

**Assoc.Prof. Gordan Radić**

Victoria International University Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Email : [gordan.radic@live.co](mailto:gordan.radic@live.co)

**Assoc.Prof. Dragan Mišetić**

Dr Franjo Tuđman Defence and Security University, Zagreb, Croatia

Email: [dragan.misetec@sois-ft.hr](mailto:dragan.misetec@sois-ft.hr)

DOI:

Research Paper

Received: February 12, 2024

Accepted: March 27, 2024

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF GEOPOLITICS AND IDENTITY OF UNDERDEVELOPED COUNTRIES IN RESOLVING CRISES IN THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY**

**Abstract:** *The generic nature of conflicts in the world is causally and consequently related to the instabilities that are most pronounced through economics, politics, the formation of a new geopolitical identity of peoples, dependence on sources of natural energy sources, international law, security and other areas. At the same time without neglecting historical, geographical, ethnic, sociological and other factors. Crises and crises initiated by instability in today's international relations should be viewed multidisciplinary. Theoretical approach, analysis and explanation in many ways can give some common determinants for conflict situations in general, primarily for the purpose of avoiding or overcoming them. Underdeveloped countries, as a weak geopolitical factor in the international community, have limited decision-making options in the same. This paper deals with the specifics of such countries in resolving conflict situations in the international community.*

**Keywords:** *underdeveloped countries, crises, international relations and security,*

### **Introduction**

The consideration of the causative agent and the subsequent resolution of the conflict irrefutably has its main reflection in the economic field. The disproportion of development between the highly developed and the underdeveloped, the weak economic situation of the vast majority of the population and the high unemployment rate in underdeveloped countries are part of the characteristics that generate conflicts by the appearance or interaction with other factors. The disproportionate spillover of material goods through various economic and social measures give a distinctive reflection within which proclaimed equality on a global scale does not have a stable foundation. Apart from the possible fact that the economy was the basis of misunderstandings, it can also be a guiding principle that, either favorable or unfavorable circumstances, leads to prevention and exit from the crisis. The character of a particular situation is given by the political context as a complement to the economic point of view by which conflict situations can be constantly encouraged or mitigated through the political-institutional apparatus. The international legal

aspect has proven to be an authoritative instrument in combating crisis situations in cases where generally accepted international regulations apply. However, it also occurs as a means of coercion that generates conflicts.

### **Underdeveloped countries and the impact of crises of international proportions**

The international community as a geopolitical identity can undoubtedly be a source of instability because many members do not recognize the resolution of their spheres of interest in the context of satisfying the fundamental rights of international subjects. On the one hand, the instrumentalization of this factor is recognized, which is practically reflected in decisions that often have the character of resolving disputes according to the views of certain groups of countries. On the other side of the view, observations go even to the extreme where the international community is thought to initiate conspiracy theories against certain peoples or countries. Nevertheless, in a multi variant analysis, preventiveness in finding a peaceful solution to the conflict and the possibility of acting by military force greatly gives this factor a guarantee of survival.

According to the Miroslav Krleža Institute of Lexicography, geopolitics is a political and geographical term that has several meanings:<sup>28</sup>

- political expression of geographical determinism with the notion that the soil on which a people lives has a decisive influence on the forms of its social structure;

- state or any other political activity based on a certain understanding of the geographical content of international and social relations and spatial-political relations within them;

\* research approach in political geography and in the study of international relations, focused on politically significant geographical elements such as the size and location of the territory, natural resources, territorial-political relations, demographic features and the like. Geopolitical are also called those aspects in various philosophical, political science, literary and other works that show the interdependence of some geographical and political content.

The term geopolitics was updated by the Swedish political geographer Rudolf Kjellén at the end of the 19th century. Kjellén was inspired by the German geographer Friedrich Ratzel known for his 1897 edition of his "Politische Geographie" ("Political Geography"). The term geopolitics was further popularized by Robert Strausz-Huppé an American diplomat (Sri Lanka, Maldives, Belgium, Sweden, NATO, Turkey) and during his lifetime a full-time member of the University of Pennsylvania.<sup>29</sup>

Taking into account the reconceptualization of geopolitics, any analysis of it must necessarily be more than a strategic analysis of national communities and the reflection of modern theorists and doyens of geopolitics. From the geopolitical point of view of large countries, primarily the United States, the global

---

<sup>28</sup> [Books with a good reputation – Geopolitics | GISKO \(unios.hr\)](#)

<sup>29</sup> [www.geopol.ba/geopolitika-se-vraca/](http://www.geopol.ba/geopolitika-se-vraca/)

picture of the world is characterized by certain types of places, people and dramas.<sup>30</sup> Such positions significantly point to the general behavior of the great powers in geopolitical relations where they clearly support the thesis that reads "Politics is nothing without geography".

