

DIACHRONIC ANALYSIS OF THE GEOPOLITICAL AND GEOSTRATEGY CONCEPTS

(Irina Ionela Pop, *Geopolitică și geostrategie: teorie și practică*, Vasile Goldiș
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Ștefan Iaroslav DANIEL

Independent researcher

Tel: 0040 – 746-233785 E-mail: danieliari@yahoo.com

Over the last decades, there has been an increasing interest in the publicistic landscape in the field of international relations in general and geopolitics in particular; the scientific terminology has also diversified, thus creating new niches: geoculture, geoeconomics, environmental geopolitics etc.

Regarding the concept of geostrategy, it has been brought up by one of the world leading researchers of this scientific area, Paul Claval, in his work, *Géopolitique et géostratégie – la pensée politique, l'espace et le territoire au XXe siècle*, which is an indispensable bibliographic reference to any rigorous approach of a subject pertaining or related to this scientific field.

In the uncertain context of the times humanity is going through, when a major military conflict is not unfathomable, the preoccupation of geopolitics and geostrategy is of concern not only for specialized researchers or for the socio-humanistic academic world, but also for the public, loosely using the term.

Grafting herself on this state of fact, the publishing, by Irina POP – a new-generation academic from Arad – of her researches of over a decade in the area in question, comes to shed light on certain gray areas and to bring to the researchers' attention the evolution of the geopolitics and geostrategy concepts from their emergence, at the dawn of the 19th century up till now.

The volume organically continues the research undertaken by the author during her doctoral schooling, which was materialized into the thesis entitled *Oil and Geopolitics in Central Asia: diachronic analysis of the American and European positions – the post Cold War period*, presented in 2008, at the Babes Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca.

The broached thematic is as important as it is complex, being essential for a proper understanding of the international situation since the start of the 19th century till now; the author even ventured into making predictions regarding possible future threats on it.

One should notice the extremely useful, numerous references to the ideologies and theories of the specialists in the field, for the structure of the text and its scientific accuracy; this only comes to certify, yet again, the cognitive value of the research endeavor on which the text is based.

Sometimes, completely different points of view are presented, even opposing ones, thus creating a sort of compendium for the studied field. The book

is comprehensive enough to allow the reader to develop an overall, objective point of view on the segment in question.

One of the strengths of this volume, as previously noted, is precisely the reviewing of several theories and points of view belonging to some of the “heavyweights” of this field. However, if we were to also identify one of the less favorable aspects, it might be the failure to explain, here and there, the socio-cultural context from which the referred researchers come from, the environment undoubtedly influencing their paradigm of thought. We should point out here Friedrich Ratzel (p.22), Karl Ritter (p.21), Ernst Heinrich Haeckel (p.22), Alfred Thayer Mahan (p.40) or Leo Amery (p. 15).

On the other hand, Isaiah Bowman (p.18) is presented comprehensively and in detail. We could also look at this work strategy in terms of the reputation of the cited authors, who are supposed to be known by the specialists in the field of international relations. However, since the volume is also addressed to students who are still novices in this area, a more thorough presentation of the cited authors is nevertheless necessary

The preface is signed by the author’s mentor and PhD advisor, professor Vasile Vese, PhD. He understood the importance of referring to her doctoral labor, noting her intellectual capacity and the courage to broach, from a geopolitical standpoint historical and political phenomena such as the Non-Aligned Movement, the military’s geopolitics in Latin America, the Ukrainian crisis or the post-communist Russian geopolitics; these are some of the sectors she tries and manages to shed some light on, by logical explanations and connections and pertinently formulated arguments.

In the introduction, Irina Pop systematizes her intentions and reveals the analytical strategy, placing us in a diachronic area.

The body of the text is divided into five chapters, each with its corresponding subchapters. The first chapter presents several definitions of geopolitics and geostrategy, as well as comparisons between the two. The author also refers to the geopolitical analysis; various approaches, by leading figures in the field, are presented; among these figures we have included Francois Thual, who provides us with a method which consists of formulating the appropriate questions before an event (pressure, crisis, conflict, war, negotiations). The geopolitical analysis is presented as a method. (p. 17)

The second chapter deals with the main classical geopolitical theories: German, Anglo-Saxon, French, Russian and Japanese. We’d like to point out the references to Karl Haushofer, who is responsible for the institutional study of geopolitics (p. 27).

At the same time, the author also brings into question Halford J. Mackinder Briton (p.32), nicknamed the Cold War geopolitician, and his famous work, *The Geographical Pivot of History*. He demonstrated that human history took place as an ongoing conflict, who set on opposite sides the nations from the central terrestrial areas to those in the coastal regions. The geographical determination of history, which he enunciated since the early twentieth century, is based on the idea that

world history and politics were strongly influenced by Eurasia's spacial immensity, and the domination over said space is the key to any attempt of world domination.

James Fairgrieve's theories (*Geography and World Power*, 1915) are also consistently referred to; he is the one who introduced the old vision of parallelograms of the world, called "belts" (p. 38).

The study cases constitute an original and well-made component, study cases such as *France's African Policy Making* and *From Kievan Russian to the Soviet Union*. The brief yet nuanced presentation, the underlining details and the author's scientific rigorous vision are also something to take note of. The observations on Japan, a country which has achieved the greatest transition on the planet from a medieval power to a modern one, are also very interesting from a scientific perspective.

The third chapter deals with the Cold War period, respectively the geopolitics and geostrategy of the two superpowers – the United States of America and Russia - , the Non-Aligned Movement and the geopolitics of the Latin American soldiers, more specifically those of Brazil, Argentina and Chile.

The penultimate chapter is entirely dedicated to the post 1989 period, with focus on the main actors of this historical time: the United States of America, the European Union, Russia and China. Their main geopolitical theories are presented here, as well as their national security strategies, their foreign policy actions and the alliances between the four.

Finally, the last chapter brings before the reader recent geopolitical concepts and themes, such as: geoeconomics, geoculture, critical geopolitics, the geopolitics of energy resources and environmental geopolitics.

The conclusions of this volume broach current international issues, such as the deterioration between Russia's relations with the West, namely the conflict in Ukraine, the possibility of the next superpower emerging, represented by China, international economic predictions and others. Just as the author herself notes, the conclusive considerations are quite close to the present, up till 2014; this is also the point where predictions are made, predictions regarding the contemporary geopolitical and geostrategic tendencies.

Throughout the process of analyzing and synthesizing the data on which this volume is based on, the author used numerous graphs, maps and statistics, so that the data presented would be easier to understand as realistically as possible. The bibliography consist of documents, statements, statistics, volumes and scientific articles, both from the history of this field as well as current ones, and the indicated electronic references; it is an indispensable working instrument for any specialist in the field of international relations and security studies, either already practicing or in training.

The content of this scientific research, the showcased ideas and the research strategy which is evident from the structure of the volume, determines us to consider it a useful tool for the students, master students from a wide range of socio-human specializations, as well as for the general public. The text is also testimony to the author's potential. She already is a seasoned researcher,

accustomed to the analytical exercise. She has an important say in her area of expertise and her future publications in the area of study at hand are not only a necessity for the bibliography of the domain but, as we all hope, a certain success.