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## The People of the Earth - The New Rules of Geopolitics

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**Abstract:** The article aims to provide an objective picture of the new rules of geopolitics and universal values. As we can see, globalization will come to influence all aspects of our daily lives, on all levels: social, economic, ideological, ecological, etc. The main methods used in the study are observation and case study. The article highlights in a unique way that each country/nation will undergo drastic transformations. As we learn from the specialized literature today, geopolitics is dominated by the issue of ecology and energy, the fact that we are referring to an intangible heritage, which must be protected. The contradiction between the interests of the people and those of the ruling classes is embedded in the tension that often pits relations between states against the common interest of humanity. The article is important and valuable for students, scientists, researchers and more, because it provides a clear picture of the changes that are taking place globally and a possible perspective on the future.

**Keywords:** crisis; geopolitics; future; resources; globalization

### 1. Introduction

#### 1.1. Giving and Receiving

For the first time in human history, we form a single society, with a unified culture through electronic communication, travel, television, commerce. Also for the first time we are united by the same political issue: that of the ecological crisis. We discover almost at the same time that the Earth was fragile or, rather, that the dynamism of human action was likely to disrupt its admirable regulations. And that this disruption could, in the long term, threaten the very pursuit of the human adventure. The idea did not take hold instantly. It took several decades. The Western crisis of the 1970s, born of the oil shock, was a crisis of energy resources, erupting after the ecological alert had been launched. But the ecological problem was not sensitive in what was then called the Third World. Today, the crisis that began in 2007 manifests the globalization of the ecological crisis: it is becoming perceptible across the globe, and its relationship with economic imbalance can no longer be ignored. Ecology is no longer just a “white man’s burden” or a “rich man’s concern”, it is becoming everyone’s business. A sign of this is the turbulent but real peace that reigns at the start of the 21st century, and which contrasts with the terrible violence of the 20th century. These resulted from the unleashing of new powers that the industrial revolution had brutally revealed to men, after ten thousand years of hesitant Neolithic progress. The amazement caused by the atomic explosion in Hiroshima has brought the aggressive energy of humanity back into its bed. It then focused on production, trade and enrichment. But the peace between men was concluded at the cost of the diversion of violence on nature. We must therefore change, otherwise we will see this violence accumulated in the bruised biosphere turn unchecked against humanity. The

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prevention of climate change, the containment of epidemics, the measured withdrawal of natural resources, all call for the exercise of a collective reason that overcomes instinctive rivalries, accumulated frustrations and ancestral mistrust. A reason that must be transmuted into an experience of solidarity, which constitutes a planetary culture, capable of enriching the cultures of each without impoverishing any. „Achieving the civilization of the universal, wrote Léopold Sédar Senghor, at the *rendez-vous* of giving and receiving” (Senghor, 1977).

## **2. The New Rules of Geopolitics**

The contradiction between the interests of the people and those of the ruling classes is embedded in the tension that often pits relations between states against the common interest of humanity. The traditional game of interests, as old as the kingdoms, empires and states established from the Neolithic revolution, confronts them with each other: each wants to extend its power or simply defend its prerogatives against a neighbor considered threatening. This interplay of influences and balance of power, this compromise between trade and military force, this wobbly harmony between religious passion and the desire for peace determine the geopolitical situation of the world.

But the planetary ecological crisis is transforming the traditional logic of international relations: the common peril calls for a common response. Whether it is climate change or the spread of uncontrollable epidemics, all will suffer – all suffer, each in turn hit by drought, heat waves, floods, nuclear accident. The economic dependence born of globalization ensures that a major regional event will reverberate along the international chains of trade and exchange.

This logic of compulsory solidarity, before being chosen, counterbalances the reason of classical geopolitics. But no one can predict whether the selfishness of nations or oligarchies will ultimately tip the balance in favor of rivalry leading to violence. There will also be many states that want, like a stowaway, to take advantage of the efforts of others while refusing to do so for themselves. But the planetary ecological crisis changes the game: against the cold reason of State asserts the vibrant reason of the future of the world.

## **3. Universal Values**

The point where this common reason applies is the atmosphere: since 1992 and the Convention on Climate Change, it has fueled an intense, arduous, often disappointing planetary negotiation, bristling with bumps and folds, but which does not have nevertheless become the main arena where the countries of the world meet. The other negotiations address important but partial issues, while those that claimed to have a universal vocation, such as the discussion on trade, are permanently bogged down. The question dominating world diplomacy remains that of sharing and managing the atmosphere with regard to climate risk.

What is it about? Of a common good. On which any appropriation in the form of greenhouse gas emissions in a proportion greater than that of others appears to be illegitimate and questionable.

