THE ROLE OF GEOPOLITICS IN THE ANALYSIS OF THE CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL PHENOMENON

- I -

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he powerful reassertion of geopolitics over the last decades is a certain reality and it was determined both by an extremely complex evolution in international life and the theoretical definitions of the contemporary meanings and concepts of geopolitics¹.

The notion of geopolitics - as we noticed in the previous chapters - is accepted and used from a threefold perspective: the geopolitical action, the geopolitical theory, analysis and scenery, the doctrine and the geopolitical propagandistic cartography.

1. From the standpoint of social reality, the geopolitical phenomenon is part of the international relations occurring in a certain geographical area. A geopolitical situation can be defined as a more or less important rivalry for power among actors inserting or disputing their interests in a certain geographical area.

Depending on both the proportions - macro or micro spacial level - and the statute and the role in the system of international relations, a geopolitical situation involves more categories of actors². The actors can be subjects endowed with sovereignty which limits their actions through its rigors and subjects without

sovereignty, much more independent in their actions in the system of international relations.

By the end of the 20th century, in the geopolitical action, the states, big or small, were the leading actors which disputed or harmonized their interests in a certain area.

The interdependence developed in the postindustrial world, the decrease of the adaptation capacity in front of the 20th century's challenges had a real influence over some analysts which consider that the states, as the main actors in the system of international relations, are more limited in their actions³. They believe the state can not efficiently to some "aggressions". Sometimes the experts ask themselves: "Which nation can defend its borders against deseases, ballistic rackets, trafficking broadcasting or subversive images? Which nation can protect its atmosphere and water against the radioactive cloud going from Cernobîl to west? Which nation can protect its currency from the damaging speculations on the world currency market?"4.

On the other hand, we notice an increasing economical ability of the states in their home affairs. Depending on internal and external circumstances they interfere more and more often both in modelling

economy in investments, consumption and in financing some new industrial branches or in reviving other older ones so as to face the internationalisation process of the market and of the banking systems.

At international level, the increasing or decreasing tendencies of the part played by the states as the main actors in the contemporary geopolitics are neither absolute nor uniforme. At the end of the 20th century, we notice a double movement: an increasing and decreasing of the state's role in international relations.

We talk about decreasing because the interdependences - economical, political, cultural, spiritual - will continue; so, the activity of the state will be more limited⁵. **Experts** consider that all not the consequence which the migration capitals and of the industrial capacities in one or another area, hove over the states, as sovereign entities - actors - in the international life, are known as yet. For example, the Honda cars made in the USA are they American or Japanese? Is this thing important for the consumer? On the other hand, the growing of the decisive role as an actor is established by a large mass of people that wish to have their own state. There are approximatively 5000 nations in the world while only 179 states belong to the U.N's. The Kurds condition meaningful: they are a nation with over 20 million people within three states without having their own state. In January 1991, the representatives of 35 nations and states set UNPO - Unrepresented Nation Organisation - whose headquarters were established in Geneva; its aim was to draw the attention of the public opinion to the legitimate wish of having their own state⁶. On the other hand, the role still prevalent of the states, as actors of the geopolitical phenomenon, is sustained by the growing preponderance of the USA in the world politics after the end of the Cold War, or of

Germany in Europe. As part of a seminar organized by the National Defence University in 1991, Colin L. Powell, the former head of the joint committee of the heads of the General Staff and former assistant of the American president, said: "After half a century of titanic struggle against fascism and communism, America has found its place in the world beyond the natural limits of its national territory"; he also said that the USA would confirm the people's hope of "exerting the leading role that it has assumed".

The changes developed within the world economy, the world - wide spread - information, the overall security problems have turned the nongovernamental powers into the main actors of the contemporary geopolitical phenomenon, where the transnational, international and supranational organizations will play a special role.

The former manager of the Central Information Agency (CIA) in the USA concerning the actors' multiplication within the present international relationship said: "Yes, we killed a giant dragon (an allusion to the former USSR) but now we are living in a jungle where a variety of poisonous snakes are swaming disorderely. In many ways, it was easier to pursue the dragon"⁸.

After the Cold War, the disputed problems among the classical actors of the international scene - the states - generated serious military and political crises and the importance role and of nongovernmental actors have grown up (for exemple the U.N.) reading unprecedented quotas. The peace Duping operations became feature of specific international relations and practically the U.N. is involved directly in every problem. In the last half of our century, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have got the greatest importance as actors within the geopolitical field. To a large

extent the states in the third world and in the former Soviet Empire as well as the former communist states also depend on the policies of the two organs, concerning the decisional act at both internal and external level.