Global instability and crisis situations in all areas of human activity have multiple impacts on underdeveloped countries. International relations and the arrangement of globally strong countries, especially those of the G7 members such as the United States of America, Japan, Germany and the United Kingdom, have not yet been sufficiently founded and accepted to be the basis or guarantee in the normalization of international relations, whereby the subjects of the international community would be elementally satisfied with the existing system. History shows that such an indefinite system has always led to larger-scale conflicts in which underdeveloped countries have become even poorer. Economically, underdeveloped countries have a lag behind highly developed countries that is difficult to reach in a short period of time.<sup>31</sup>

Underdeveloped countries geographically, gravitate to "turbulent areas": the Middle East, the Southern Rim of the Caucasus Highlands, Central Africa, Central Asia, Southwest Asia, parts of Central and South America which explicitly and implicitly places them as generators of crises or dependent subjects in crisis areas. The security-defense point of view through this context has a great effect, because significant funds of the already modest state budgets of these countries are allocated for security and defense resources. Crises are considered and become more difficult when countries do not have important global players-allies, do not belong to alliances or do not have globally important mineral resources or raw materials.

It is quite clear that the identity of the state in international relations represents its contribution and value in the redistribution of overall or world opportunities on one of the development plans. Underdeveloped countries are not capable of matching technologically developed countries in this sense with their economic capabilities. For this reason, their overall domestic and foreign policy is adapted to the requirements of first the community or alliance to which they are acceptable, or from whom they have more interests, and only then to their own potentials that develop mainly in certain areas. In the current relationship of forces at different pressures, there are moments when even underdeveloped countries get "five minutes of fame" either through a short-term role or are given importance over a longer period of time. This situation comes to the fore in crisis situations, when the geographical position wholly or part of the territory of an underdeveloped country has a crucial significance in achieving the goals of a community of states, associations or alliances of states or an overall solution to a problem, regardless of whether it is a national, state or religious issue. These questions are understandable is the question of identity.

The fate of less developed and/or underdeveloped countries is reflected in the fact that their influence and significance in international relations is thus stronger if they adapt better to their dominant processes. This undeniably implies positive participation in them. Appropriate adaptation allows less developed and underdeveloped countries to become more of a subject and less an object of international relations in accordance with the objective limitations that these categories of countries have.

---

<sup>30</sup> Tuathail G., Dalby S., Introduction to Geopolitics, Political Culture, Zagreb 2007, page 114.

<sup>31</sup> Milašinović, R., Conflict Prevention Opportunities, Proceedings of the Faculty of Civil Defence, Belgrade 2002, page 47.

The crossroads of the decision, when an underdeveloped country is placed on one side or the other, is a question of the survival of its geopolitical identity and the tracing of the way forward, that is, the moment when an underdeveloped country has to make a decision on the future direction or accession to alliances. In practice, the issue of the alliance is also the issue of securing its own interests directly or indirectly, which reflects the importance of a concrete moment, although underdeveloped countries serve primarily as an object when distributing interest zones of great powers. Regarding the preservation of their own interests and attempts to eliminate crisis situations, underdeveloped countries therefore apply various methods to depreciate their shortcomings and vulnerabilities (the so-called "Achilles points") of their own elements of statehood. The most characteristic are:

1. The role of the buffer zone in conflict situations.
2. Partnership with highly developed countries.
3. The role of the subject during a state of crisis.
4. Concessions in a geopolitical context.

Ad. 1. Underdeveloped countries can be in a situation of buffer zone between alliances, warring states or even parties to the conflict, spheres of interest and even economically dependent international entities. One historical example of a buffer zone is Luxembourg which was created to distance France and Germany from each other. Some countries such as Afghanistan were founded to play the role of buffers between Russia and India which was first colonial and later as a neocolonial state, was and largely remained under English influence. The former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, despite being a member of the "Non-Aligned Movement", was also a buffer zone between the then Western and Eastern Blocs on the Balkan Peninsula.

Ad. 2. The partnership of underdeveloped countries with highly developed countries not only means a simple sum of activities carried out on a multilateral level, but also affects it with feedback. Not infrequently, the accession of an underdeveloped country to an alliance can affect the balance of power in the redistribution of interests, which automatically puts the underdeveloped country on one side or the other. Giving consent to states to join the alliance can also lead to internal conflict in the alliance, which complicates the attitude and development of policy towards an interest issue. In such, often behind-the-scenes, political activities, underdeveloped countries can gain a lot, but also lose. While the great powers of the alliance increase political power, it provides underdeveloped countries with the opportunity to pursue significantly greater interests than they could if they were not members of that alliance.

Ad. 3. As a subject in balance, underdeveloped countries may have a certain negotiating position in order to find themselves as an "objective host" in the negotiations of the parties to the conflict and by actively participating in solving the problem, significantly improve their geopolitical identity in the international community. Within the framework of the setting between the parties to the conflict, not always thinking only of war conflict, their decision to take sides or positions, one or the other, can sometimes significantly prevail for one side or the other.

