

Threats and challenges to the collective security of eurasia (on the example of the geopolitical cosmology of the south caucasus)

Pavel Karabushenko¹, Arushan Vartumyan² and Tatiana Shebzukhova²

¹ *Astrakhan State University, Astrakhan, Russia*

² *Pyatigorsk Institute (branch) North-Caucasus Federal University, Pyatigorsk, Russia*

Abstract. The modern world is facing numerous challenges and threats posed by the political realities of international relations. The instability of them leads to the destruction of the geopolitical world view, which needs constant clarification and adjustment. Geopolitical cosmology, which is engaged in creating a realistic picture of international relations, will help us to give an objective assessment of current international events. The geopolitical analysis of the Eurasian space, where there are always many different kinds of contradictions, threats and conflicts, is of particular interest in this regard. This region has the richest historical traditions, and a modern assessment of the objective political reality is impossible without taking them into account. The authors used a comprehensive methodological approach, which allows give full consideration to the dynamics of international events and constantly changing geopolitical strategies. The main goal of this study is to analyze the conflicts constantly occurring in this region, which are evidence of the confrontation between the leading powers defending their national interests here. It is in Eurasia that the world "weather" of international relations is formed. It is here the national interests of many leading countries that have nothing to do with this region, but strive to demonstrate their importance, collide. And the countries of this region itself must learn to defend, independently or jointly, their national interests, ensure their security and peacefully resolve urgent conflict situations.

Keywords: geopolitics, cosmology, threats, war and peace, conflict, elites, empires, national interests.

Eurasia has always attracted the attention of researchers not only by the diversity of its geopolitical palette, but also by the depth and relevance of its international relations, the historical traditions of which to a large extent determine the content of modern political theories and disciplines [1, 2]. The region of Eurasia is included in the zone of national interests of several large world actors at once. Historically, the South Caucasus has always been a zone of rivalry between three regional empires (Russian, Ottoman and Persian) and the Anglo-Saxons (the fulcrum of the British Empire were their colonial possessions in India and Egypt). The so-called "new Great Game" is a continuation of the geopolitical rivalry that the Anglo-Saxons waged with the Russian world in the vastness of Eurasia [3,

¹ Corresponding author. Email: Pavel_karabushenko@mail.ru

4]. This rivalry has not gone anywhere and will continue as long as these two imperial projects exist.

Geopolitical cosmology is based on geopolitical theories, which, in essence, are sometimes a kind of political mythology. Many strategies are hopelessly outdated (and have moved into the category of eschatology), but they still continue to be in demand among certain groups of political elites and their leaders. The geopolitical world view which is formed by them turns out to have distorted fragments, which reinforces the erroneous and illusory idea of the modern international relations.

Thus, the *object* of this study will be the Eurasian geopolitical cosmology, and the *subject* is the conflicts and the problem of the security of the South Caucasus. *The methodological basis* of this work includes such methods as dialectics, comparative studies, hermeneutics, semiotics, as well as methods of systematization, modeling and design. A working hypothesis is the thesis that the region of the South Caucasus periodically becomes an object of attention of the leading world powers, which are fighting here for zones of influence based on their national interests. And this struggle illustrates the unstable balance of powers that has developed in this region.

1 Foundations of geopolitical cosmology

Geopolitical cosmology creates geometric projections of the South Caucasus "political space" and clearly demonstrates and explains the essence of the events taking place in this region through these images. This is a kind of conversion of the rational into the figurative, for a better perception of the proposed ideal schemes. Cosmology offers us imaginative perception - a variety of geometric schemes that illustrate the models under consideration. The best way to represent these schemes by means of simple triangles, since, as the experience of geopolitics shows, trilateral ties have a certain strength and margin of stability.

The task of geopolitical cosmology is not only to track all the changes taking place in the geopolitical world view, but also to create a picture of current international events that would really reflect the objective reality, without admiring and distorting politicians' mythological ideas about the former geopolitical greatness of their states.

Thus, geopolitical cosmology describes the creation and destruction of that political world view of international relations, which was created by the leading countries for their own projects. When this picture of the world from a scientific projection turns into a collection of already outdated formulas and schemes, it gradually turns into a mythological one, serving archaic views and ideas. This is a situation in which the content of the political process changes, and the old form pretends to be an objective reality.

