the former, the new-type geopolitical hegemony, or, according to the latter, the American geopolitical supremacy, are obvious, but the United States of America need partners in order to manage the crises and counteract the challenges to the international security, with the European Union being the safest ally, a presumption supported mainly by H. Kissinger, as well as by G. Modelski and W. Tompson. S. Huntington has also foretold possible conflicts between the civilizations both at the micro and macrolevel, that would undermine the international security, while in

order to prevent them it is necessary to observe three rules, which practically have not been applied.

Zb. Brzezinski was especially concerned with the short-term preservation of the geopolitical hegemony of the United States of America, specifying, at the same time, that in the medium-term future, the United States of America will need strategically compatible partners, while H. Kissinger shares the opinion that the United States of America have a sufficient geopolitical potential to shape the events in Eurasia, seeking, in an institutionalist spirit, to build certain security regimes. We clarify that F. Fukuyama invoked, until the late 90s of the 20th century, the triumph of democracy, and I. Rammonet noted the extension of the list of democratic states and, implicitly, the establishment of a less conflictual regime within the international relations, while S. Huntington, A. Toffler and H. Toffler, on the contrary, announce new axes and factors of the global conflict. Zb. Brzezinski with H. Kissinger continued to give credit to realistic and geopolitical perceptions, which would be later shared by S. Huntington through the analysis of the types of polarity.

3. THEORETICAL SUBSTANTIATION OF THE POST-COLD WAR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

We consider that the *polarity*, a geopolitical notion of realistic origin, continues to be broadly used in the research on international relations due to the fact that geopolitics preserved its determining role in the competition for the world supremacy. We believe that one of the most explicit typologies of the world order through the application of polarity was achieved by S. Huntington, who distinguishes *the multipolar geopolitical order*, when three and more major actors find themselves in geopolitical relations of cooperation and competition, and the settlement of important issues of international security requires the combined effort of all the great powers and the balance of power does not admit the one-sidedness; *the bipolar geopolitical order* is ensured by two superpowers approximatively equal in their geopolitical potential, which are in

relationships of alternating periods of cooperation and conflict, when the bilateral geopolitical relations are completely determining the international agenda, and the extension of the spheres of geopolitical influence is carried out either by creating the coalition of satellite states, or in the form of proxy warfare in the case of non-aligned states, by resorting to intermediaries; the *unipolar geopolitical order* is ensured by a single superpower, while the other states are merely minor powers, being impossible to have a coalition formula which would be able to obstruct the superpower from acting one-sidedly (Huntington, 1999). E.-O. Czempiel claims that the terms of *unipolarity and multipolarity* are applied conceptually as a theory and as a fact, stating that the United States of America have acted unilaterally, in case of Iraq, while, in reality, they acted multilaterally, through a coalition. In his opinion, these terms can be addressed in a double sense – that of strategies and attitudes, and power distribution, – the last case also featuring bipolarity, from the conditions of the cold war. E.-O. Czempiel underlines that, currently, the United States of America have a certain geopolitical hegemony, at the same time other power centres are present, which makes it very difficult to determine whether we have a unipolar geopolitical world or a multipolar geopolitical world, underlining the fact that the geopolitical unipolarity is not frequent, while in the post-bipolar geopolitical period the United States of America act multilaterally, but take decisions unilaterally.

V. Juc outlines that the *pole* interpreted in a narrow geopolitical manner partially reflects the realities of the contemporary world, especially since it has an elevated conceptual and organizational status in the attempts to explain and understand the content of the world geopolitical architecture of international security and of the structure of the post-cold war international system. The traditional polarity approach, expressed through the geopolitical confrontation between the major powers, at the global level, is further present in the scientific works of the post-cold war period even if it has partially lost its important and relevant character in the topicality of empirical research on the structure of the post-cold war international

system due to the decrease in the dominance of the ideas of the linear planetary conflict on the grounds of the increase in the weight of several levels and hierarchies in the organization of international relations. Therefore, when insisting on the unipolar structure of the international system, it would be justified to identify a *centre* rather than a *pole*, even if several researchers, such as: Zb. Brzezinski, Ch. Krauthammer, P. O'Brien pointed out the imperial unipolar type of system, which, ultimately, is reduced to the global geopolitical hegemony of the United States of America. In the researcher's opinion the world post-cold war order was not unipolar in content and character, for the simple reason that there were no poles in the traditional geopolitical sense, which assumes that international relations are regulated by the balance of powers. The unexpected disappearance of a pole generated strategic retraction both numerically and qualitatively in the state of international relations (Juc, 2018).