Ad. 4. Concessions in the geopolitical context of an underdeveloped country can be used when the great powers express their demands (part of the territory regarding the establishment of military bases,

participation in the blockade of the borders of the neighboring country on which pressure is exerted, etc.). With these "concessions", the specified category of countries may acquire certain privileges:

- placing goods in certain markets;
- a reduction in the import rate for certain goods from the market;
- training of personnel in certain segments;
- various lobbying to achieve some goals for underdeveloped countries;
- infiltrating direct investments in the economy and the like.

The highlighted circumstances in which underdeveloped countries may find themselves as balances of power at the crossroads of events in the international community significantly declare a view in security terms and determine: (a) direct or indirect significance for security at regional level; (b) guidelines for placing security potentials on one opponent's side; (c) guidelines for accepting collective security instruments and shared responsibility for possible solutions by forming a common strategy, and (d) the possibility of being attacked as a member of one 'party to the conflict' through armed and non-armed force.

The importance from the point of view of defence can be seen through: the provision of resources, infrastructure and geospace in order to achieve activities in the field of joint defense and the use of all available potentials with the possibility of participating in preparations for the missions of one of the parties to the crisis or the reception of their troops and support in the fight against transnational threats.<sup>32</sup>

In essence, each underdeveloped country has its own geopolitical or geostrategic significance that can have a positive or negative effect from time to time. The increase in the importance of underdeveloped countries can be increased through:

- Accession to full membership of associations, unions or alliances at regional or global level;
- Gradual involvement in the process of establishing security zones in the environment in order to reduce the possibility of crisis outbreaks;
- Continuous establishment of bilateral and unilateral relations with neighbors;
- Development of defence capabilities for the purpose of collective defence;
- Improving relations with the most important actors on the world stage (USA, UK, Russia, China, Germany, France, Japan, etc.).

With this approach and the achievement of smaller and then strategic goals, it achieves: strengthening identity and sovereignty in the process of globalization, further building suitable conditions for the development of national identity, ensuring continuous upgrading of the state of national security and creating optimal conditions for economic and social development.

Economically speaking, underdeveloped countries can be significant because they have cheap raw materials and labor. If they do not have any significant strategic raw materials or a favorable geostrategic position, this can have a crucial importance for entering the international market with an organized

---

<sup>32</sup> Host Nation Support Programme – NATO.

approach to the development and signing of bilateral and multilateral agreements, and the availability of trade organizations at the global level.

The historical-geographical characteristics of the location of underdeveloped countries also affect their present situation. Many of the countries that we can describe thus, were members of the Non-Aligned Movement as Burma, the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and others, and there are those that emerged from the collapse of the former Soviet Union as Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and others. The characteristics of these countries are that they are most often located on the borders of former Warsaw Treaty and NATO member states, so with the disintegration of one bloc, they began to lose their importance as a buffer zone. In the example of Montenegro, North Macedonia, Albania, it can be seen that the only significant remaining alliance in the world accepted them and directed them through various programs to the status of full member. It is evident that this opened wide doors to the paths of independent democratic development, integration processes with other countries (e.g. the European Union and NATO Alliance), but it was also a suitable ground for the development of crises, especially through the influence of capital from highly developed countries that thus created economic and social movements of countries from this oeuvre. In this case, underdeveloped countries gained significance visible through the prism of redistribution of spheres of influence and had the good fortune, or misfortune, to belong to the former countries that colonized them.

Combining this "subordination" with internal and external factors and events in a country that is in the process of transition, underdeveloped countries were significant for highly developed countries due to: conquering the market, i.e. placing finished products in these countries, exploitation of economic goods, privatization of former economic giants, utilization of the natural environment, use of cheap labor and the like. However, openness to the rest of the world and the benefits of development within a part of the international community alleviates extremely negative views, so underdeveloped countries using their current significance and "interest" of highly developed countries differently use current aspirations and strive for a more favorable future in order to realize their own interests as a driving force on the international scene.

To get out of the crisis situation and subsequent development, activities can be carried out in several directions:

- Regional cooperation and connectivity;
- Sustainable development without conflict;
- A joint appearance against asymmetric threats.

Sustainable development without conflict implies a balanced relationship between economy, security, energy needs and environmental security. It also implies the rule of the rule of law and the pursuit of democratic prosperity. Conflict prevention should be as close as possible to the three-dimensional ideal-theoretical model of conflict prevention, i.e. the model of synergy.<sup>33</sup>

---

<sup>33</sup> Dautović, K., *Prevention of Conflicts in International Relations*, Diran, Travnik 2007.

