



SPECIAL REPORT

UNDERSTANDING OUR GEOPOLITICAL MODEL

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Every single day the media reports many events that do not have geopolitical significance. To help you better understand how we decide whether or not an event is geopolitically significant, we've pulled together this special report.

At Geopolitical Futures, we really have no stand-alone pieces. Everything we write is interconnected as part of a global narrative. Each day our paid readers receive at least one analysis. The purpose of this daily feature is to distinguish things that matter from things that don't. It is not a decision we make lightly. It begins with a unique understanding of geopolitics, one embodied by the forecasts and net assessments that live permanently on our website. We then use strategic intelligence methods of collecting and evaluating information to track and challenge these forecasts and net assessments. Everything we write flows from this methodology. It is what we use to decide whether or not an event is important.

The simplest definition is that broad geopolitical shifts are taking place that, over time, will change the way the world works. The way we understand geopolitics is very different from the ways others interpret it. For most people, it is a term used interchangeably with "international relations." For us, it is an integrated way of looking at the world. It begins with place and the constraints and possibilities of geography. Geography defines the kinds of communities we have, from

small independent villages to vast nation-states. An Eskimo lives a different life than a Parisian who lives a different life than a Paraguayan. The Arctic is not a European city, and can't compare to a South American country. Differences in place define much of who we are.

Any place consists of multiple dimensions. The economy is necessary to feed people. Politics are essential for internal organization. The military is needed for war-making and defense, technology for managing nature, and culture for defining everything from community to beauty. All of these are components of geopolitics. Three things shape these components: first, constraints of place; second, the degree to which the various systems interact to create power in all its dimensions; finally, surrounding communities – their power, their fears and their desires.

These taken together create imperatives and constraints. Imperatives are things that must be done for a community to survive and prosper. Constraints are things that cannot be done. Imperatives and constraints are rarely aligned. Sometimes things that must be done can't be done. Each nation struggles to align the things that must happen with the things that are impossible, to the extent reality permits.

Thinking of a nation in terms of imperatives and constraints allows you to compare the relative power of nations. This power is always asymmetric. Some nations have greater economic power, others greater military power and so on. In this grand scheme, the individual is profoundly constrained. The fall of a prime minister rarely matters on the scale at which we work. We are interested in what changes the world – and the simple fact is individuals only rarely do so.

This methodology (and this is a limited overview) allows us to predict the interactions between nations and to forecast the

likely outcome of these interactions. This allowed us to forecast that the European Union would not sustain itself past its first financial crisis, and that Russia would re-emerge and conflict with the United States in Ukraine. It allowed us to forecast that the U.S. and Iran would reach an understanding about their roles in the region, and that U.S.-Israeli relations would cool. It allowed us to predict that China could not maintain its growth

Our Geopolitical Model

Geopolitical Components

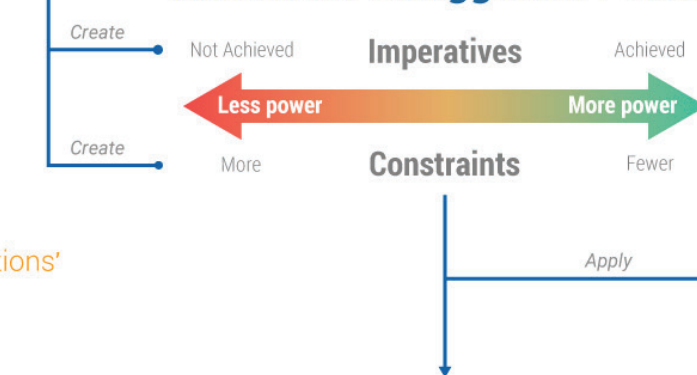
Geography Dimensions

- Economy
- Politics
- Military
- Technology
- Culture

Surrounding nations'

- Power
- Fears
- Desires

A Nation's Struggle for Power



Strategic Intelligence

Collect and evaluate information about political, economic, military and cultural forces

Determine whether or not events are important

Continually challenge the model

RESULT

Can discern which parts of the world can significantly change the global reality
Can predict the likely outcome of that change

Analytical Output

Net Assessments

The foundational analysis that takes snapshots of the geopolitics of a particular region or nation at a particular moment in time

Informs Deep Dives, Forecasts and Daily Analyses

Deep Dives

An in-depth study of global developments

Forecasts

25-year and annual forecasts to understand how events evolve over time

Draws on the net assessments for specific analyses of the imperatives and constraints of the world's most important actors

Daily Analyses

What matters versus what does not

rate, and that the result would be a political and social shift, first to dictatorship and in the future, we think, to fragmentation.