We consider the assumption of S. Huntington as absolutely founded, defining the geopolitical structure of the post-cold war international system within the world order as a *uni-multipolar one*, presenting itself in the form of a complex hybrid that includes a superpower and several major powers determined by the process of resizing the world post-bipolar geopolitical architecture of international security (Huntington, 1997). In this context, the solving of the fundamental issues in the field of international security claims the firm action of the superpower, but in combination with some major powers. The vulnerability of the pattern of uni-multipolar geopolitical order is fully felt in the geopolitical tensions between the aspirations towards the geopolitical unipolarity (by the single superpower) and the trends towards the geopolitical multipolarity (mainly from some major powers). S. Huntington distinguishes three levels of achieving the geopolitical objectives established by the actors of the uni-multipolar post-cold war international system. The first level contains the only superpower with internal potential and external capacity, able to express and exercise globally its geopolitical interests; the second level includes the great powers with internal resources and external

capacities to promote the geopolitical interests in certain regions only; the third level incorporates the secondary regional powers, the geopolitical interests of which are frequently in (open or latent) conflict with the geopolitical interests of the major powers in the vicinity.

We underline the fact that the open military aggression of the Russian Federation against the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine confirms the need to use the term of *pole* in the international relations research, reflecting the structural-geopolitical realities of the process of ensuring international security and the post-cold war international system, since it has a conceptual-organizational status in explaining and understanding the content of post-cold war international relations. Trying to bring back the importance of the geopolitics' thinking and the need to apply it in the analysis of the resizing of the international security's geopolitical architecture in the context of reconfiguring the post-cold war international system, we support the use of the term of *pole* of geopolitical origin as a fundamental element in organizing the international system structure within the international security architecture, specifying that this approach expresses a more complex vision through the extension of the geopolitical concept, which encompasses dimensions justifying the topicality of this supposition, even from the perspective of the term of *centre*, anchored on geoeconomics, which is a component of geopolitics, as well as for the strengthening of the regional power by *centres*, the member states of these international actors identify, promote and fulfil both group and national geopolitical interests (Ungureanu, 2020).

4. GEOPOLITICAL REFLECTIONS IN THE ANALYSIS OF THE POST-COLD WAR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

We will emphasize the important aspect concerning the polarity influence in determining the distribution of geopolitical powers within the world architecture of the international security in the context of the reconfiguration of the post-cold war international system, with the researchers' opinions varying based on the

number of poles, addressed either separately or in combinations. V. Juc underlines that the systemic establishment of international relations represents the cornerstone for the world order building, channelling the investigations for the determination of the structures, ensuring the balance and stability treated as being identical or different. It is important to clarify that the great majority of scientific works are anchored on quantitative typologies, even if certain researchers, such as A. Wendt, generally reject this methodology, considering it in a constructivist way as being ungrounded due to the fact that the attempts to deduce the stability and peace patterns through the analysis of different powers' distribution among the state entities prove to be historically inadequate in the absence of the theoretical examination of the way in which certain state actors perceive the nature and identity of threats coming from other entities of the same type, because they act on the basis of the socially constituted meanings that the objects have for them (Juc, 2010).

K. Deutsch and D. Singer consider that studying the stability of the international system can be achieved not by the number of great powers, but by mathematical techniques, concluding that the multipolar system made up of at least five great powers is more stable than the systems that include fewer major actors (Griffiths, 2003). The multipolar international system certifies a relatively equal geopolitical distribution of power among the major actors; therefore, it is impossible for one of them to dominate the others, this geopolitical order should narrow down the range of options of a violent nature within the international security environment and guarantee the stability of the international system. K. Deutsch argues that the vulnerability of the internal structural instability of such a type of international system is determined by concentrating the power in unbalanced coalitions. In this context of ideas, we consider that the stability of the post-cold war international system does not depend on the number of great powers having the status of *poles*, participating in the structural formation of elements underpinning the international system, but rather determined by the balanced distribution of the geopolitical power within the

world architecture of the international security, the compliance with which it influences the credibility of guaranteeing a stable international security environment that conditions the creation of the international system.