Other common goods will emerge as the energy contradictions sharpen: the oceans, the Arctic, the Antarctic, space, money. The difficulty arises from the fact that it is the West which has most widely theorized the universal, and often to claim a particular superiority: „We are superior, he seemed to say

during the thin interval of time that the great divergence lasted, and it is because we know how to think the universal”.

Isn't there then, in the call for urgency to act together against a threat which, undoubtedly, will require difficult efforts from all, a new avatar of Western colonialism, which would find at the time of its decline this lifeline to prevent others from joining it? But time has passed, the great convergence is underway, The West is falling into line. As Gandhi said ironically when asked what he thought of Western civilization, “I think that would be a good idea”.

The universal problems are indeed such, they are not those of Western countries. However, they will only convince of their sincerity if they make the explicit choice to reduce their share of ecological space by reducing their material consumption.

„Global universal values are not given to us, writes Immanuel Wallerstein; they are created by us. The human enterprise of defining these values is the great moral enterprise of humanity. But we can only hope to achieve this when we are able to go beyond the ideological perspective of the powerful in the direction of a real common appreciation of what is good. This presupposes a much more egalitarian structure than what we have built so far” (Wallerstein, 2006).

What undoubtedly constitutes universal values? The commons. And what does a reasonable use of the commons entail? A fair sharing, decided by all, and preserving their sustainability. In other words democracy, at the planetary and local levels, since it would not be legitimate for a State to claim an equal right to the common space if, within it, it organized an inequitable sharing of resources.

Democracy is not a Western value – and all the less so since the West has allowed itself to drift towards an oligarchic regime, retaining only its external forms of democracy, the elective institution in particular, when the reality of power slid to the finance masters. It is a living aspiration both among Westerners stripped of their freedom to act and among poor peoples tired of suffering the exploitation of their own rulers.

Let us hypothesize that the Neolithic era, which favored institutions with a pyramidal power system, and during which democracy was only an always imperfect exception, is a parenthesis in the political history of humanity. „In the Palaeolithic, for several tens of thousands of years, bold thinkers argue, democracy was the normal condition of human societies, as evidenced by the organization of many hunter-gatherer societies” (Baechler, 1994).

The entry into the biolithic era would then mean, compared to the Neolithic era, a new state of politics, in which human societies would invent a generalized democracy, of the local – subjected during the Neolithic era or simple field of state rivalries. This new state of the political would mean the regression of the hysterical individualism at which capitalism attained in its final phase and the adoption of the values of solidarity and community which subsist in many poor countries.

But another universal value is at stake in the global politics of the commons: what the West calls “nature”. Since the 16th century, European culture has developed a representation of the world separating the human mind from all non-humans, who would be devoid of any interiority (Descola, 2011).

The success of the industrial revolution was based on this vision of a dumb material world that could therefore be exploited at will. We know the result of this gigantic operation, which not only led to the ecological crisis, but endowed humanity itself with such a power of transformation on the environment that it has become, if we believe many scientists, a geological force, ruining by the very success of

its philosophy of sealing between man and nature its founding principle. A natural force, man can no longer be thought of outside of nature.

This dualistic philosophy seems to have gained the threads of other traditions, since China or Japan, for example, do not act on the environment with less brutality than Westerners. We will no doubt have to, in the biolithic culture which will aim to adapt the technique to the rhythms and the integrity of all living beings, redefine a cosmology which, if not, makes room for the qi (the breath), for the spirit, to interiority, to consciousness, to essence – to the thousand words with which humans have designated for so long what was the world and what was in the world, and what was not them without their being for so foreign.

A cosmological proposal, which for some years has received an important echo, opens the way to planetary dialogue which will not only concern common utility but also the meaning of the whole. „With the idea of Mother Earth, formed by the peoples of the Andes, the break with Western modernity is affirmed: nature is not valued there according to its usefulness, but as a bearer of own values. In this sense, nature and society are not alien to each other” (Gudynas, 2012).

A new perception of what is called nature cannot fail to lead to spirituality, so largely repressed by the modern world. Economic disorder, ecological destruction, ostentatious rivalries are also the expression of a spiritual crisis that seems general. The United States is giving way to the self-justifying hysteria of a Protestantism proclaiming it to be the chosen nation of God and owing nothing to anyone. Europe is distinguished by an atheism so militant that it becomes dogmatic. The Muslim world exacerbates its religious expression, as if failing to find a place in the world that is not aggressive.

We cannot ignore here the danger of religious passion, which has too often encouraged war conversion and bloody quarrels, when it did not become a pretext to seize the wealth of the other, the agent of a power dispute. The necessary reduction in material consumption will not only result from an approach of reason, but also from a questioning of materialist values. It will not fail to extend philosophically. Planetary culture will no longer refuse dialogue between beliefs.

