The Impact of Selected Countries' Geopolitical Codes on Global Cyber Security

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Abstract:

Purpose: *The aim of this study is to present the impact of selected countries' geopolitical codes on global cyber security. Despite the passage of time, the relationship between territory and population, already observed in antiquity, has remained constant and has not lost its significance to this day. The role of a state's territory in the conduct of politics has been recognised throughout history by many individuals ranging from ancient philosophers to prominent figures of a more recent past such as Napoléon Bonaparte. This outstanding military commander, who was Emperor of France, President, and King of Italy, spoke of the importance of territory for the power of any state. A state's geographical location has always been, and continues to be, significant. Moreover, the strength of its influence in the world is conditioned by the prominence and international standing of its leader.*

Design/Methodology/Approach: *The evolution of geopolitics has led to the emergence of a new dimension of threats. Based on scientific studies available in the literature, this work characterises, among other things, the influence of the Intermarium on Poland's geopolitical code and the current cyber threats faced by selected countries.*

Findings: *This study formulates the most important conclusions, which include, first and foremost, the need to maintain constant readiness to effectively counter espionage-related cyber attacks perpetrated by the Russian Federation and China. Furthermore, it has become crucial to strengthen security through alliances with states located in Central and Eastern Europe, in order to repel attacks by imperial states effectively in the event of armed invasion.*

Practical Implications: *The findings can support security policies in Central and Eastern Europe and guide NATO and EU actions, stressing the need to strengthen cybersecurity, build alliances, and prepare for long-term cyber and hybrid threats.*

Originality/Value: *This paper links classical geopolitical codes with contemporary cyber threats, showing how traditional concepts translate into new digital security challenges on a global scale.*

Keywords: *Geopolitics, geopolitical codes, security, cyber security, cyber threats, threats.*

JEL codes: *F52, F50, H56, O57.*

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1. Introduction: The Term "Geopolitical Codes"

The "valuation" of states refers to the assignment of roles and significance to all countries existing on our globe. In this way, the resulting map encompasses not only physical borders but also the mutual influences and correlations between countries worldwide.

Geographical location, continent, neighbouring states, population, political system, legal system, level of societal education, military capacity, economic resources, natural wealth, environment, ecology, and cyber security—all of these elements form geopolitical codes. Johan R. Kjellen stated that the study of the state should be based on spatial phenomena and geography (Wolf-Powęska, 1979, p. 112).

According to Sykulski, one of the important issues addressed in contemporary geopolitical thought is the interpretation of global space by intellectual elites. Representations are created concerning both nearby and distant geographical spaces—a kind of "geopolitical image"—which then serve as a basis for political action (Sykulski, 2009a).

The Western geopolitics scholar Flint proposed five main assumptions, presented in the form of the following questions, to enable a state to determine its geopolitical code:

1. Who are our current and potential allies?
2. Who are our current and potential adversaries?
3. How can we maintain our allies and care for potential allies?
4. How can we counter our current enemies and emerging threats?
5. How can we justify these four assumptions to our public and to the global community? (Flint, 2008)

Therefore, geopolitical codes are an important instrument for shaping public opinion, and their scope includes in detail:

a) models of the world (in time and space);
b) national myths (including historical myths);
c) views on the structure of the international order (Dijkink, 1999, pp. 293-299).

Flint, as an example of a contemporary geopolitical code, presents the "war on terror". He asserts that the terrorist threat allowed the United States to create a narrative justifying its "global role as a world leader, laying the foundation for actions against specific countries" (Sykulski, 2009a).

One of the key elements of this code was the creation of a list of "rogue states", which included Iraq, Iran, North Korea, and Sudan (Sykulski, 2014). This list of

"rogue states" is modified in response to changes in the policies of individual countries.

According to Potulski, every group and every political actor constructs its own "map of the world", which is a collection of its perceptions regarding its place and role in the world.

