



By: Carla Norrlöf

America's gravest threat is an internal geopolitical implosion



The fiercest struggle in American politics today is not between two presidential contenders. It is happening between states, which control the electoral maps that determine who sits in Congress.

Though Republicans and Democrats are relying on redistricting campaigns instead of armies, their conflict is best understood through the lens of geopolitics. After all, they are not fighting over ideas or specific policies, but over territory.

Gerrymandering has become the decisive tool in this struggle, allowing state-level authorities to create maps that neutralize opposition voters.

By clustering such voters into a handful of districts so that most districts go to your party, or by scattering them across many districts so that they cannot prevail anywhere, parties can translate cartography into control. Ballots are still cast, but the outcome has been predetermined.

Texas offers the clearest example. Republicans just passed a congressional map designed to yield them as many as five more seats in the House of Representatives.

When Democratic lawmakers fled the state to deny a quorum, Texas Governor Greg Abbott threatened to send troopers to bring them back. California – a heavily Democratic state – then responded in kind.

Governor Gavin Newsom wants to override his state's independent redistricting commission to secure a Democratic advantage, arguing that if Texas tilted the battlefield, California must not remain idle.

A threat to democracy

Where will all this lead? Polling **shows** that most Americans see such partisan map-drawing as a threat to democracy.

California's redistricting commission is constitutionally independent. By mirroring

Texas, it is showing how easy it is for partisan imperatives to override democratic guardrails.

Mainstream commentators are increasingly **describing** the clash as a kind of “war.” With other states considering their own mid-decade redistricting efforts, and with major figures like former President Barack Obama endorsing California's move as a responsible counter-strategy, the stakes are rising fast.

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Though there will undoubtedly be legal challenges to the new maps, the Supreme Court already ruled, in 2019, that partisan gerrymandering is a “political question” that lies beyond federal courts' reach.

With that decision, the last national safeguard vanished. Each state is free to redraw its map unchecked, and the results are not subtle.

In 2024, a Brennan Center for Justice **analysis** showed that current maps already tilt the field by about 16 congressional seats in the Republicans' favor – enough to decide control of the House.

The lens of geopolitics

Of course, gerrymandering is not the only distortion in American democracy. The Senate, the Electoral College, campaign finance, and media bias also warp representation. But no tool so directly tilts the playing field as the partisan electoral map.

That is why the issue is best understood through the lens of geopolitics. Borders decide who controls territory, and control of territory confers power.

Redistricting is not only about defending ground already held. It is also about expansion,

pushing lines outward to absorb allies and to cut off opponents from strategic corridors (where votes might otherwise flow together).

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Once drawn, these districts are defended like frontiers, and concessions are treated as strategic defeats.

The Nobel laureate economist and game theorist Thomas Schelling warned that such escalatory contests do not end in victory, but in instability.

Once one side redraws its front lines, the other must answer. Neither can withdraw without risking long-term defeat. What begins as a righteous act of defense spirals into permanent expansion and counter-expansion – a political arms race.

The powerful political identities

Why does this tactic work so effectively, and why is it so dangerous? The answer lies in the powerful political identities that states like Texas, California, and New York cultivate.

To call yourself a Texan, a New Yorker, or a Californian is to belong to a political community with its own strong sense of “we.”

Gerrymandering exploits that identity, turning solidarity into guaranteed victories that feel natural, even as they deepen the divides within the republic.

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Gerrymandered election district maps turn temporary advantages into permanent

frontiers. In geopolitical terms, they become fortified partisan enclaves and strategic corridors designed to secure dominance rather than invite democratic competition.

Internal geopolitical implosion

True, even small states have ways to resist empires. They can form alliances, exploit shifts in the terrain, or fight unconventionally.

Moreover, demographic change, grassroots mobilizations, cross-party coalitions, and court challenges can puncture even the most fortified enclaves.

But while these options show that the disenfranchised are not entirely powerless, they do not deliver lasting victories.



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Other countries show how corrosive the spiral can be once it begins. In Poland, the Law and Justice (PiS) party **changed** the electoral rules after 2015 to tilt the system in its favor, deepening polarization.

Hungary offers a cautionary twist. When Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's Fidesz party redrew districts in 2011, the changes gave it a short-term edge, but later created distortions that became liabilities. Winning too heavily in some areas meant wasting votes in others.

Gerrymanders may deliver certain wins today; but over time, the skewed maps can create

unforeseen vulnerabilities.

When maps dictate outcomes, elections risk becoming hollow rituals. The real battles shift to party primaries, where candidates cater to the most committed voters.

Extremists thrive, moderates vanish, and polarization deepens. Minority communities bear the greatest cost.

Packed into a few districts or diffused across many, they are stripped of effective representation. With fewer resources for long legal fights, they are easy marks for mapmakers.

The true danger is not that elections will cease, but that they will cease to matter.

A party can lose the statewide popular vote but still control most of the seats. Representation no longer reflects the will of the electorate.

The result is government chosen not by the people, but by those who were in power when the maps changed. America's gravest threat is not an external rival but collapse from within: an internal geopolitical implosion.

Carla Norrlöf is Professor of Political Science at the University of Toronto.