Stanley D. Brunn [1]

GEOPOLITICS IN A TOPSY-TURVY WORLD: TEN FUTURISTIC PERSPECTIVES

Abstract:

The paper is based on the following: my studying, teaching, writing and experiencing political geography and global geopolitics for half a century, from my experiences traveling in nearly 80 countries on all continents, from teaching in more than two dozen countries (large and small in the Global North and the Global South) on five continents, and from my professional career interests studying human and human/environmental futures (Brunn 1974, 1981, 1984, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2015, forthcoming). All of these personal and professional ingredients are essential in addressing the topic for this topic because I think it is important for everyone looking at local, regional or international geopolitics to know "where the author is coming from" and "where we are going or where we might be going."

Permit me to make three points at the outset, which are woven into the discussion below. First, the year is 2016, it is not 2001 or 1989 or 1968 or 1948. Second, it is important in looking at geopolitical futures to look forward, not backwards, about what might be the

[1] Stanley D. Brunn, PhD., Prof. at Dept of Geography, University of Kentucky, Lexington, USA, e-mail: brunn@uky.edu

"state and the shape" of the political world.   And in that perspective to explore some "new and different" worlds about what "might or could be."   Third, the future is and will not simply a repetition of the past, much as we might think it is or hope it is.   There are new actors on regional and world stages, new approaches to seeing a problem, new technologies and from those some new political and geopolitical realities.

Key words: geopolitics, future, hot spots, world.

Introduction

In writing about the worlds of the future and future worlds, there are a number of ways to proceed. One would be to take a detailed, careful and critical look at "what is going on" in the world today. This approach would be sort of a reflective "state of the world" assessment. Such a perspective certainly has merit as it would primarily be based on a critical analysis of present situations and events. A second approach would be to look at major contemporary geopolitical events in specific regions and also what might be or is on the agenda of the United Nations, which is the best forum from which to view the international political arena. In early 2016 this approach would call for examinations of political, economic and cultural events in the Greater Middle East (from Morocco to Turkey to Central Asia), in eastern and southeastern Europe, in South Asia, East Asia, Sub Saharan Africa, Central and South America and also the U.S. These regions have "hot spots" of events reported in major international newspapers and international television networks and internet providers. A third approach would address some specific contemporary topics on regional and global scales today; this focus would certainly have to consider transborder refugee flows, boundary conflicts, terrorism, non-state militias, emerging epidemics, declining global stock markets, lower oil prices, unexpected environmental changes, global arms trade and international economic development

agendas. Realizing that each of these has merit, I decided to integrate all these themes into an overriding focus on the "dynamics of the current geopolitical worlds." I identify what I consider ten major features of these worlds.

This thinking just expressed leads to the title of this paper: a "topsy-turvy world." What this phrase connotes in English is a world in which there is a certain amount of dynamism, disruption, unpredictability, uncertainty and unevenness. "Topsy-turvy" actually reflects an "upside-down" world, not an even, orderly and predictable world. One observation about the current world is certain, viz., there is not "one" direction the world is moving or trending, but it is moving in "multiple directions" simultaneously and sometimes with both expected and uncertain results or impacts. Political leaders of all political philosophies, ideologies, experiences, personalities and persuasions, as well as many who advise them (many who probably look backwards more than forwards into the future), are and remain uncertain *what* is going on *where* in many cases. They are often uncertain *why* certain events and processes are unfolding *where* they are occurring and *what* those changes will mean in the immediate and short run for the many *"wheres"* on the world geopolitical map. Insecurity and unpreparedness are part of this "geometry of uncertainty" that perplexes many leaders and advisors. Forget about the long run (next ten or twenty-five years) at this point, because the world is probably best viewed as "many forks in the road ahead."

Students of geopolitics and regional specialists on the world condition do not need to decide today which "fork or road" or which "forks or roads" to take in discussing geopolitical futures. The "roadmaps" for the future will have different sizes, shapes, names and projections than the present; that is a certainty.