M. Haas argues that monopolarity is distinguished by the highest degree of stability, bipolarity is associated with lasting wars, due to the fact that some actors try to change the geopolitical distribution of resources, while multipolarity carries a high number of conflicts, but most of the time they do not cause cardinal changes in the system. Multipolarity is more stable than bipolarity, and *geopolitical instability* is conceived as preserving the number of power centres, while *geopolitical instability* is determined by the number of wars that take place within the international system. P. Hassner, on the contrary, shares the opinion that the high number of power centres is at risk to become rather a source of unpredictable geopolitical events and uncontrolled disorder than of restraint, underlining the fact that the nuclear balance between the superpowers has been established within the bipolar geopolitical world. E. Mansfield and J. Ikenberry, in particular the latter, also consider that the unipolar geopolitical order turns out to be the most effective form of ensuring the international security and the international system stability due to the capacity of the hegemonic power to dominate over any coalition and intervene in geopolitical conflicts, which generate instability, by inhibiting the warlike spirits (Ikenberry, 2001).

On the same note, D. Wilkinson claims that the unipolar system most efficiently ensures internal stability and can last for more decades, the unipolar configuration has internal self-regulatory factors (Wilkinson, 1999). Arguing that the *smaller* is more preferable than *small*, K. Waltz expresses the conviction that the international systems, which are smaller in number, are more stable, and the members thereof prove to be more capable of managing businesses to their mutual advantage, the stable systems are self-reinforcing, because the understanding of others' conduct, concluding agreements with them and keeping the compliance therewith under control become much easier to achieve through continuous

experience. Within the bipolar international system, the interdependence is low, the alliance leaders create strategies starting from their own estimations of interests, being free to follow the strategic line directed mostly to facing the main opponent. The superpowers must face each other, the main constraints being caused not so much by the actions of their own associates as by the actions of their global geopolitical opponent. In the multipolar geopolitical world, the dangers are diffusely distributed, the responsibilities are unclear, the interdependence is high due to the fact that the states often pool their resources to serve their geopolitical interests. Geopolitical powers depend on each other in the multipolar international system, the difficulties come to light especially when certain states threaten the other, while the alignments prove to be uncertain (Waltz, 2006).

J. Mearsheimer is much more offensive than K. Waltz, arguing that, under the conditions of anarchy and security dilemma, the major actors aim to maximize their relative power in relation to their competitors, seeking to establish geopolitical hegemony. The researcher defines the geopolitical structure of the international system by two criteria: the distribution of either visible or latent capacities present in the system and the gap between the first two states. According to the first criterion, multipolar and bipolar systems are distinguished, while according to the second – geopolitically balanced and geopolitically unbalanced systems. As a result of these two criteria combinations, J. Mearsheimer identifies four types of systems: the multipolar geopolitically balanced system, the multipolar geopolitically unbalanced system, the bipolar geopolitically balanced system and the bipolar geopolitically unbalanced system, specifying that only the first three meet the conditions that correspond to the reality. The multipolar systems prove to be more unstable and more prone to war than the bipolar ones, due to the following reasons: the higher number of important actors increases the likelihood of war, because more conflict situations arise; asymmetries of geopolitical powers, the priority being given to the transfer of responsibility to the detriment of the geopolitical counterbalancing, which makes it difficult to prevent the war; steps

up the risk of relative power calculation errors, as well as the states' resolution to achieve their geopolitical interests. The geopolitically unbalanced multipolarity is more prone to war than the geopolitically balanced one, since there is the tendency of the potential geopolitical hegemon to force the attainment of the world hegemony and, respectively, the increased degree of fear at the states' level, which can inspire them to adopt risky policies.