These perceptions provide a group-specific "map of the world" and thus constitute one element of cultural and political self-identification, serving as the means by which influential social groups define the state, the nation, and the world (Potulski, 2017, pp. 82-83).

In maintaining influence and control over space and territory based on international relations, it is important to conduct political dialogue between political leaders. Roschau indicated that power does not constitute an ideology, but to a certain extent is its antinomy, as in critical situations ideology must always yield to its pressure. In this understanding, war became not merely one of many possible tools, but indeed a fundamental instrument for implementing state policy (Wolff-Powęska, 1979, pp. 64-65).

However, one cannot ignore situations that generate threats and also serve as instruments for highly developed states to "appropriate the world". The impact of globalisation on security is very pronounced, creating a need to implement remedial measures in order to stabilise its condition whenever any threat intensifies.

Global security is a process of organised actions undertaken by all civilised countries of the world. In such circumstances, it is possible to build peace and social order, as well as attempt to control the evil that arises from the dishonest actions of one person against another (Majchrzak, 2021, pp. 477-478).

2. Shaping Poland's Position as the Intermarium

The assignment of roles and significance to states on the international stage allows for the creation of a strong, moderate (neutral), or weak state. This has a significant impact on how such a country is perceived by other states. Will they take it into account, or will they rather marginalise it? The significance of a geopolitical code has implications for world peace, the security of citizens, and broadly understood expansion.

The interpretation of the importance of a geopolitical code depends on the political establishment of the given country. Primarily, the values represented by a state's leader significantly influence the geopolitical codes assigned to that country. For example, deficiencies in the value system of a state representative—who often brings chaos, poverty, and violence to the country, promotes illiteracy, lawlessness based on authoritarian rule, or hegemonic practices—can have severe consequences.

Through such actions, society is driven into poverty, backwardness, marginalisation, and isolation from the world. In these circumstances, it is difficult to restore authority and the trust of others when inhumane treatment occurs and there is a departure from civilised values. Lawlessness undermines citizens' security, generating fear of unjust imprisonment or war.

Under such conditions, the scale of other crimes increases, including illegal trafficking in people, human organs, and weapons, as well as the emergence of mafias, gangs, and drug cartels. Such a state ceases to be functional, and its influence on neighbouring countries results in what is referred to as a "difficult neighbourhood".

In the tradition of Polish political thought, important "geopolitical images" include, for example, the vision of Poland as the "Christian bulwark of Europe" or as the "bridge between East and West". Both of these geopolitical codes were based on the political interpretation of geographical space within a specific historical period (Sykulski, 2009b).

This referred to the time when Poland was initially a great power, as, by virtue of the Union of Lublin, a federative state was created, composed of the Crown of the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The government at that time, under the leadership of King Jagiełło and Queen Jadwiga, was founded on numerous conquests supported by political successes.

However, prolonged wars ultimately led to Poland's loss of independence. From this arose the notion of Poland as the Intermarium—that is, Poland as a country situated between the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea, and simultaneously as the centre of a federation of Central European nations. The strategic interest of the state was to create a broad alliance of communities located in Central and Eastern Europe.

The purpose of this alliance would be to protect against the imperial ambitions of great powers and to create conditions for the free development of the region. In this context, Germany and Russia were defined as enemies, while Central European and Baltic states—threatened by the "imperial" policies of Russia and Germany—were defined as allies to be sought (Potulski, 2017, p. 84).

3. Geopolitical Codes of Different Countries and Cyber Threats

In view of the current of geopolitics, which should be future-oriented and assume scenarios of probable behaviour of allies and adversaries, it is important to verify the ongoing actions of those countries which, for various reasons, are global powers.

"Русский мир" (Russkiy Mir) is the idea underpinning the Russian Federation's unlawful armed attack on Ukraine. At the same time, Russia's adopted rhetoric serves as full justification and explanation, both to its own citizens and in the eyes of

the world, for the legitimacy of the brutal military actions undertaken. While threatening to escalate the war into NATO member states and to use nuclear weapons, Russia has intensified its cyber attacks.

