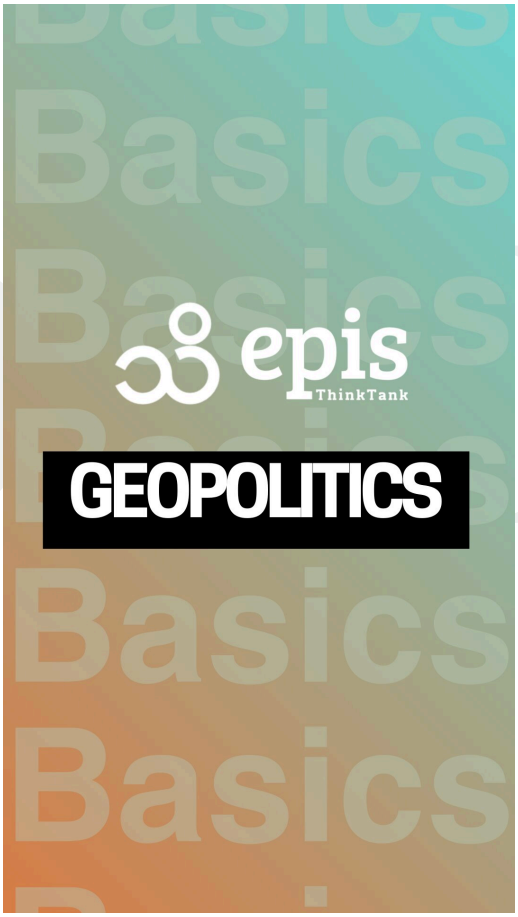
Geopolitics and the World's Ecosystem

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Geopolitics and the World's Ecosystems

Geopolitics, a school of thought in political science and international relations, is concerned with the effects of the earth's geography on the decision-making of states. Tim Marshall describes all nations of the world as "prisoners of geography", assuming that geographic circumstances determine states' economic and military interests and capabilities. Based on this assumption, it could be formulated that a state's geographical location

primarily determines the ecosystems that occur on its respective national territory.

News and scientific evidence of climate-crisis effects on ecosystems are ubiquitous and yet do not seem to lead to changes in human or government behaviour. In 2022, the Stockholm Forum on Peace and Development (SIPRI) published an impactful report portraying the latest research on how climate change and environmental degradation impact international peace and security. Consistent with SIPRI's findings, it is argued that incorporating the world's ecosystems into the geopolitical analysis of state action could help address the challenges of the coming decades.

Desertification, land degradation, forest dieback due to biotic and abiotic causes, the spread of non-native pests and pathogens, flooded coastlines, parched fields as well as melting glaciers can be attributed in part to human-induced changes in marine and terrestrial ecosystems in recent decades and centuries. The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) warns that these phenomena are likely to result in up to one million animal and plant species being pushed to the brink of extinction within the next decades. Ecosystem services such as the provision of water through the natural filtration of precipitation, the pollination of flowers and crops by insects, the provision of food, and the provision of fresh air through photosynthesis are essential to humans.

As human demand for finite resources, and thus the systematic and profit-oriented human intervention in the world's ecosystems, has steadily increased over the past centuries, an analysis of the effects of government action on ecosystems and landscapes seems adequate. Broadening the interpretational scope of geopolitical analysis could help identify, analyze, and draw conclusions about the human impact on ecosystems, the highly complex relationships within and between ecosystems as well as the risk of negative cascading effects within the world's biosphere. Scientific knowledge about climate change, species extinction, and the negative impact of humans on these phenomena could serve as a basis for states' geopolitical decision-making. Based on this knowledge, it would be in states' geopolitical interest to restore degraded soils, conduct afforestation and reforestation and clean polluted rivers and lakes. To protect ecosystems, it may be necessary to question and reduce profit-oriented, environmentally damaging management practices in agriculture, forestry, and industry that have made our current standard of living possible and to which we seem to have become accustomed.

It is time to consider environmental protection as one of the main interests of any state and to analyze state action in this regard. An equalization of ecological, economic and military state interests in the geopolitical analysis of state action might lead to more environmental protection. It should be kept in mind that humans depend on an intact environment, as it sustains us and forms the basis for everything else. The reverse is not the case: nature would do very well in this world without mankind.