To illustrate the multiplication of the actors within the contemporary geopolitical phenomenon, James Rosenau presents the two crises which broke out in a space disputed by the two superpowers at the end of 1974: the seizure of American Embassy in Teheran by Iran and the invasion of Afganistan by the USSR. No less than 29 transnational actors, beginning with the U.N. and ending with the Olympic Committee and Supervising Committee in Helsinki were deeply involved in one or both of the crises?

Some analysts of the contemporary geopolitical phenomenon10 admit that a geopolitical situation can also arise within a state without any direct implication of other states; they also say that the ethnical, political or religious comunities can be "actors". considered problem The controversial and difficult to accept if we take into account that nowhere in the world has descentralization gone so far that the authority of the actor - state - over its sovereign space should be purely nominal. On the other hand, the enumerated comunities are not legal subject within the international relations system, although they are internationally recognized.

2. The theory, analysis, scenario and geopolitical cartography are products of the analysts' and statemen's effort of observing, investigating and interpreting within the analysing process of the geopolitical realities, namely of the power rivalries among the actors disputing their interests in a certain geographical area. If we examine the geopolitical research as a whole, we notice that the results of the investigations are divided into two distinct parts, depending on the following purposes: the

theory, more or less systematized, which tends to identify itself with the social sciences field and the doctrine with its inseparable chapter, the cartography of geopolitical propaganda, which has as fundamental purpose the justification of an actor's policy depending on its interests in a certain geographical area.

Nevertheless, without accepting the assertions according to which "cartography fascinates, but it teaches us nothing"11, we have to accept that the geopolitical map could be an instrument of public opinion manipulation. The geopolitical maps have not been depicted as a faithful copy of a geopolitical reality in one geographical area or another, but they are not necessarily copies¹². objective and neutral geopolitical maps which are used as a support for an actor's propaganda are by no means a product of the present. They have been used from the 19th century, during the periods of tension, crisis or conflicts within the system of international relations. Such products of the propaganda geopolitical cartography circulated both in the West, and especially in the East during the Cold War. Their role was to justify and convince the public opinion about the necessity of defeating the evil, which was represented by the adverse party. The red and the blue spaces were separeted by the Iron Curtain, and in these maps they became targets for neutralization conquest. It didn't matter that this "Iron Curtain" was "permeable" from economic or dplomatic standpoint (the famous red phone which linked the Kremlin and the White House).

Thus, the geopolitical maps have become a propaganda support. They were projected for a certain guiding of the readers'/outlooker's thinking in the direction wanted by their designers¹³. Taking into account the fact that in the future the role of the image will grow in spreading information, the geopolitical

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role of the propaganda maps will not diminish. To be efficient, the propaganda will use every strategy and every method of conveying information directly to its target, including those typical of the geopolitical theory. But we do not think that the propaganda having a geopolitical support and the geopolitical analysis could be the same because nowadays nobody mixes up the political speech with the political theory and analysis.

Geopolitics, as a branch of the sociohumanistic sciences, can be defined as a discipline dealing with the power rivalries among the actors disputing their interests in a certain geographical area in the historical evolution. Ion Conea defined geopolitics as between states"14. game "political Although nowadays geopolitics is still defined from a multitude of view-points, it is no longer perceived as a discipline which studies the influence of the geographical environment over the policy of a state as it was the case of Ratzel and Hanshofer's period15: Space is no longer an "actor" of the history, which can determine the developement of the political events, but it is a medium support in which the actors involved in a contemporary geopolitical phenomenon dispute their interests.

The rigid geographical determinism must be abandoned because the space value for the geopolitical action is determined by objective elements which can belong to economical, political, war or ideological domains, but it can not determine directly the policy of one actor or an other within the system of international relations. Napoleon's assertion according to which "the policy of the states lies in their geography"16 was justified in the 19th century, but nowadays it has only a historical value.

Therefore, the main aim of the geopolitical theory is to point out the ways in which an actor within the system of international relations may impose its

own interests in one particular geographical area or another. Within this corroboration of the policy with the geographical space, the actors are the political forces which have relations ("games") in an area, depending on their interests and their capacity, but not at all depending on the proper geographical environment¹⁷.

Almost half a century ago, this aspect was noticed by Professor Ioan Conea, who stated that geopolitics does not study the geographical area because "it only suggests to us the idea of dimensions", so it must study "the political game between states" which he also defined sometimes as "pressure among states" 18.

