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An eternity of geopolitics

Diplomacy was invented to handle the eternal challenge of geopolitics. -ST

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By Kishore Mahbubani

WHEN I was a diplomat I used to say that diplomacy was the world's second oldest profession, hastening to add that it bore no relationship to the oldest. The reason why it is old is that since human beings began organising themselves into tribes, there were rivalries, frequently over territory. Diplomacy was therefore invented to handle the eternal challenge of geopolitics.

In the modern world we live in, where the prospect of a war between any two major powers is a remote possibility (partly because of the advent of nuclear weapons), many might believe that geopolitics has taken a back seat. But one stark reality about the 21st century that we should hoist in is that geopolitics will return with a vengeance, though many of the geopolitical rivalries will be played out beneath the surface. The naked eye will not catch them. We need a sophisticated vision to understand the new geopolitical terrain that is emerging. And that terrain could become treacherous.

History teaches us that whenever a dominant power begins to lose power relatively, new opportunities are created for rising powers. We are living in such an era. The United States is slowly beginning to lose the unquestioned dominance it had over the global order.

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