As political history shows, geopolitics is a variable quantity, each time re-explaining the meaning and significance of political constants to everyone. "Geopolitics always constructs its own international Universe, the structure of which is in a state of constant restructuring and clarification of the leader's status and the outsider's position. Currently, the Western (European) part of Eurasia is already becoming a periphery, and its Asian part comes out on top" [5, p. 173]. The geopolitical world view is a constantly changing structure, the dynamics of which sets the rhythm of the life of international relations. And cosmological principles are necessary in order to form a dialectical view of the basic geopolitical constructions, the geometry of which is in constant motion and development. From our point of view, geopolitical cosmology is "raising of abstraction to the rank of higher schemes and formulas, allowing to comprehend complexity in its simplified form. As an example, we can cite the assessment scheme of the central geopolitical region - the continent of Eurasia" [5, p. 173].

We also note that the more errors and incorrect concepts accumulate in geo-political cosmology, the closer it approaches to its eschatological stage - the stage of destruction. And we can observe that the monopolar model of the world order is collapsing in the geopolitical world view, and the poles - the centers of power are changing. All this forces the former hegemon ("gendarme of the world") to cling to every opportunity with all his might in order to maintain his world leadership, which is gradually passing over to other centers of power. Having being realised that this was the agony of its former indisputable world power, this hegemon becomes aggressive. But this aggression is weakening. These are the death screams of a dying empire (the flash of a dying old superstar!). For a better perception of objective reality, geopolitical cosmology can appeal to figurative schemes illustrating its main provisions. This style of presentation is permissible, since it is aimed at facilitating and adequate perception of the described reality by the political and scientific communities. It is fundamentally important for it to convey to the actors of geopolitical relations, which political world view is a real and which is mythological.

Thus, there are two types of geopolitical cosmology: 1) *scientific* - which is based on such sciences as history, political science, political geography, regional studies, and 2) *mythological* - based on purely ideological fabrications that draw speculative projections of international relations that are beneficial for the politics of certain countries.

Geopolitical cosmology helps to adequately assess the existing latent threats and open challenges to the collective security of Eurasia that exist in the South Caucasus sector of it. At the same time, special attention should be paid to the behavior of political elites who are responsible for the development and implementation of their geostrategic concepts that determine their place in the modern world hierarchy [6].

2 Deep causes of the conflict

Geopolitics is always a struggle of someone's imperial projects for the right to be leaders and determine the political agenda. Therefore, all international relations and events in this region should be viewed through the prism of rivalry between two imperial triangles: 1) the US, EU and Great Britain (as outgoing imperial projects) and 2) Russia, Iran and Turkey (as emerging imperial projects). Division of the spheres of influence determines the position of small countries that have become unwillingly involved in these global geopolitical relations.

The existential conflict in the Middle East arises at the go-and-go junction of these two imperial potentials. This model was proposed by the English historian A. Toynbee, when he was developing his concept of the role of the creative minority in the history of world civilizations [7]. The crisis in the United States "surprisingly" coincided with the crisis in the scientific thought of their geopolitical science. Western theorists actually found themselves at a fork in history and were unable to overcome the abyss of ideological singularity that had arisen before them [8-12]. Apparently, it turns out that Western creative minority, which was leading for a long time, did not cope with the challenge of its time and constantly gave out inadequate solutions to problems. This means that, according to Toynbee's Law, it should go away and allow others to decide and determine the current agenda.

Speculative geopolitics most often appeals to the limited sovereignty of acutely dependent of stronger actors countries in international relations. It was the destruction of the system of sovereignty that led to the fact that countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya practically ceased to exist as independent states. And all these processes are taking place along the perimeter of Russia and Iran borders, which makes us assume that an "arc of instability" has arisen around potential regional leaders. Such an "arc" is a kind of

"sanitary corridor" created by the global leader (USA), which understands that it is losing his world power and also turns into one of the regional leaders.