Studying exclusively the interstate relations in the strategic-diplomatic field, R. Aron defines, by the phrase *configuration of geopolitical power relations*, two types of systems, while the binomial *homogeneity/heterogeneity* is applied to determine the ways of ensuring their geopolitical balance and stability. The multipolar geopolitical balance system results from the compromise between the natural status and rule of law: the states acknowledge the mutual right to existence, strive to maintain the geopolitical balance and show a certain degree of solidarity. The bipolar geopolitical balance system is distinguished by a higher level of heterogeneity, the states being divided into three groups: leaders of geopolitical alliances, states affiliated in geopolitical coalitions, and states not engaged in geopolitical conflicts. In this regard, the bipolar geopolitical system is not more unstable and more impacted by wars than the multipolar geopolitical system, it can rather trigger a global war, because each local conflict shakes the world geopolitical architecture of the international security, which determines the reconfiguration of the international system. Nevertheless, R. Aron does not specify deliberately the type of system that would be more stable, using, absolutely rightfully so, in our opinion, the category of geopolitical power balance as the defining tool of scientific research in his study of the weight of local geopolitical conflicts in international relations, even from the bipolar world (Aron, 1984). The researcher believes, much like M. Kaplan or St. Hoffmann, that the type of bipolar geopolitical structure turns out to be more unstable as compared to the multipolarity. St. Hoffmann mentions that, within the bipolar geopolitical systems as opposed to the multipolar geopolitical structure, the dialectic of hostilities rather prevails (Hoffmann, 1999). The common idea shared by these three renowned researchers

is that the numerical aspect does not matter in ensuring the geopolitical stability of the system so much as the geopolitical relations between the poles, although there can naturally be differences deriving from the definition of the geopolitical structure role. Pursuant to R. Aron's opinion, the way the international system's poles are established is more relevant than the number thereof, while M. Kaplan argues that international politics is generally dominated by subsystems, which erode easily.

We consider that R. Aron correctly described the disruptive influence of geopolitical conflicts of subregional level on the stability of bipolar geopolitical systems, this estimation contradicting with the case of bipolarity as described by Thucydides. As a matter of fact, K. Waltz also fought this presumption underlining that the third parties, including those with geopolitical status of great powers, were not able, in the contemporary bipolar world, to disastrously distort the geopolitical balance between the superpowers, while the reduced global weight of the Non-alignment Movement confirms the rightness of this idea, according to V. Juc, in our opinion, the third parties, changing thus the geopolitical balance in favour of other superpower, strengthening subregional geopolitical conflicts, namely, between two geopolitical superpowers, which established the bipolar international system, have eroded the geopolitical capacity of the *pole* of a superpower until the opposite *pole* disappeared, defining the geopolitical reconfiguration of the bipolar international system within the process of reshaping the world geopolitical architecture of the international security.

St. Hoffmann did not openly name either the most stable type of international system, since along with R. Aron he leans towards the multipolar geopolitical balance, which effectively functioned following the treaties of Westphalia, even if disturbed by numerous limited wars, but these rarely affected the civilian population. The contemporary bipolar system was characterized by heterogeneity in values and more levels of geopolitical competition and rivalry, being made up of the centre encompassing superpowers' geopolitical camps and the inhomogeneous periphery, fragmented in subsystems depending

on the degree of presence and geopolitical influence of those two major actors. The change of the international systems happened through general wars, which were not always inevitable (Hoffmann, 1999). Developing the concept of the conflict's stakes as the analysis instrument, which includes the geopolitical structure of the system and the status of the conflict's technology, the researcher distinguishes between stable geopolitical systems and revolutionary geopolitical systems: the stakes of the conflict in a stable geopolitical system are limited, and the relations between the actors are characterized by moderation in scope and means, while the revolutionary geopolitical system is extremely unstable, because moderation disappears and in addition, a revolution in the technology of conflict or a transformation of the geopolitical structure of the world occurs. The distinctions between the stable geopolitical systems and the revolutionary geopolitical systems are determined by the impact of the binomial *acceptance and agreement/non-acceptance and disagreement* on the values and rules of the geopolitical competition between the actors, mainly between the main protagonists. The stable or *moderate* geopolitical systems are characterized by multipolarity in the geopolitical power distribution and homogeneity in the established goals and means used by states, while revolutionary geopolitical systems turn out to be bipolar in the geopolitical power distribution and homogenous in the actors' qualities. In the attempt to identify the peculiarities of the *bipolar world geopolitical system*, St. Hoffmann considers it as being both revolutionary and moderate, invoking the possibility of assured mutual destruction.