All of these forecasts were contained in what we call “The Model.” The Model is the summation of how the imperatives and constraints we have identified confront each other at a global level. The Model tells us two things. The first is what parts of the world can significantly change the global reality. The second is it predicts what the likely outcome of change will be. So, for example, at this moment, the Model is noting that Eurasia is in the process of massive degenerative change. The European Union is failing on multiple levels. Russia is both increasingly aggressive in the short run and fragile in the long run. China is struggling to cope with a massive shift in its economy. The Middle East is redefining itself after the collapse of its European-imposed borders. From this we can also forecast that Central Asia will destabilize, caught between various forces. Finally, the U.S. and North America, unlike Eurasia, are stable in most respects and increasing in power.

We use two analytic tools to reach these conclusions. One is called “Net Assessment,” a term taken from the Department of Defense’s Office of Net Assessments. It is a difficult term to define, but our Net Assessments serve as snapshots of the geopolitics of a particular region or nation at a particular moment. The second is our Forecasts, both the 25-Year Forecast and the Annual Forecast for the coming year. Both are necessary in order to understand how events evolve over time, and both draw on the Net Assessments for specific analyses of the imperatives and constraints of the world’s most important actors.

Intelligence is another oft-used and misunderstood phrase crucial to our work. Strategic intelligence is the way we collect information. Unlike other forms of intelligence, such as operational or tactical, strategic intelligence does not begin by

building from the bottom. Strategic intelligence deals not with secrets but with political, economic, military and cultural forces that are visible to the naked eye. The challenge of strategic intelligence is to both see and understand the obvious. Learning to believe what you see – however preposterous it may appear – is far more difficult than it sounds.

The purpose of detailed intelligence is to destroy or change the Model. The Model's danger is that it becomes a totem, worshipped by all. The purpose of detailed intelligence is to force us to adjust or abandon the Model.

To return to our initial question: What matters ultimately is the condition of the Model. We are continually writing updates to the Model that confirm or falsify it, and in the latter case, we make adjustments and explain why. Having a defined view of the most important processes changing the world, we produce updates (not articles or stories but analysis) that focus on these areas. We also constantly search the rest of the world for areas of potential significance, or for things that we may have missed.

So, if you read our Forecasts and Assessments, you will understand the Model. Then, if you read our Deep Dives – our updates on the model – you will see them evolve. Most things in the world don't matter and sometimes several days go by without impacting the Model. Those events or processes that affect the world as expressed in the Model are what matter.

Mission Statement of GPF

The mission of Geopolitical Futures is contained in its name. Geopolitical Futures understands the world through the rigorous application of geopolitics: the political, economic, military and geographic dimensions that are the foundation of a nation. The imperatives and constraints contained in these define the nation. We study first the past and thereby understand the future. At its core geopolitics assumes, as does economics, that events are governed by these impersonal forces and not by individual whim or ideology. Geopolitical Futures is rigorously non-ideological. Our staff may have their personal beliefs, but they must check them at the door.

We therefore strive to be objective, not merely neutral, but indifferent to the opinions swirling around the world. We have one underlying belief, which is that liberal democracy can survive only if there is a segment of society, which we call the learned public, who is not caught up in the passions of the moment, but is eager to look at the world as it is, and influence the polity toward the prudence that flows from understanding. It is this learned public we serve with the methods we have developed. Above all, Geopolitical Futures is an intellectual undertaking, an ongoing experiment in finding order in the apparent chaos of the world. We are a business that lives the life of the mind.

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