The instability of this region is also explained by the artificiality of the borders of states, which were conditionally designated after the fall of the Ottoman and then the British empires. And the setters of these "boundaries" were the Anglo-Saxons. Their policies, in essence, are the root causes of international conflicts, which this region of Eurasia is so rich in. It is the instability of borders and the unresolved nature of a number of national issues that shakes the countries of the Middle East.

It should be noted that the geopolitics of the Anglo-Saxons is built on the principles of provocation – they are masters of creating (designing) conflict situations. So, for example, the same A. Toynbee, who worked in the British intelligence during the First World War, proposed to plant a "delayed-action mine" in the Russian Empire - Galicia, with a hostile to Russia population. According to his plans, the political culture of Galicia was supposed to infect the rest of Ruthenia with its western "virus" and cause a conflict with Russia [13]. This topic is still one of the most painful, the most bleeding for Russia. The Middle East is simply stuffed with such "mines" and "traps", which are the task of the current generation of politicians to overcome.

In the early 2020s, the United States proposes to revise all these boundaries and establish new ones. The Anglo-Saxons are once again trying to change the rules of the game and create a favorable geopolitical alignment for themselves. The general meaning of this Washington initiative was redrawing the political map of the Middle East in order to once again appear as a magistrate. Moreover, the borders of the most dependent states were to undergo a significant transformation. Such proposals are capable to identify new zones of confrontation and exacerbate old conflicts.

Russian experts noted that whenever the role of Russia increases, chronic exacerbations of conflicts always occur on the perimeter of its borders (Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Nagorno-Karabakh, Transnistria), the purpose of them is to remove Russia from this region [14, 15] ... The world puppeteers are fulfilling a certain order to destabilize the situation and incite confrontation in the region of Greater Eurasia. In particular, all the concepts of the so-called "color revolutions" and projects for the transition of democracy (democratization) to authoritarian regimes are aimed at this. The US is particularly indignant at Russia's military presence in the region and Iran's active assistance to its allies. The official Kremlin noted that "the military presence of Russia in the Middle East managed to maintain the balance of power in the region, to act as a key guarantor of regional security" [16].

It is the sovereign policy of regional leaders that causes the greatest negative reaction from Western politicians. Conducted by Russia since the mid-2000s. multi-vector foreign policy ("Primakov's doctrine") [17], went against the interests of the collective West (the United States and its closest satellites). At the beginning of the XXI century. Russia and Iran have repeatedly been declared the main threats to US national security [18, 20]. And they will remain such a threat as long as the United States pursues its independent policy in this region. Such threats will disperse in waves in different directions, destabilizing the situation in neighboring regions, primarily in the regions of the Middle East, the Caspian and Black Seas ... [20].

3 Threats and conflicts of the south Caucasus

From the point of view of geopolitical cosmology, the South Caucasus has become a crossroads of two geopolitical triangles at once: (1) "northern" - "triangle of consensus" (Russia, Iran, Turkey) and (2) "southern" - triangle of confrontation (Turkey, Iran, Israel) ... Inside these triangles there are "hot spots" that escalate from time to time: 1) the Palestinian

problem; 2) the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh; 3) Syria and 4) the Kurdish problem.

The South Caucasus is the northern part of the Middle East region, where there is a clear confrontation between the three leading regional players - Iran, Turkey and Israel. The skirmish between them is being waged both in the Syrian and in the Karabakh arena, with the participation of their supporters and observers from outside. This conflict is taking place along the perimeter of the geopolitical borders of Russia and Iran.

The negotiations held from 1994 to 2020 on the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh problem did not result in a practical, fair settlement of the conflict. The "Kazan Formula" gave all the parties such security guarantees. But these agreements were not implemented. The collapse of the USSR began with the problem of Nagorno-Karabakh (1989), the problem of which was not resolved in a timely manner by the Soviet leadership. This conflict gave rise to a chain reaction of national conflicts on the outskirts of the Soviet empire and led to its collapse in 1991. It was from 1991 that an era of great losses began for Russia, from which it still cannot get out.