Roadmaps into the Future

Below I address ten points that I think are important in describing, analyzing, predicting and understanding topsy-turvy worlds. The three major features underlying these topsy-turvy worlds are *speed, networks or connectedness, and place or placelessness* (Castells 1996). All have an impact on the major features discussed below. I present salient features of some emerging worlds as I wish to guide readers into thinking about future worlds and use their imaginations to think what these mean for places and regions and peoples they have intimate knowledge. These are not presented in any specific order, as all merit our attention.

1. **Boundaries Are Important and Not Important**.
The world's nearly 200 states are living with the Westphalian legacy of nation-state boundaries. Whether we like it or not, this "bounded or territorial world" is a reality, and a perplexing legacy, that we face in today's world where technology, mobility and knowledge makes traditional ways of looking at boundaries almost obsolete, or if not obsolete, than certainly outdated. The planet's residents live in a

world where *boundaries make a difference* and *where they do not*. Boundaries can be closed, bounded and fixed features or they can be open, porous and mean virtually nothing to those entering or leaving. Many cross both kinds of boundaries daily at work, for work and to work (Schwartz 1986; Everard 2000; Duranske 2008). Think about the flows of legal and illegal refugees who are fleeing oppression and repression in Central America and Southwest Asia. And those we don't hear about in Central and Southern Africa? Do refugees know what physical boundaries mean? And also think for a moment where (countries) they are *not* going or entering, not even in small numbers? Very interesting is the list of major political world powers where refugees know they are unwanted, unwelcomed and not tolerated. At the other end of the spectrum are transboundary environments where one crosses with ease. There are no boundary markers, no state customs agents, and no physical barriers. Unlimited and barrier-free movements are hallmarks of much of the EU, as we know today. Boundaries can also make a difference for three other economic groups, viz., (a) business investors looking for good "safe" tax havens, (b) corporations seeking to remove trade barriers for the export of raw materials and finished products and (c) those engaged in illegal sales (drugs, military products and human trafficking). International trade barriers are in many cases as nationally protected as those state boundaries are in the EU. Hindered by the many "rich country protective trade barriers" are poor and geographically disadvantaged

(those landlocked or with short coastlines) countries in the Global South. Finally, in this discussion on boundaries we cannot forget the worlds of social media where users of the internet, iPhones and other personal electronic communication devices are changing not only human relations, but the importance of boundaries. Many refugees carry cell phones as these are essential not only for contacts with homes they left, but for human survival in new spaces they move and interact. More on this topic below.

2. **Human Mobility as a Basic Human Right**.

The world's states, let alone the world's leaders have never reached agreement on this important point, but it might in the near future. The basic question that arises in a world where the global exchange of global information about many subjects increases dramatically each year is whether human mobility might also be considered a "right" in the same sense as access to quality food, housing, living standards, health and security.   The United Nations has long expressed concerns about human rights. In point of fact, refugee issues were important in its founding.   But those rights as now expressed by states and organizations are tied to a given territorial space or, as was just discussed, state boundaries. Defining one's rights basically means that we are addressing moral concerns (Smith 1994, 2000; Lee and Smith 2004).   And moral concerns relate to values.   Sometimes when observing what is transpiring on the world scenes with respect to human mobility (economic opportunities or fleeing repression), one

might question where "morality" concerns are expressed, especially when responding to a crisis, whether it is a religious or ethnic conflict, a major natural disaster, a new disease outbreak, a refugee population or a prolonged famine. One could certainly make the case that mobility and migration issues are a major concern today for much of the EU and Central America. Perhaps those concerns, at least expressed by political leaders, are more in word and law (for example, carefully constructed nuanced words) than in actual daily practice (those who are seeking asylum). Rights are tied to space and boundaries. How governments and citizens respond to these pressing legal and human rights issues will reveal much about our "moral" stance with respect to others (insiders and outsiders). If all individuals sought to move *when* and *where* they wish, the result would not be massive cross-border migrations because most people would remain where they are, as they do now. Regardless what social scientists might have us believe with their studies emphasizing cross-border migration (perhaps even an obsession with migration rather than permanent places of residence) and volumes of published studies on migration processes and migrating people, what is important to know is that most people on the planet do not move; that is, they have and wish to retain strong ties to place and to family, land and local traditions.