Ukrainian banks and government websites became the targets of massive cyber attacks, the source of which was most likely Russia. Further attacks from this direction are highly probable, including against Ukraine's critical infrastructure. NATO states are also exposed to similar attacks (Szydłowski and Zaniewicz, 2022).

Between 25 and 27 December 2023, almost all of northern Poland and the southern part of the Baltic Sea experienced serious disruptions in the reception of GPS signals. The Polish Air Navigation Services Agency even issued a NOTAM warning for aviation. The causes of these disruptions are not officially known, but Joakim Paasikivi, lecturer in military strategy at the Swedish Defence University, told the YLE news portal that Russia may have been behind the interference with the GPS system in the Baltic region, with the aim of demonstrating its capability to conduct such operations.

According to him, the disruptions were a test prior to their use in a "grey zone" war or in hybrid warfare, particularly since they coincided with Russian exercises in the Baltic Sea. Problems with GPS were recorded not only in Poland, but also in Lithuania and Sweden (Kielak, 2023).

The foundation of contemporary Russian isolationism is the concept known as "Russia – the island" (Potulski, 2010, p. 177). Aleksandr Dugin assumes that Russia continues to be a global player, having an interest "in everything and towards everyone". This serves to emphasise Russia's distinctiveness as an autonomous civilisational and geopolitical space, which justifies its reserve towards externally imposed political and cultural models (Westernisation).

Russia appears in history as the "geographical axis of history" and the "heart of the world". Empire and geography are Russia's destiny and fate; without these fundamental values and guiding principles, Russia loses its unique identity (it will perish as a civilisational phenomenon). Without them, it cannot exist, and therefore the world should recognise this special Russian mission.

Russia aspires to save the world from the great danger of mondialism—that is, globalism assuming the establishment of a planetary state with an overt or covert world government, promoted in an increasingly aggressive manner by the Atlantic (mainly Anglo-Saxon) establishment (Дугин, 1997, 2004a, 2004b).

In contrast to the coercive actions of the Russian Federation, the Chinese are building a Eurasian bloc without any slogans of conquest or empire-building.

In their proposed version of globalisation, the following elements are emphasised:

    a) a multipolar world in place of United States hegemony;
    b) civilisational and cultural pluralism without imposing cultural Westernisation or Sinicisation on anyone;
    c) the absence of a universalist ideology under the pretext of which anyone might claim hegemony over the world.

According to this project, three great politico-economic-military entities would dominate Eurasia: China, Russia, and the European Union (that is, Germany). Eurasia would become a vast zone of trade and peace, since Beijing, as the dominant power over Eurasia, would safeguard peace and the preservation of existing borders.

This is because the project would encompass between 50 and 64 states, and a war in one place could immediately disrupt one of the routes of the New Silk Road and threaten the profits of all participants.

Poland would also be a major beneficiary of the project, due to its location on the Central European Plain, linking Russia with Western states (Wielomski, 2021).

Reality, however, points to a different face of China, which seeks in this way to become a global power and to make the world dependent on itself by securing access to various resources, including finance and information.

Adam Marrè, Chief Information Security Officer at the cyber security company Arctic Wolf (who served in the FBI and fought against Chinese hackers and spies), stated that Chinese hacking attacks are part of a growing wave of cyber attacks on high-level US government targets and critical infrastructure, preparing Beijing for a possible conflict with Washington and its allies.

Marrè considers that Beijing poses a unique challenge in the field of cyber security due to its size, resources, and its ability to own and control extensive telecommunications infrastructure worldwide, such as undersea cables and 5G telecommunications systems deployed by Huawei and other Chinese companies. Russia, Iran, and North Korea also constitute significant cyber threats, but they do not have access to these channels of communication on such a large scale.

For some time, America has been warning against the rise in activity sponsored by the Chinese state, both for domestic reasons and for geopolitical purposes based on espionage and the infiltration of infrastructure (Maciejewski, 2023).