In 2020, the situation on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border worsened. Yerevan and Baku intensified their military actions on the line of contact in Karabakh. In September, the situation deteriorated so much that it was reported about the beginning of open hostilities, with the number of dead and wounded. It was the so-called "Second Karabakh War" (September 27 - November 10, 2020) in the fall of 2020. The hostilities continued for a month and a half. As a result, Armenia lost significant territories in Nagorno-Karabakh. Baku established control over the cities of Jebrail and Hadrut, Fizuli, Zangelan, Gubadli and Shusha. Thanks to Russia's intervention, the conflict was transformed into a peaceful course, and a corps of Russian peacekeepers was brought into the confrontation zone in November 2020. On December 10, 2020, Azerbaijani President Aliyev hosted the Victory Parade (*Zəfər paradi*) in Baku. In Azerbaijan itself, it is believed that this parade, which became the first Victory Parade in the history of independent Azerbaijan, has great symbolic significance, both from a political and historical point of view. At the same time, Turkish President Erdogan said that after Karabakh "Turkey will continue to fight" [21, 22]. This testifies that the war with Armenia was beneficial not for Baku, but for Ankara ...

Turkey unequivocally supported Azerbaijan and condemned the actions of Armenia in this conflict. The Arab world (represented by Saudi Arabia, Egypt, etc.) supported Armenia, attributed the blame on Turkey and Azerbaijan. Iran has also expressed its concern about Turkey's attempts to strengthen itself in the South Caucasus. In the beginning of the escalation, there was information about the participation of mercenaries in this conflict. The Russian Foreign Ministry, the CSTO, the Council of Europe and NATO called on the parties to the conflict to cease fire and begin negotiations. Martial law was introduced in both countries, and Yerevan announced a general mobilization [23]. Obviously, none of the warring parties can gain a strategic advantage. It means that there is no military solution to this conflict. But the projects of the "sovereign states" of Armenia and Azerbaijan prevent the parties to the conflict from reaching an agreement.

Baku cannot independently solve the Nagorno-Karabakh problem by military means, therefore, there is some other subtext in this conflict. In the aggravation of the Karabakh conflict, one can guess the "Turkish trace", which provides for a kind of passing move. Following the course of *"two states - one people"* (the slogan of Pan-Turkism in 1919), R. Erdogan supported Baku unequivocally and placed all responsibility for the military conflict on Yerevan. The speed of the reaction shown by Turkey suggests that: 1) It is beneficial for Turkey to aggravate the situation in the "East" (the Armenian-Azerbaijani border) in order to involve Russia in it, which, according to the CSTO agreement, will have to support Yerevan and thereby break off relations with Baku; and 2) it will untie Ankara's hands in the "West", where it starts a big game around Libyan oil, which has already led it

to a serious clash with France. By 2020, relations between Turkey and France have deteriorated due to the situation in Libya - Ankara and Paris were trying to draw "red lines" of their influence in oil-rich Libya, which caused a certain negative connotation in their relations. In an attempt to make Russia and France parties to the geopolitical conflict, Turkey is trying to prevent their rapprochement and joint actions against itself.

The formula "*one people / nation - two states*" used by Ankara and Baku is essentially more speculative than objective, which allows them to interpret and understand it in their own way. But there is a project of pan-Turkism, which Ankara purposefully pursues during the reign of R. Erdogan is behind all these actions [24].

The "British trail" that always hits the Russian world in the so-called "big game" can also be found in this conflict. London has historically played the role of a provocateur and, as a source of provocation, has always designed its participation in such a way as to act by someone else's hands and remain in the shadows. The secret services of the Anglo-Saxons are actively working in the countries of this region, maintaining tension in their relations. Geopolitics has always been a business for them. They derived financial benefits from these conflicts and their entire economic system existed through such practices.

So, for example, the geopolitics of the United States under D. Trump finally became a policy of high-profile deals with hard-to-understand meanings and favorable consequences for third countries. Trump promised the Arab world to make peace with Israel in order to jointly oppose Iran. Syria has become a bargaining chip in these transactions. The Syrian events are too well known to everyone and do not need our comments. But Anglo-Saxon transnational corporations were directly involved in all these conflicts. The collective West (the United States and its closest satellites) planned to carry out their globalization project by robbing third countries. But the geopolitical situation is developing in such a way that the "hunter" himself may be in the role of "victim".