Joint action against asymmetric threats implies an act against terrorism, production and use of nuclear weapons as well as against the disposal of nuclear waste. Joint action is also necessary in the fight against organised crime and corruption, the production and use of narcotic drugs, arms and human trafficking. The joint appearance of the underdeveloped and developed is necessary both in the preservation of the human environment as well as in preventing further destruction of nature.

## **Conclusion**

Insufficiently strong international subjects are susceptible to various harassment and processes of destabilization and disintegration that they try to master independently, with the help of the international community or countries of the near and distant environment. Sublimating the historical, geographical, political, economic and security-defense problems of underdeveloped countries clearly indicates that they are dependent on the international community and highly developed countries, but also that their absorption power is not great in accepting new values, as a result of which transition periods last quite long. Failure to find authoritative solutions for democratic development established on the foundations of a market economy results primarily in economic, and on the basis of that other dependencies, as a result of which there is a spiral development of negative consequences for these countries. Most often this is characterized as: socio-political dependence, economic, technical-technological and the necessity of joining one of the security alliances. Democracy and transition offers many options for these countries, and accession to one of the alliances or associations is conditional. We conclude this paper with the thesis of the world-renowned journalist, analyst and political reporter Tim Marshall presented in his excellent book entitled "Prisoners of Geography" that geography shapes not only history but also destiny. He argues that in an increasingly complex, chaotic and connected world, countries' natural characteristics influence their strengths and weaknesses and the decisions made by their leaders.

## **References:**

1. Dautović, K. (2007). *Prevention of conflicts in international relations*. Diran, Travnik.
3. Milašinović, R. (2002). *Opportunities for conflict prevention*. Proceedings of the Faculty of Civil Defense, Belgrade.
4. Tuathail, G., and Dalby, S. (2007). *Introduction to geopolitics*. Political culture, Zagreb,
5. Marshall, T., (2021). *The Power of Geography*. Ten Maps That Reveal the Future of our World.
6. [www.geopol.ba](http://www.geopol.ba)
7. [abcgeografija.hr](http://abcgeografija.hr)

## ZNAČAJ GEOPOLITIKE I IDENTITETA NERAZVIJENIH ZEMALJA KOD RJEŠAVANJA KRIZA U MEĐUNARODNOJ ZAJEDNICI

**Sažetak:** *Generička priroda sukoba u svijetu uzročno-posljedično je vezana uz nestabilnosti koje su najizraženije kroz ekonomiju, politiku, formiranje novog geopolitičkog identiteta naroda, ovisnost o izvorištima prirodnih energenata, međunarodnom pravu, sigurnosti i drugim područjima. U isto vrijeme ne zanemarujući povijesne, zemljopisne, etničke, sociološke i druge čimbenike. Krize i krizna stanja inicirane nestabilnostima u današnjim međunarodnim odnosima trebaju se promatrati multidisciplinarno. Teorijski pristup, analiza i objašnjenje u mnogo čemu mogu dati neke zajedničke odrednice za konfliktne situacije uopće, a primarno u svrhu njihovog izbjegavanja ili savladavanja. Nerazvijene zemlje, kao slab geopolitički čimbenik u međunarodnoj zajednici, imaju ograničene mogućnosti odlučivanja u istoj. Ovaj rad obrađuje specifičnosti takvih zemalja pri rješavanju konfliktnih situacija u međunarodnoj zajednici.*

**Ključne riječi:** *nerazvijene zemlje, krize, međunarodni odnosi i sigurnost*

### About the authors

*Assoc.Prof. GORDAN RADIĆ*, a law graduate and then a Master of Laws degree from the Faculty of Law, University of Mostar. He received his PhD in management in the topic of the Greek debt crisis at the University of Herzegovina. From 2013 to 2021, for two terms, he served as dean of the Faculty of International Relations and Diplomacy at the University of Herzegovina. At the University of Modern Sciences – CKM, Mostar served as acting rector. Author, co-author and reviewer of several books, scientific papers, articles and participant of a large number of round tables and forums of an international nature.

*Assoc.Prof. DRAGAN MIŠEVIĆ*, graduated from the Faculty of Economics in Mostar under the mentorship of prof.dr. Sc. Frano Ljubić. Further education in the field of economic sciences continues with the mentorship of prof.dr.sc. Marin Buble in obtaining a master's degree, and with the mentorship of prof.dr.sc. Vinko Kandžija in obtaining a doctorate. In his previous career, he connects theoretical and practical principles of economics and management through engagement at the Faculty of Economics of the University of Mostar and Vitez University. In addition to scientific work, he works in the public sector (Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and in several economic entities in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Croatia. Permanent court expert in the field, economy, market relations and finance, and bankruptcy administrator for the territory of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. He has published several papers in the field of economic sciences in domestic and foreign scientific and professional journals. Participant of various conferences and professional consultations of an international nature.