3. **Religion as a Vastly Understudied and Understood Topic**.

One could make a very strong case that religion is a major catalyst for conflict in today's world. This statement would not be hard to document in looking at South Asia, Southeast Asia, Central Asia, the Middle East and even parts of East and Central Europe and Sub Saharan Africa. And these conflicts are not only military, but also appear in civil discourses in the Global North. I would also submit that religion has been a major source of conflict in many regional and global wars in the past, not only in eras of European exploration and discovery, but in post-colonial decades and in post Cold War regions. I suspect a close reading of history and political science texts would also reveal that religion was a major ingredient in many of these conflicts. Having said this, I maintain that religion is not a subject studied seriously, or taken seriously, by those studying diplomacy, conflicts, governments, laws and international relations. It is a subject "shunned" by many scholarly communities in the West (and perhaps elsewhere), perhaps because many scholars themselves are not religious oriented or think that it is not a serious factor important in understanding a region's or country's deep or recent history or even its contemporary culture and political events. Without a background in religion institutions or religion in history and society, elected leaders and of those in diplomatic corps are bound to make blunders, mistakes and gaffes, some serious, about interpreting what is actually transpiring. A case in point is the number of Foreign Service personnel

and even ambassadors in Europe and North America who probably knew very little or nothing about Arab culture, Shia and Shiite religious factions, historical and contemporary Islam, before 2001. And I suspect those "gaps" remain today in our understanding or misunderstanding about the growth of Pentecostal movements in Africa, emerging religious communities in China, secularization in Latin America and Europe and the Islamic diaspora fueled by petroeconomies in the Middle East. A focus on religion and culture as an integral part of international diplomacy training would help all countries recognize the importance of this vital cultural element in the political world. A serious study of the religion/culture/politics intersections would also likely mean one would have to face or confront some of the morality issues raised above.

4. **Conflict as Exceptionalism**.

Perhaps this topic should be placed at the start of this presentation or perhaps it should be listed near the end. What I am suggesting is that political analysts studying geopolitics and international relations need to place in some perspective what is going on in historical and contemporary political worlds. Those professional scholars and leaders who seek to keep abreast about what is going on in the world today could and might assume that the world indeed has always been and is really a topsy-turvy and confusing world. It could easily be described as a place of endless and understandable chaos with regular reports in the print and visual media about civil wars, bombings,

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terrorist acts and plots, non-state militias, assassinations, cross-border conflicts, clandestine and violent drug cartels, military threats, rigged elections and verbal threats by populist leaders. These are among the topics that "make news" and feed the frenzied international thinking that the world indeed is in terrible shape and getting worse. All these events and news reports, visual and narrative, however, need to be kept in some global perspective.   Given that there are nearly 200 states, large and small, on the world political map, only a small fraction, a very small fraction, are ever are mentioned in the regional and global news on any given day as experiencing some violent political action or military event. From my perspective there are weeks that go by with few or no reports from some regions and more than that for many countries. That is, they are not "newsworthy" in a world experiencing or reporting state or interstate violence. Perhaps the reasons for the absences of such reporting is that reporters are "not there," which may be the case. If there are no reporters to cover a sensational or newsworthy violent or military act, then presumably there is "no news." Is this really true? I do not think so. What we do know that the geographical distribution of print and visual reporters for any major global or continental newspaper or television news organization is very, very uneven. Some regions have many reporters within their "reporting territories," such as the Middle East, Europe, North America and East Asia and other regions, including most of Africa, have very few. Under-reporting does not mean nothing is