5. CONCLUSIONS

We conclude that, within the framework of the international relations in the first stage of the post-cold war period, a *uni-multipolar geopolitically balanced* geopolitical structure of the international system was built, in which the United States of America, despite their geopolitical superpower status, faced difficulties in solving by themselves the main international issues, reviewing their

foreign policy that involves the action of the United States of America in collaboration with other important states that dominate in certain regions of the world, but without having the possibility to expand their interests and capabilities at the global level, in the sense in which the United States succeeded: the group of *major regional powers* enrolls the Franco-German coalition in Europe, Russia – in Eurasia, China and, possibly, Japan – in Eastern Asia, India – in Southern Asia, Iran – in South-Western Asia, Brazil – in Latin America, South-African Republic and Nigeria – in Africa; the *secondary regional powers*, the interests of which are in conflict with the *major regional states*, are: the United Kingdom in relation to the Franco-German combination, Ukraine in relation to Russia, South Korea to Japan, and the latter in relation to China, Pakistan in relation to India, Saudi Arabia to Iran, and Argentina to Brazil. Subsequently, within the international relations in the second stage of the post-cold war period, the revanchist actions undertaken by the Russian Federation to recover the geopolitical superpower status intensified both in the post-Soviet space, and the entire European continent, particularly, in the energy sector, which resulted in the partial reshaping of the world geopolitical architecture of the international security, while the geopolitical structure of the post-cold war international system maintained the same *geopolitically balanced uni-multipolar* status. The second stage of the post-cold war period ended on the 24th of February 2022, when the Russian Federation started a war against Ukraine that is conceived, in the framework of international relations, as the third stage of the post-cold war period, in which a new international *geopolitically unbalanced uni-multipolar* system is built with a devastating impact on the world geopolitical architecture of the international security, requiring a new delineation of geopolitical spheres of influence, determining, at the same time, a new geopolitical reconfiguration of the international system. This fact will lead to the end of international relations in the post-cold war period, while the new geopolitical *bipolar militarily asymmetrical geopolitically unbalanced* structure of the international system will function in the framework of new international relations in the context of a new cold war.

References

- Aron, R. (1984) *Paix et guerre entre les nations*, Paris: Calmann-Levy.
- Griffiths, M. (2003) *International Relations: schools, currents, thinkers* [in Romanian]. București: Ziua Publishing House.
- Hlihor, C. (2005) *Geopolitics and geostrategy in the analysis of contemporary international relations: theoretical and methodological considerations* [in Romanian]. București: "Carol I" National Defense University.
- Hoffmann, S. (1999) *Janus and Minerva. Essays on the theory and practice of international politics* [in Romanian]. Chișinău: Știința Publishing House.
- Huntington, S. (1997) *The clash of civilizations and the restoration of world order* [in Romanian]. București: Antet Publishing House.
- Huntington, S. (1999) The Lonely Superpower, *Foreign Affairs*, 78(2), pp. 35-49.
- Ikenberry, J. (2001) Getting Hegemony Right, *The National Interest*, 63, pp. 17-24.
- Juc, V. (2018) *Dimensions of contemporary international relations in Romanian*. Chișinău: ÎS FEP „Tipografia Centrală” Publishing House.
- Juc, V. (2010) *Foundation of socio-human sciences through paradigms* [in Romanian], Respect for human rights - main condition in building the rule of law in the Republic of Moldova: the works of the scientific-practical conference. Institute of Legal, Political and Sociological Research of the State University of Moldova, Chișinău, pp. 176-187.
- Ungureanu, V. (2020) *Resizing the geopolitical architecture of the post-Cold War international system: geostrategic adversities and security fallbacks* [in Romanian]. Chișinău: F.E.-P. „Tipografia Centrală” Publishing House.
- Waltz, K. (2006) *Theory of international politics* [in Romanian]. Iași: Polirom Publishing House.
- Wilkinson, D. (1999) Unipolarity Without Hegemony, *International Studies Review*, 1(2), pp. 141-172.