The great actors of the contemporary world - USA, Russia, Japan, France, Germany etc. would have been equally interested in the Iraki action of annexing Kuwait and in other conflicts in Africa, if those states had one of the largest oil reserves of the world and these exemples could continue with other geographical areas.

The subject of geopolitics has not been defined yet in unanimously accepted terms because there are a lot of viewpoints in tackling this subject depending on different tendencies in thinking or even on the intelectual authority of some famous authors and researchers of the contemporary geopolitical phenomenon. I consider that the subject of geopolitics can be Kjellen's "planettarischer (planetary zustand" situation) or a part, a certain zone from it, which is observed and explored with geopolitical instruments, but also with some other sciences taking into account that geopolitics is a subject between history, demography, politology, economy. geostrategy and geography¹⁹. It must take into account "every thing which organized within hierarchy of forces, especially political and military ones, but also economical and cultural forces, states

and their alliances - destinies and aims - in all the aspects of force and of its evolution, of law and of its application²⁰.

Therefore, the problem tackled by geopolitics can be more or less ample and it is in connection with the policy of the states and of the other actors of the international life because it can unravel the interest manifested generally or in a certain area by these actors. Geopolitics must observe and research the changes which have occurred in the power relations at the international level or in a particular area under study.

Eventually, the power prise or the lack of prise are those which determine the condition of the international relation geopolitical system, therefore of the medium at a certain moment. The prise has always been associated with peace and security. The intensity and the measure of lack of prise securring within the equation of power at a certain moment, led to crises situations, to various kinds of conflicts diplomatic, economic or ideological - and eventually to war.

The role of an actor within the equation of power and especially within the relations with others, defines its geopolitical position which must not be mixed up with its geographical location. The former is defined under the relations among actors, which are usually neglected by geography, while the latter is defined by a state's location on the Globe. If the geographical position is static, the geopolitical one is large characterized by a degree dynamism, which can be influenced by a lot of objective or subjective factors, among which the political interest or wish have a decisive role.

The geopolitical position of a state the actor most frequently met within a geopolitical analysis - could be a favourable or an unfavourable one, in its historical moments. When a state has agreeable and mutually favourable relations with the other states and international organizations, it has a favourable geopolitical position. But its geopolitical position could be extremely difficult, as in the summer of 1940, when Romania lost an important part of its territory because of its total isolation within the international relations and of the rapports with its neighbours.

The object of geopolitics can also be particularized by referring to the object of other sciences which deal with the study of international relations, statal or complex social phenomena, such as crisis and war. Experts have often discussed about the relations between the study object of the political geography and that of geopolitics. This aspect has generated a strong dispute²¹. By comparing and analysing the domain of research and its study object, as they have been defined by specialists, we notice the features similitudes specific and the between geopolitics and political geography.

For a long time, the French school of Geography considered that the object of this subject was identical with that of geopolitics. Jacques Ancel considered geopolitics, "a geography serving the policy which assumed the role of history in Bismarck's time" while Albert Demangeau considered it "a political life geography, an ill one, but still a political geography" 23.

The progress registered by the geographical science, especially by improving the investigation instruments, the statistics of the data obtained by theorizing, conceptualizing and modelling²⁴, have shown that its object is different from that of geopolitics.

Nowadays, political geography is defined as the discipline "dealing with the differences between the phenomena according to the area where the people live"25. Christian Dandel considers political geography as "the science of organization territories, and of the differentiation of the places"26. The American geographer Whittlesley thinks

that "the political geography nucleus is the political space" and Otto Mauhl declares that this science deals with "the geographical nature and geographical phenomena of a state, or, in other words, with the study of the geographical uniqueness of a state, depending on its cultural and natural background".

The analysis of these definitions points out that the element "space" is common both to political geography and to geopolitics. Both are disciplines which study space and various actors, generally the state, but each of them in a different way and having specific aims.

Political geography deals with the aspect and the political division of states at a certain moment. It offers momentary images of a momentary situation. Unlike the political geography, geopolites is not interested in states (or other actors) as a natural phenomenon, namely in the position, dimentions, form and borders of the state. It deals with the dynamics of the relations among states in connection with a space they are interested in. Therefore, geopolitics will study the power relations among states.

Talking about the specific features and about the common elements of geopolitics and of political geography, the American researcher Ladis K.D. Kristof is categorical: "Political geography is geography. It is a geography modified by the interest in the effect of the political phenomena over the surface of the earth, while geopolitics is not a study of geography but of the politics changed or influenced only by geographical factors"²⁹.