happening (Mayer 2002). Rather it just means that what is happing there is determined by someone (a gatekeeper or a person/office that makes decisions what to report) or some organization as not deemed worthy of informing readers and viewers. Perhaps decisions are made about "what is newsworthy" from the perspective of the Global North or rich countries and regions, not the world's poor regions. I make this point because the kinds of violent, sensational and catastrophic news portrayed in major newspapers and on tv screens around the world are exceptional, atypical or unusual events, even if they are excessively violent. Certain regions dominate "bad or unpleasant news" coverage more than others (Campbell and Power 2010). Forgotten amidst the global reports and reporting are the daily stories where people live together in harmony, raise families, celebrate holidays, live civil lives, enjoy neighborly hospitality, attend worship, sporting and music events, and express love in many different ways.

5**. Geopolitical Visual Branding**.

The point has been made by a number of social scientists that the world we live in a world where speed and fluidity are keys, but also that it is a "visual" and highly visual world. It is not a world where text or narrative or words are most important today, but a world where "what is seen" is considered most important (Ditmer 2010). This point is easily evident in the previous point about political conflicts, environmental disasters and human suffering.   States themselves recognize this point or are struggling to recognize what this "visual

world" means and how to adjust for it. It is a world where many a state seeks to "brand itself" itself in some way. That is, the state searches for the most effective ways to present itself both to its own national populations and diverse audiences, perhaps in some form of "brand nationalism," but also to outsiders, whether they be neighbors, friends or foes. Does it wish to be "seen" as environmentally friendly, hospitable to new minorities, attractive to international businesses and safe for global tourist markets and fighting terrorists (Der Derien 2010)? How this branding is done will depend on those who can prepare effective branding labels and then disseminate it in some attractive, appealing and wholesome ways. The branding may be done in a tightly controlled state-media office where the "media arm" or office is constantly using its resources to generate support for a political leader and his (yes, usually men) programs. Those labels may be promoting economic initiatives, showing support for a friendly leader elsewhere, punishing opposition leaders for unpopular views and displaying weapons on national holidays that are meant to drum up support for nationalist agendas. The brands may be inaccurate and deceptive, but they are effective ways to seek ways to inform and perhaps pacify an information-hungry and nationalistic-oriented public. Words used in speeches about adversaries or friends may be used in the official branding. The branding may also include timely photo opportunities with other leaders at a conference or leaders in front of some military hardware, gigantic development project or

heritage cultural event. The state's official webpage is another example where the state can promote itself to whomever it wishes through images of leaders, friends, students and observing parades, opening factories and welcoming dignitaries. The successful state using visual imagery knows that in many cases a short visual "clip" of an event (meeting with a friend or former adversary or being seen with citizens at some popular event) represents a powerful instrument for both foreign and domestic audiences, much more powerful than a lengthy radio or newspaper interview. Images are power and more powerful than words. In the brief time (less than ten seconds) that one sees a "branding" event, the viewer can form lasting impressions about leaders and events. Branding is a form of "visual geopolitics" which itself is an increasing important concern for those within governments and those scholars studying geopolitical relations (Hughes 2007; MacDonald 2010; MacDonald, Hughes and Dodds 2010).

6. **Bottom-up Geographies and the Hidden Power of Social Media**.

A point was made above about the importance of social media in today's world. This is an increasing cultural phenomenon that is evident in all world regions; its users are everywhere, in rural areas and big cities, in remote rural areas and in gigantic gateway cities. Its users include the young and very young, the middle aged and also elders, refugees and migrants, old and new diaspora members,