#### **4. The Center of Gravity of the New Geopolitics**

In any case, the peoples will have to confront their interests and their aspirations, and geopolitics will be dominated by the energy question. It has two aspects: first, access to existing and new resources, in a context of progressive depletion of fossil fuels and rising energy costs.

Humanity finds itself in a paradoxical situation: we have too much fossil energy. If we want to avoid warming above 2° C, we will have to limit, by 2050, the volume of carbon dioxide emitted to less than 1000 billion tonnes. The quantities of oil, gas and coal accessible at an affordable cost represent far more carbon dioxide than this ceiling. Consequently, if we want to limit global warming, we will have to limit the consumption of oil, gas and coal.

There is therefore a major contradiction between the objective of affordable energy to maintain economic growth and that of climate balance. “This situation creates a divergence of interests between countries without fossil resources and those who have them. The former must spontaneously reduce, through taxes and regulations, their consumption of fossil fuels. But by adapting their economy in advance at a cost higher than that of the instantaneous market, they weaken themselves relative to the countries which remain at the market price. As for the countries with fossil resources, they benefit from

the rise in prices, whether through external income or through the low price of their internal consumption” (Prévoit, 2010).

In doing so, the holders of fossils behave like free riders, i.e. they benefit from the efforts of the former to reduce their consumption, without themselves reducing their greenhouse gas emissions. Countries deprived of fossil resources should therefore argue the climate risk to weigh on those who have them.

But if all countries fail to moderate global consumption, the race for resources will increase, while climate change will increase. War will then become a realistic hypothesis.

A hesitant behavior between the two constraints – more expensive access to resources and the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions – under which conflicts would remain controlled is an equally realistic assumption.

In this case, the countries that would be best placed to tackle the world of tomorrow would be those that have the least amount of fossil fuels. They would indeed be the best prepared to undertake the actions that will sooner or later prove essential to countries with carbon energies when they disappear.

Energy-efficient countries would therefore ultimately benefit, as a result of the development of technical skills or culture, or probably a mixture of the two. Those who will best master new energies – from the sun, the wind, biomass, geothermal energy, the seas – would also benefit.

The situation creates a logic of new alliances: countries without fossil fuels have an interest in uniting to adopt a policy of prevention of climate change, in the face of fossil countries which will also suffer from climate change, but will be tempted to maximize short-term profits from the sale of oil, coal and gas.

## **5. The Bright Future of Europe**

“The European Union is a heritage of humanity, it no longer belongs to Europeans alone. Whenever elsewhere in the world we talk about regional integration, we look to the Union” (Paranagua, 2011).

It is that after being torn apart in bloody wars and inhuman abominations, she was able to find herself again and begin to realize the millennial dream, born in Rome, of union. But a union that is not uniform, capable of combining nations and cultures in a common project while retaining the identity of each, of merging identities “without confusing them”, as Umberto Eco says (Eco, 2012).

It has a vital quality for the future: „it consumes relatively little energy relative to its economic power, half as much per capita as the United States. Europe has another advantage: it has almost no more fossil fuel reserves. Its energy dependence would increase from 50% in 2010 to 70% by 2022” (Eurostat, “Consumption of energy”, Eurostat, <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa>.) It is therefore obliged to adopt a vigorous policy of energy savings and the development of renewable energies, in other words to cultivate the values of sobriety and efficiency which will be the economic qualities of the future. This same sobriety will strengthen its diplomatic position in climate negotiations since, being forced to make a virtue of necessity, its energy saving policy should lead it to significantly reduce its carbon dioxide emissions.

Successive treaties have endorsed the freedom of finance: monetary creation left to private banks, ban on the European Central Bank lending to States, prohibition imposed on them to limit the movement of capital, rule of unanimity in matters taxation – which encourages fiscal dumping – disproportionate

power granted to the Commission, which is not, however, an elected body. In reality, the Union has gradually been handed over to the financial system.

The other major question facing Europe is that of its energy and ecological policy. We have seen that betting on sobriety will put it on the path to the future. But we must consider the geopolitical consequences of this option. The first concerns Russia: it is culturally and strategically part of Europe. She delivers most of her gas to him. This immense country is, of course, in the hands of one of the most ferocious oligarchy, but it remains a privileged partner, and probably more so, of Europe. How, in particular, to work out with him a common ecological and climatic policy?

Another aspect of Europe's particular situation is that its energy poverty creates for it a common interest with developing countries, with emerging countries lacking energy resources and with Japan: these States, in fact, have everything to fear of climate change, and everything to be hoped for from new economic and technical instruments making it possible to do without fossil fuels. This new logic of alliance is all the stronger because if Europe has old links with the peoples of all continents – we know the cause – it is no longer a threat militarily. The strength of Europe is its energy and warlike weakness. But it carries the democratic ideal – albeit dangerously wounded -, an invigorating cultural plurality, a desire for peaceful and ecological union that can echo in the hearts and intelligence of many men around the world. There is a path of progress between Chinese authoritarianism and American brutality.