According to The Washington Post, American officials and industrial security officials have stated that "the Chinese military is increasing its ability to disrupt key American infrastructure, including energy and water utilities, as well as communications and transport systems".

"It is very clear that Chinese attempts to compromise critical infrastructure are in part intended to prepare to disrupt or destroy that critical infrastructure in the event of a conflict, either to prevent the United States from projecting power in Asia, or to cause social chaos in the United States – to influence our decision-making process during a crisis," said Brandon Wales, Executive Director of the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) of the Department of Homeland Security. "This is a significant change compared with Chinese cyber activity from 7-10 years ago, which was focused primarily on political and economic espionage."

Morgan Adamski, Director of the Cybersecurity Collaboration Center of the National Security Agency, confirmed in an email that the activity of Volt Typhoon "appears to be focused on targets in the Indo-Pacific region, including Hawaii" (Nakashima and Menna, 2023).

The attainment by the United States of the position of superpower was a long process, marked by such important events as the successful conclusion of the Civil War, the turbulent economic development at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the First and Second World Wars, and finally the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The role of superpower, which fell to the United States, generates various temptations but also imposes requirements, such as the necessity of committing forces and resources on a vast scale in global trouble spots, and at the same time generates additional threats, such as global terrorism.

Amid all this, American politicians are aware that the way these challenges are overcome may have enormous consequences for the international order and the future of the world (Kiwerska, 2003, p. 3).

The United States has included a number of countries across the world in its geopolitical calculations, since for it all parts of the globe are equally important from a strategic perspective. In American rhetoric, policy towards individual countries functions as a matter of "national security" and the "mission" of the new world leader, previously in opposition to communism, and currently to terrorism.

The political codes of the United States in the period of constructing world leadership in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were as follows:

    a) Expansion – the key objective of US geopolitics.
    b) Basic control – over the Caribbean and the Pacific.
    c) Ideology – founded on anti-colonial rhetoric.

For the United States, a world leader must assert its presence and authority in all countries. In this way, it can create an environment in which the American system can survive and flourish. The "Washington Consensus" – that is, the idea that a

strong global economy enhances global national security by extending prosperity and freedom to the rest of the world (Sykulski, 2014, pp. 16-17).

The conviction remains unchanged that the United States must maintain military superiority, remain the strongest military power, as this constitutes the foundation of the security of America, its neighbours, and its partners, and is important for the stabilisation of different regions of the world (Skrzyp, 2013, p. 25).

Permanent protection against cyberattacks is necessary, since hackers with links to the Chinese authorities broke into the email accounts of twenty-five United States government agencies in May 2023. The victims of the cyber attacks included the Departments of State and Commerce, as confirmed by US government officials.

The Washington Post reported that the hackers broke into the email account of the Secretary of Commerce, Gina Raimondo. They also gained access to the private correspondence of several high-ranking officials from the Department of State.

4. Conclusion

The presented influences of the geopolitical codes of selected states on global cybersecurity indicate the necessity of resisting the power of influence and the global subordination to imperial states that apply social isolationism within their own countries, namely the Russian Federation and China. From these states comes the dangerous phenomenon of espionage and cyberattacks.

This was clearly visible in the actions described in the article that preceded the armed attack on Ukraine. These states currently constitute a real threat to the world, since both China and the Russian Federation possess considerable influence and significant military potential, as well as hacker networks with high skills and a wide range of technical solutions.

In conclusion, further intensification of the subordination of the world to the influence of the Russian Federation and China is anticipated. The threats of the use of nuclear weapons by Russia point to the exceptional importance of geopolitics and geostrategy, particularly in the case of the countries neighbouring Russia.

The war in Ukraine magnifies the scale of the threat to the security of other states. It is evident that the United States has a decisive impact on the security of tomorrow on a global scale, regardless of how the relationship between the United States, the European Union, and NATO develops.

In this situation, reflections on geopolitical codes should remain an element of further discussions, observations, and research.

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