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tourists and travelers, pilgrims and immobile populations, members of possessed and dispossessed groups, military militias and ad hoc grassroots opposition groups. (Bottom-up refers to those at the lower end of social and economic categories.) The worlds of social media, which are both text and visual, are challenging many of the traditional forms of citizen involvement, identity, community action and citizen-leader communication (Holmes 1997; Smith and Guarnizo 1998; Kim and Hart 2002; Singh 2002). One might think of other information/communication technologies that changed the political landscape in the past, not only individual, family and community lives, but also locations of organizations and institutions (schools, governments, hospitals, work places, leisure and worship places, libraries, etc.). The introduction of the telephone and later television were in a few locations at the outset, but they then diffused slowly, much slower than the contemporary globalization or internationalization of contemporary social media (cell phones, apps, blogs, websites, etc.). Social media are important in today's geopolitical world for two reasons. First, is that many (probably most) governments do not know precisely how to deal with all the accompanying issues (personal and private) related to its use: the messaging, images being transferred to almost anyone anywhere and establishing regulations on what is legal and permissible. These information/communication/technology issues are complex and many government leaders, whether elected or selected and whether in

democratic or tyrannical states, are trying to find ways to best deal with them. Social media technology is developing much faster than any regulations that might be set up to restrict or control its use. This phenomenon presents a challenging problem for many states. The second issue is that social media can be seen as a "bottom up" way of expressing views and addressing concerns; it is not a "top-down" process. A wide diversity of groups use social media for all kinds of purposes including political empowerment, social protest, health care, law enforcement and citizen surveillance, family connections, economic advancement, non-state militia recruiting, human trafficking, risk management, disease warnings, threatened biodiversity ecosystems, personal and professional opportunities are seen as ways traditional groups, communities and even individuals can and might assume some greater control over their own destinies. Many of these uses are not clear cut, but "blurred" with respect to legality, permissibility or illegality. The short and medium and long term impacts of these "new social media worlds" have yet to unfold. And they are likely to unfold in some unexpected and unpredictable new ways.

7. Political/Environmental Worlds.

Initially natural scientists informed us about changes occurring in the earth's physical environment. Their reports were about disappearing plant and animal species, shifting biodiversity zones, rising ocean temperatures, shrinking glaciers, rising coastlines and finally greater

frequencies of catastrophic events and more populations at risk. Social/environmental scientists eventually agreed that the earth's physical environments were changing and affecting agricultural productivity and responsible for unusual seasonal temperature variations and precipitation levels. Political leaders were among the last to recognize and accept these emerging "earth/environmental realities," perhaps because what we are dealing with are long term conditions and they are used to looking at "the future" as "my next election," not some projected events twenty or fifty years in the future (Dalby 2013; Kahn 2013). Perhaps they were also in a "denial" mode in which they could assume that politics had nothing to do with creating or even solving the problem. Scientific communities in the natural and human sciences around the world are now being looked at for not only describing what is actually transpiring in many parts of the planet, but also presenting and projecting scenarios that range from "doing little to doing much." It needs to be stated that not every member of the public in any country, nor all elected or selected leaders, agree that this is a serious nature and a political problem worth tackling. Some leaders hide behind religion and others are just skeptical of humans being able to exert any long term changes on planet earth's environment. Why this is an important geopolitical issue is that the uses or misuses of natural resources as related to economic and energy policies are basically political. How short and long term economic goals are related to the human condition is

probably a concern that most governments would probably agree is important to them. Answers have to do with issues not only related to the work environment, but also the living environment and human/environment ecosystems. It is in the living environmental arena where air and water quality, human safety and security and protection from hazards and disasters are at the heart of the hazard/politics debate. These issues not easy for political leaders to address as noted above, just like those related to religion, because many political leaders do not have a strong environmental science or science or social science background. A university training in engineering, law, and economics is not the same as a training in the social, policy, environmental and health sciences, all which would most likely make one sensitive, or somewhat sensitive, to issues about human need and bettering the lives of children, women, elders, the impoverished, the undernourished, the marginalized and those at most risk to environmental disasters. Most political are probably drawn to political and public service because they are more interested in regulations, business and economic development and public law rather than climate change, disappearing or threatened ecosystems, hazard mitigation and environmental security. Morality issues are also at play in ecological and environmental policy, just as they are in cases related to religion and human rights. Recognizing that the planet's livelihood is in jeopardy and neglecting an understanding of the

political/environmental intersections itself is an important call to action by those who practice and study geopolitics.