This leads to a political choice that a Europe freed from the financial oligarchy should assume: turned towards the world, it must distance itself from the United States from which so many things now separate it. It defends social solidarity, it integrates the logic of climate change, it is moving towards energy saving, it consumes less, it does not project itself into a disproportionate and threatening military apparatus. If the United States does not change, Europe has little to do with them.

## **6. In the United States, Subsidence or Chaos**

The United States was the strongest. They are still the champions in computing and biotechnology, it is true. Their demographics are dynamic. They have immense resources, with gas and shale oil. This allows them to postpone the deadline.

Yet this most powerful society in the world, and arguably in human history, is gravely ill. „She is sick of having too much of everything, as evidenced by the staggering number of obese people in this country: more than a third of the adult population, according to statistics from the official health service. Obesity has a simple cause: we eat too much. In the United States, we eat too much. We consume too much, we throw away too much, we pollute too much. It means a society of waste” (Ogden, 2012).

The United States has another problem. They proclaim and perceive themselves as a country guaranteeing freedom to individuals. Taught to eat and consume too much, they are damaged by television – which they watch for more than four hours a day on average – which floods them with advertisements and programs designed to keep them in mediocrity. The school accustoms them to obey from an early age. Debt keeps them more firmly anchored to respect for order than any chain: the total indebtedness of students exceeds 1000 billion dollars – a young person who starts life with a debt of 30,000 dollars cannot take the risks rebelling and losing his job. The overall household debt exceeds 10,000 billion dollars, or 33,000 dollars per person, including old people and babies. The poorer classes are firmly held by a record incarceration rate.

The people of the United States are prisoners of the oligarchy, of the masters of Wall Street. In no other country in the world do billionaires have so much money or so much power over politics and the media. They are also the most reactionary, the most determined not to let go, the most cynical. The same people who finance the pharmacies spreading doubt about climate change support the Tea Party.

The end of American democracy can be dated: in January 2010, the Supreme Court decided to no longer place a limit on the sums that a company can pay to a candidate or a party. The Citizens United judgment held that companies have the same right to freedom of expression as citizens. In the United States, supreme justices believe that an elephant weighs as much as a mouse.

The United States seems culturally stuck on the American way of life, which moreover shale gas and the oil sands allow it to support somehow, the price of energy has now increased, even if it is at the price of the devastation of its territory and the significant emissions of methane. And if Americans don't change their way of life, why wouldn't Indians, Chinese, Brazilians and other inhabitants of the planet want to imitate them?

The United States poses another problem. They are heavily armed. There are nearly 300 million firearms in the United States, almost as many as there are people. And the country is endowed with the most powerful army in the world, its military budget weighing almost half of the military expenditure of the whole world. This budget reflects the weight of the military-industrial lobby, interested in maintaining a permanent level of conflict. According to some analysts, „these interests want a conventional adversary and they believe they have found it in China” (Lagadec, 2012).

This daily psychology of violence, the strength of media control, the weight of the military, all mean that the temptation will be great for the oligarchy of the United States to respond with violence to the problems which can only worsen. . The United States becomes a risk to peace. But perhaps they will tear themselves apart. Or will they change to embrace happy sobriety.

## **7. Conclusions**

### **„What fools despise...”**

Rich countries must reduce their material consumption, this idea is at the heart of this book. But the great convergence means equality, and therefore the sharing of responsibilities. The emergence and liberation from guardianship create new duties: the future depends on everyone.

It is striking, moreover, to see how similar the issues are between so-called countries of the North and the South: the ecological shock, the increase in the cost of resources, the slowdown in growth, and, key to everything, a generalized inequality which hinders to the necessary policies.

History advances, with a force proportional to the energy of 7 billion humans, who are so many creative intelligences, linked together and expanded by more than a billion computers. A new world begins.

Scientists tell us that the geological period during which the Neolithic took place was the Holocene, a time of climatic stability favorable to the development of agriculture. The power of action developed by humanity from the industrial revolution has made it a geological force, and some geologists and climatologists explain that we have now entered a new period called the Anthropocene.

Will we live it with the mentality of the Neolithic, conquering and brutal, efficient and destructive? Who could lead to the ruin of civilization, this civilization today total? Or will we invent the biolithic, in accordance with the rhythms of life and the resources of the Earth?

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We know enough about the future to know what to do in the present. „The future is the best adviser, said a wise Frenchman, madmen disdain it.” (*Pensées et maxims*, Malesherbes, Guillaume-Chrétien Lamoignon). But we humans are not crazy...

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