The United States is particularly interested in the Caspian region, which is considered as a fallback platform for US Middle East strategies [25]. In this case, not only American, but also a NATO resource is used. It is known that even during the time of D. Bush Jr. (2001-2009), within the framework of the so-called. "Great Game", the US administration advocated the expansion of NATO's "Partnership for Peace" program with the countries of Central Asia and in particular in the field of anti-terrorist struggle [26].

The EU (primarily France and the Federal Republic of Germany) fails to play the role of a peacemaker. Wherever they try to take a leading role, the situation just gets worse. Only Russia has a trusting equidistant relationship with the conflicting parties. Its experience in resolving such conflicts has a positive history, which allows Moscow to act as an international negotiating platform. However, it is obvious that as long as Azerbaijan and Armenia exist in an independent format, the conflict around their borders cannot be resolved. The degree of mutual hatred will increase with each new drop of blood shed in this conflict. It should be recalled that the conflict itself flared up in 1989 during the systemic crisis that began in the USSR, although the very seeds of this discord were sown by the Anglo-Saxons in 1919.

Moscow also managed to reach an agreement with Tehran and Ankara on the Syrian issue. Their relationship on this issue can be characterized as situational cooperation. In Syria, it was Russia and Iran that played a key role in defeating ISIS. According to the head of the Russian Defense Ministry, in five years it was possible to completely defeat terrorist structures and resolve geopolitical issues that affect Moscow's interests. "Moreover, we can confidently say that the entire international terrorist underground has suffered significant damage" [16]. Russian military prevented the expansion of terrorist groups to neighboring territories. According to the Russian Defense Minister S. Shoigu, "more than 133 thousand terrorist facilities were destroyed, including illegal oil refineries, 865 gang leaders and more than 133 thousand militants were liquidated (4.5 thousand of them were from Russia and

CIS countries) as a result of strikes by the Russian Military Space Forces” [16]. The active phase of the Russian military operation in Syria lasted 804 days, from September 30, 2015 to December 11, 2017.

Obviously, this kind of situational partnership (when different countries have the same positions and interests at the same time) must be used in the regulation of political processes, especially of a conflict nature. And the countries of the Caucasus-Caspian triangle (Russia, Iran, Turkey) are still able to do this. The situation in this region may deteriorate significantly due to the growth of the so-called the Afghan threat that emerged in 2021 after the Taliban seized power in Afghanistan. Waves of geopolitical threats emanating from Afghanistan can easily reach the countries of the South Caucasus, if extremist organizations manage to seriously undermine the situation in neighboring Iran and in the region of Central Asia. The imposition of one conflict on another, the intertwining of threats, all of this can destabilize the relative equilibrium in the Greater Eurasia region and cause a new conflict of world powers.

4 Conclusions

Our general conclusion is that the South Caucasus region is one of the potential conflict zones of the large Eurasian space and the threats emanating from it can seriously destabilize the situation. It is obvious that until the countries of the South Caucasus acquire their full sovereignty and become capable of defending it on their own, this region of Eurasia will constantly be under the pressure of the struggle of the leading world powers. They will remain objects of the great geopolitical game. This region has already experienced the power of the “color revolutions” (Georgia and Armenia) and has already faced the challenges of globalizing its policies in favor of specific imperial powers [27]. But today such a prospect is low-probable due to the lack of the necessary resources. The geopolitical gravity of more powerful players of foreign policy will constantly pull the countries of the South Caucasus towards stronger centers. In addition, it should be borne in mind that we are now living in the era of the end of the Anglo-Saxon project (US domination) and the decline of the monopolar world. In addition, it should be taken into account that the era of the Anglo-Saxon project (US dominance) is coming to an end and the monopolar world is declining. This means that a new geometry of international relations and a new geopolitical cosmology are being born now...

Authors' contributions

The article has been written by a team of authors, all authors have taken equal part in the theoretical analysis of the problem and in carrying out the research.

P.L. Karabushchenko collected, analyzed and summarized the data, writing the original manuscript. A.A. Vartumyan made adjustments and considered the modern features of the subject under study, summarizing the ideas of Russian and foreign authors. T.A. Shebzukhova contributed to the revision and editing of the article.

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