8. **The Geopolitics of Power and the Powerless**.

At its root geopolitics is all about power: *who* has it, *where* is it and *how* is it being used? These words reflect the basic ingredients of geopolitics at any point in a region's deep or contemporary history (O'Tauthail and Dalby 1998). Defining "power" in this context also can and does vary spatially or geographically (Driver 2003). A common schematic used by political geographers, political scientists and others studying comparative politics and international relations is to look at the world in a world systems context, that is, either as a "core-periphery" or "core-semiperiphery-periphery" set of concentric circles. One can depict these zones or rings and apply them to study the world at any given time, for example, the beginning of a century or after a major world war or after a major international event such as the end of colonization or rise of OPEC or the termination of a long running regional conflict. Who (what state or states) are in the core and who are in the periphery are important questions, but so are those who write and use this model to influence global and regional policies? It is tempting to say that the rich are the powerful and the most influential? And they are writing about themselves and their friends. And what are they writing about the periphery or even the semi-periphery? Does anyone with credibility and influence writing about the periphery come from the periphery? Who speaks for them and

what those states consider important? I suggest the above because in an increasingly globally connected world the powerless are being recognized, somewhat belatedly, by the global "core" countries as having and wanting "a place" at that table of what is being discussed or proposed about their future. Rather than a "top-down" approach where the "core" speaks or tries to speak for the "periphery," the periphery wishes to make its presence known and heard. In major international bodies such as the United Nations Security Council or the International Monetary Fund and many other international organizations, there are calls for greater representation from what is commonly today referred to as the Global South.   These are labeled "fourth or fifth world states," by some scholars. Expanding the UN Security Council to include Brazil, India, Egypt, Iran, Indonesia, Mexico and Nigeria might be one way to have the "powerless" voices heard and seen (Clover 1999; Smith 2009; Vlad, Hurduzeu and Josan 2011). Their agendas on global trade, immigration, climate change, water, biodiversity protection, women and children, regional conflict and even UN decision making might challenge the "core," but the world's demographics are on "their side" as they represent increasing percentages of the world's population compared to the shrinking percentages for France, the United Kingdom and Russia. Behind these thoughts of greater representation of "the poor" in global politics is again the point made above that political leaders and major political parties in core countries especially need to know more about Global

South worlds, not just their economic plights, but environmental, religious and cultural worlds.

9. **Living in Fluid, Dynamic and Unexpected Worlds**.

I have made the point above that the world is far from static and certain. It Is also far from being "even" on almost any human condition variable or indicator. The world is not one which is still or standing still. Rather it is one experiencing internal and external changes almost daily and in many countries. Adjusting to this fluidity, dynamism and exponential growth in networking at all scales represent one of the challenges facing political leaders everywhere. It is not only important that they know this is "the new norm" for many countries and regions, but that they seek to understand "*what is going on where and why*." That is a basic geopolitical question today facing all countries, large and small, rich and poor, new and old, democratic and tyrannical. This worldview is difficult, and I would acknowledge very difficult, to understand fully for many globally-oriented leaders and their advisors as well as their informed citizenry. The "knowledge" world is a major feature of today's world, whether it be economic, environmental, social or political (Keohane and Nye 1998; Rosenau 2002). And knowledge is usually associated with power and know-how (Ronfeldt and Arguilla 1999; Rosecrance 1999; Rosenau and Singh 2002). While certainty and an air of knowledge may be an admirable quality of the political leadership, as it looks good for "local" and extra-local branding, it may be that sometimes mistakes are made, or

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have been made, and need to be admitted. These may be honest mistakes simply because a previous leader did not think carefully and clearly about a statement or a policy proposed and supported. Or it may be that the leader received poor advice, simply because the advisors did have good training in regional geopolitics, religion, or culture or in the environmental sciences. The topsy-turvy world in truth means that even in the most powerful, influential and rich countries and their elected leaders and advisors may not and will not have all the desired information they need to properly assess and solve a problem. This observation becomes especially critical when one is assessing visual information and receiving massive amounts of electronic information either from official sources (Google Earth and the internet) or from social media sources. All government intelligence communities, which are in the "knowledge business," have gaps, some wide and some deep, in what they know or don't know about "*what is going on where*." To pretend to have complete and accurate knowledge is illusory.