Very often, geostrategy and geopolitics are synonymous³⁰ in the political analysis and speeches, even if they have a different object of study³¹. The notion of "geostrategy" was initiated by the Italian general Giacomo Durando³² in the middle of the 19th century and it appeared again at the middle of the following century

through the contribution of Admiral Castez³³, and American analyst Colin S. Gray³⁴.

We do not intend to analyse the initial use, especially the military one, of the term in relation with force or with the idea of using force. Within the security and defence field, the military specialists developed and anticipated reflections on the dynamics of space and on the science capacity of determining space, so that peace could be concluded and a political decision could be reached in an area affected by conflicts. Geostrategy, as well as geopolitics, includes war, but in the geopolitical conception, war does not involve only military dimension. Showing that war is more than a military confrontation, Paul Kennedy wrote in his, famous work "Birth and Decline of Great Powers": "Within a prolonged war for hegemony among the great powers, there are no doubts that the victory will be of that power which has the most thriving structure of production - or, as the Spanish captain said, will be of the one who has the last «escuedo»"35.

General Pierre Gallois thinks that geostrategy is "the study of the relations between the political attitude of a great international power and its geographical environment". Acording to the Larrouse dictionary on "La Défence et des Forces Armées", geostrategy is defined as the science which "analysis the relations between the geopolitical environment and the defence policy promoted by a state or group of states at international level³⁷.

André Vigorie's conception is that geostrategy is "the ensemble of defence attitudes related to the vastest dimensions and the largest variety of action means".

We can easily notice that the above mentioned definitions and the others which I have not presented here, contain the same paradigm: the conflictual relations among actors in relation with space. This explains why some military and civilian analysts speak about geopolitics and geostrategy as being a couple³⁹ or as being two relatives or even sisters"⁴⁰; their opinion is that geopolitics says what must be conquered or preserved and geostrategy also says if this thing is possible"⁴¹.

Nowadays, geostrategy must conceive the conflictual rapports another space than a classic one, in other terms that those used by Clausewitz Mahan or Foch because this discipline changed both its land marks and mode of action. Even a summary analysis of the fundamental paradigms of geostrategy shows that epistemological, technological and polemological breaks occurred vis-àvis the strategically classic thinking⁴², because the fields of military struggle have multiplied. The actors of the turn international life tend to economic, informational, imagological and even cosmical spaces into battle fields. We admit that geopolitics and geostrategy will join to identify if war takes place within an economic, informational and imagological space.

The system of international relations is also the object of history generally and of specially. political history From this perspective, history interferes with geopolitics and also particularizes. This discipline study object also includes the analysis of international relations and implicitly of the rapports among the traditional actors - states - but only for the events in the part. Ion Conea was right when he said: "Geopolitics will always be a present science, a discipline of the present phenomenon. The geopolitics of our days will be history tomorrow as the history of every past was geopolitics for the times when the events we regard as history happened"43.

Geopolitics or the history of the present can unravel the evolution

tendencies and the future situation of the system of international relations. The geopolitician, unlike the expresses "his wish of anticipation of the development humanity in world"44. Therefore, we appreciate that complementary rapports are established between the objects of study of the two disciplines. Continuity of some perenial phenomena and processes which are not with in relation crisis and the system development of the international relations is unrevealed within the historic research and analysis. In their turn, these find their role within the substantiation of the geopolitical research and analysis.

The object of geopolitics is also in relation with economy, demography, politology, sociology etc. Therefore, the object of geopolitics is interdisciplinary or, as Christian Dandel concludes: "A little history, a little geography, a few different aspects of the present and of the intelectual news, different, but almost the same, these are the ingredients of any geopolitical writing"⁴⁵.

The need of knowing and understanding the processes and phenomena which occured within the system of international relations, and the simplicity of some different geopolitical situations impose the geopolitical there as an efficient instrument for unravelling the interests of the actors - states, international organizations in some particular geographical areas as a capacity imposing or mentaining these interests at a given moment. Geopolitics unravels the spot and the role the actors have within the balance of power. Both at global and therefore showing general level, dynamics of the forces which determine the present and the long term architecture of security.

The present or the future geopolitical regions of a maximum convergence/

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divergence and also the geopolitical position of an actor at a certain moment are determined by means of specific methods of geopolitical analysis. The consequences of the maximum convergence geopolitical fields and if the power centers generally over the actor are known and anticipated with a certain amount of probability. Nowadays, for example, more analysts consider that the Asian-Pacific area will be the geopolitical region with the most spectacular ascent"46. This thing will have consequences over the traditional power centers: West Europe and the USA. The major economic regions will be interconected through multinational firms and banks, but each one will have a technological and industrial independent base, its own financial resources. From this perspective, the struggle for the control over raw material resources and over the sale markets will increase, and its form of manifestation will be more and more varied.

