

The 21st Century Janusian Geopolitics

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You cannot make an omelet without breaking eggs. In my opinion, this old saying reflects today's reality. Taking into consideration that 21st century pandemonium puts geopolitics in a very delicate position. After all, in a very strange way, things happen the same way as they happened before, and at the same time, everything is so different. In a few words, this oxymoron could be explained by the following way. The same situations appear again and again, but the international's community reaction differs, either partially or completely from the past. For historians, the example of a world pandemic like the COVID19 virus is not something new, coming out of the blue. Without any doubt, Black death, and the Spanish influenza deeply affected humanity, many years ago, as the SRAS virus did in 2003 and COVID19 virus is still doing now.

Since the dawn of humanity, the key factor of our civilization has remained the disruptive technological innovations, changing dramatically the way of life of billions of people all over the world. And even much more. They affect everyone's perception of reality. There is no doubt that time, space, quantity, and quality are not anymore understood the same way, as they used to be, ten or twenty years ago.

Fishing with my son in South France in 2019 summer, confirmed my intuition, in a very funny way. No more than one minute after start fishing, my son asked me if something was wrong. "*Where are the fishes dad?*" For him, fishes were "*too slow*". For someone like me, on the contrary, used to go fishing for half a day with my grandfather thirty years ago, with a small boat in the Aegean Sea, this commentary sound weird. I had to explain, again and again, that fishing needs a lot of time and patience. And a lot of luck indeed!

This is just an ordinary example of big changes already occurred and the ones that are about to take shape progressively within the years to come. Let us try to decipher another very simple empirical example. Watching the French news on TV, on July 5th, 2021, it is obvious

that a part of the population is quite reluctant for getting vaccinated against the COVID19. What a paradox, in the country, where, in 1885 Louis Pasteur invented the first vaccine ! And since then, vaccines are largely used all over the world, saving millions of lives every day. Strange though to be, everybody knows that diseases like polio, measles, or smallpox practically disappeared in countries where vaccination is obligatory since a young age. And millions of French are getting vaccinated every year against influenza, without any problem.

One of the main arguments against vaccination in France is that until now, two or even more years were necessary to develop a new vaccine. And as far as the COVID19 vaccines were developed in such short period of time, "*they are not so sure*". This sounds quite amazing. Revealing that time perception is indeed of vital importance. *How is NOT possible to accept the fact that thanks to modern technology things go faster and faster nowadays ?*

During Louis XIV reign, the trip between Paris and Versailles was taken about four hours. It is just 14 minutes by train today. At the same time, high speed cookers can help us earn a lot of time, especially, if we invite friends for a dinner after a very long day at work. *Why do we accept that modern technology helps us doing things faster in those two cases, and not in the case of the COVID19 vaccines ?*

This puts perception of the technological evolution in the heart of the 21st century geopolitics. A low rate of acceptance of technological innovation could undermine both economic growth and the impact of new technological applications within the years to come, as well as our own way of life. Most civilizations went to decline mainly because of internal problems. And this one seems so important that we should not underestimate it.

In the meanwhile, the big power geopolitical game continues as usual. USA, Russia, China, UK, France etc. continue to dominate the international scene, relying on their economic, military, technological, and cultural superiority. Just look to the GDP of the G8. It represents a big chunk of the world's one. But the goal now is not anymore just to control a territory, a Heartland or a Rimland. But rather to focus on domination on high tech segments with a very strong potential, like 5G, IoT, nanotechnologies, smart cities, Big Data etc. and contributing, in such a way, to the emerge of a new type of geopolitics: the high-tech ones. Considering that innovation rate is still accelerating. What was modern two years ago, seems quite obsolete today. This is exactly what happens, for example, about smartphones camera resolution. As a result, the high-tech geopolitical struggle between big powers could remain a hot potato issue for the years to come. Exactly the same way, the US-Soviet space race used to be, a few decades ago.

However, this does not mean that old style geopolitics are dead. On the contrary, they are much more alive than we think. China, recently celebrating the 100 years of the Communist party, continues to emerge as a big power, looking for expanding its influence worldwide,

especially in Europe and Africa, in the post-COVID19 era. Russia's geopolitical poker game looks marvelous. A real state of art in terms of efficiency. From Syria to Ukraine, and from Moldavia to Georgia, Moscow is pulling the strings to extend its sphere of influence. This is a big classic in terms of geopolitics. Including the new law allowing only to Russian sparkling wines to use the term of *champagne* and not the French ones ! Combining military action, when necessary, provocation, and diplomacy in a very efficient way. Then, Turkey applies a quite expanding geopolitical strategy. Using military force simultaneously in many different fronts in Syria, Iraq, Libya, Eastern Mediterranean etc. And finally, the USA is back to the basics. Trying to redefine its role and priorities with its allies and competitors, especially in Europe and southeast Asia.

All this gives the impression of a geopolitical déjà vu. But at the same time, we are not the same as we use to be. As already mentioned previously, technology has changed our way of thinking and our priorities. This is the reason why I believe that the Roman god Janus fully represents the first two decades of the 21st century. It seems that in terms of geopolitics, we navigate in uncharted waters, because we do not really know whether old recipes and practices still function, and, above all, if we still really want to use them again, or try something brand new. In my opinion, this is a *how to make an omelet without breaking eggs* geopolitical situation. Perhaps, Moon's colonization could be a big chance for humanity to take a step forward, towards a new direction. One way or another, after Heartland theory geopolitics, and high-tech geopolitics a new era of lunar geopolitics is about to start. Perhaps sooner than we think. Under these circumstances, a new way of geopolitical theory and practice could emerge, sooner or later. Combining the benefits of the technological innovation and the ideological background that goes with, with already efficiently proved traditional ideas and practices. Thus, maintaining a *yin & yang* style balance of power, allowing to humanity to thrill all over our solar system. Let's cross our fingers for that.

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