10. **Mapping Geopolitics in a Topsy-Turvy World**.

I have just outlined what are some distinctive features of the emerging geopolitical worlds. Mapping these will be tricky and often difficult. The familiar map with states and boundaries printed with different colors and using different projections will simply be a map "frozen in time," that is, when it was produced by the state for official purposes. It is one that appears in children's and university students' classrooms

and is displayed in embassies, government offices and libraries around the world. This is far more complicated because the world itself is more complicated. It does not reveal the complex networks that exist among those in diplomatic, adversarial, military, commercial, scholarly and environmental communities. One could easily argue that networks today are more important than cores and peripheries or even maps showing two-dimensional state territories. The case can also be made that states today are mere "points" not territorial units of different sizes and shapes on a world map. One could imagine a map with the core regions being a mix of commercial cores in some states, but other parts of the same state may be in a periphery or perhaps even in a deep periphery. One could also imagine that the networks of humanitarian aid between Middle East countries and those in Europe today are fluid and dynamic and change by the day. And those related to the Middle East and South Asian conflicts are also changing by the day. In short, what is needed to construct a meaningful contemporary and future geopolitical map for the world or for a region or even for an individual country is an understanding of the very ingredients that result from the dynamic world. That is a world with local and regional mixes in changing culture, economies, environments and politics and their mixes are occurring on the ground not in some abstract spaces.

Where We Go From Here?

What I have called attention to in this statement are some salient or distinguishing features of the current world geopolitical map. These may not be new ideas for many readers, but perhaps what is new is that they are presented in a coherent package that ask each of as scholars, political leaders and citizens to reflect on what they mean. Looking at/into the future means that some critical thinking about geopolitics and also instruction in geopolitics. There are many theories and models about global and regional geopolitics that are useful and important in understanding "what is happening where and why" in a political world. But it is equally important that we look at "conditions on the ground," that is, where people live, where policies are enacted and how they affect those at local scales.

What is important as we move forward to further understand "the future geopolitical worlds" is that we are both open to learning and also "unlearning." In my view, there are three kinds of learning that are at play here. One is "unlearning," that is, we find out that some things we learned in our training, and early in personal or professional life, are just no longer true or applicable. It makes little sense to continue to adopt old ideas and theories that no longer apply. Second, we need to "relearn," that is, to discover what is the world like today, which may be drastically different than five or fifteen or twenty years ago. Relearning is sometimes difficult especially if issues are important today were not important when we were trained.

Examples can be issues about the environment change, religion, women, children, diseases and health care, immigration, information technologies, ad hoc militias and even democratization. Third, when we "relearn," we are really admitting that we have to learn something different, which may be a different feature of a culture such as religion or new international diaspora unknown previously to us or emerging intersections of topics, such as cybersecurity and cyberwarfare, social media and branding, environmental security and ethics or the empowerment of women and marginalized groups. Universities and schools of Foreign Service and international diplomacy that train professionals need to confront these new geopolitical realities if they are to prepare for the kinds of geopolitical topsy-turvy worlds that their children and grandchildren will face. Failure to have a sound knowledge about these new topics of a geopolitical nature as well as some flexibility in thinking will likely lead to further misunderstandings and conflicts at local and national and regional scales. The challenges are also there for those who teach, study and practice geopolitics and who also need to be willing to unlearn, relearn and continuously learn. My final point is a simple one, but an important one. With the current changes that are occurring on the world geopolitical map and the changes that will be occurring everywhere in the next five, ten, and twenty-five years, one point we need to remember.

"The final political map has not been drawn."

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