The geopolitical methodology is used in studying, analysing and administrating politico-military crisis or of other nature.

Within the international relations field, a crisis is a phenomenon which occurs in the framework of a dispute and/or of a conflict among more actors, frequently states, but also entities or nations, supra or multinational organizations⁴⁷. It can modify completely the geopolitical situation within a particular area.

The complexity of the contemporary geopolitical phenomenon calls for a systemic analysis, in which every element (relation is/can be the key to grasping the dynamics and the directions of force. The paradigms of analysis are: position and role of an actor) same actors in the power equation; the international actors interest in a certain geographical area; perception of the actors on their own power; the perception on the intensity of actor's interest in specific geographical area. With the help of all these paradigms, the geopolitical position actor within the field of an international relations as well as dynamics of the geopolitical phenomenon in a region or at the global level are correctly described and evaluated.

The terms used in an geopolitical analysis are also used by other sciences which deal with the study of the contemporary, geopolitical and social phenomena, but these have sometime particular meanings in the geopolitical theory and methodology.

NOTES

¹ Hervé Conteau - Bégarie, "Géostratégie: le mot et la chose", in *Strategique*, nr. 58, 2/1995, pp. 7-26; Christian Dandel, "Geografie, geopolitică și geostrategie: termeni în schimbare", in E. I. Emandi, Gh. Buzatu, V. S. Cucu, *Geopolitica*, Iași, 1994, pp. 290-311; Sergiu Tămaș, *Geopolitica*, București, 1995, pp. 193-201.

² James N. Rosenau, *Turbulența în politica mondială*. *O teorie a schimbării și continuității*, București, 1984, pp. 93-113.

³ *Ibidem*, p. 103.

⁴ Lewis H. Lapham, Notebook, "Leviathan in trouble", in *Harpers*, sept. 1988.

^{5, 6} Marie Françoise Durand, Jacques Lévy, Denis Retaillé, "Le monde: espaces et systèmes", Courrier international, 10 janvier 1991.

⁷ Colin L. Powell, "From Globalism to Regionalism", in *From Globalism to Regionalism: New Perspectives on N. S. Foreign and Defense Policies*, ed. Patrick M. Cronin, National Defense University Press Washington D.C., p. 16.

- ⁸ Apud Sergiu Tămaş, op. cit., pp. 248-249.
- ⁹ James N. Rosenau, op. cit., p. 110.
- ¹⁰ Ives Lacoste, Préambule, in *Dictionnaire Géopolitique*, Flammarion 1993, pp. 3-4.
- ¹¹ Frank Debié, Este geopolitica o stiință? Un aspect al geografiei politice a lui Peter Taylor, in vol. E.I. Emandi, Gh. Buzatu, V. S. Cucu, op. cit., p. 316.
- ¹² Sergiu Tămaş, op. cit., p. 174.
- ¹³ Sterie Ciulache, "Influențe asupra percepțiilor lumii politice", in vol. E. I. Emandi, Gh. Buzatu, V.
- S. Cucu, op. cit., p. 336.
- ¹⁴ Ion Conea, "Geopolitica o știință nouă", in vol. E. I. Emandi, Gh. Buzatu, V. S. Cucu, op. cit., p. 57.
- ¹⁵ Sergiu Tămaş, *op. cit.*, pp. 52-54.
- ¹⁶ Apud, Ion Conea, op. cit., in loc cit., p. 65.
- ¹⁷ et collab., Sergiu Tămaş, op. cit., pp. 52-53.
- ¹⁸ Ion Conea, op. cit., in loc. cit., pp. 57-58.
- ¹⁹ Ion Conea, op. cit., in loc. cit., pp. 61-62; Christian Dandel, op. cit., in loc. cit., p. 291.
- ²⁰ Christian Dandel, op. cit., in loc. cit., p. 302.
- ²¹ et collab., Claude Raffestin, *Géopolitique et histoire*, Payot, Lausanne, 1990, pp. 9-28; Ion Conea, *op. cit.*, in *loc. cit.*, pp. 36-47; Christian Dandel, *op. cit.*, in *loc. cit.*, pp. 290-292; 297-302.
- ²² Ion Conea, op. cit., în loc. cit., p. 41.
- ²³ *Ibidem*, p. 45.
- ²⁴ Paul Claval, *La nouvelle géographie*, P.U.F., