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GEOPOLITICAL POSITION OF UKRAINE IN MODERN WORLD

The thing that is understood now as geopolitics has been existing since ancient times. However, the object of the research didn't have its own name. The term *geopolitics* was only put forward by a Swedish scientist Rudolf Kjellén in 1916. He understood it as a doctrine that considers a state to be a geographical organism or a space phenomenon.

The political events of the 20th century rapidly made this young discipline very popular.

After World War II geopolitics took on some new meanings: 1) a synonym for a geostrategy in solving specific foreign policy and military strategic objectives; 2) an equivalent of political geography to explain a zonation of both regional and global processes.

Traditionally geopolitics is viewed as a study about an impact of geographical space of states on their political goals and interests. Today it is interpreted more broadly as a study about relations and interactions of geographical space and politics.

According to Saul Cohen's model of geostrategic areas and geopolitical regions, Ukraine belongs to the category called *Gateways* that will play a role of leaders in communication between states stabilizing the geopolitical system of the world. *Gateways* are usually situated along the borders of geostrategic areas. The author of the model believes that in the process of becoming an independent geopolitical unit, a *Gateway*, as a conflict zone, turns into a zone of compromise development [2].

George Friedman, an American political scientist, forecasts geopolitical changes that may occur in the 21st century deeply analyzing current trends [3].

The USA seems weak now, but it is an illusion. American power is so great that the next hundred years will be the period of absolute rule of America. And the peak of it will be at the end of the 21st century. Weak-willed Europe will lose its importance, and Chinese growth will appear to be a soap bubble that will burst soon. The new stars like Japan, Turkey, Poland and Mexico will shine in the geopolitical sky.

Russia will gradually restore its control over the post-Soviet space not through the mobilization, but due to special operations in 2020s. But right after that Russia will finally fall and collapse unable to compete with stronger states. Turkey will extend its influence in the Caucasus and partially in Central Asia. This country will actively deal with the Crimea and Odessa, where its interests will face with Ukrainian and Polish interests.

Zbigniew Brzezinski pays a lot of attention to the problem of Russian hegemony and the need to reduce it in Eurasia. Analyzing the consequences of the collapse of the USSR, Brzezinski said that the most painful for Russia was the loss of Ukraine. The emergence of an independent Ukrainian state became a significant geopolitical failure to the Russian state. Independent Ukraine defines the borders of Europe anew. Assessing the importance of Ukraine being independent, Brzezinski emphasized that the very fact of its emergence is the 3rd historically significant event of the 20th century [1].

Besides, the independence of Ukraine deprived Russia of its dominant position in the Black Sea. The loss of Ukraine became crucial, because it radically restricted geostrategic opportunities of Russia. Even without Baltic countries and Poland, but with Ukraine Russia could try to become a leader of Eurasian empire confident in its power.

Brzezinski considers Ukraine to be the geopolitical center of Central and Eastern Europe that considerably influences the balance of power on the European continent as a whole. Ukraine is the geopolitical center, because its emergence helps to transform Russia. He noted that Russia is not the Eurasian empire without Ukraine anymore. Russia can still fight for the status of being an empire, but in that case it will be an Asian state that is more likely to be involved in conflicts with Central Asia. If Ukraine lost its independence, Poland would be automatically turned into a geopolitical center and would lose its desirable and unprecedented security.

Armed aggression of Russia against Ukraine is a long-term impact factor on the system of global and regional security, and the current system of international law.

Russia used the concept of hybrid warfare against Ukraine that is unique in many ways on the side of the structural and functional point of view.

Hybrid warfare is a desire of one state to subordinate another state with the help of political, economic and informational instruments. That's why combat actions are secondary under the hybrid warfare conditions. Information operations and other leverages come to the fore.

Russia tries to solve simultaneously some actual geopolitical tasks with the help of hybrid warfare against Ukraine. The first one is to get rid of a competitor in influencing post-Soviet space, because our country is the only one that has a potential to compete with Russian Federation. The second one is that hypothetical defeat of Ukraine would considerably demoralize countries in Central and Eastern Europe. The third one is that Ukraine used its opportunities received after gaining independence irrationally. The domestic national elite have used neither a unique transit potential nor the Soviet economic legacy nor the energy of Maidan 2004 properly. Moreover, Ukrainian foreign policy was inconsistent, so that Kyiv had much more developed relations with Moscow in early 2014, and there was no alternative agreement on military and technical cooperation.

Moscow is strongly and aggressively tuned to bring Ukraine back to Russian sphere of influence at any price. The Russo-Ukrainian conflict cannot remain without attention of the international community.

Ukraine as an independent state that has a great natural, economic, cultural and intellectual potential can make a significant contribution to the development of the world civilization and to the ensuring of international security.

If this potential is used wisely, Ukraine can become not a straggler, but a leading state in the region or even in the world.

Ukraine can really strengthen its position at the global level by structural modernization of the economy and large-scale integration into European institutions. The strengthening of strategic cooperation with the US and the development of partnership with Canada will also facilitate.

The formation of models of equal partnership with Poland and Turkey as powerful regional neighbors will be successful at the subregional level.

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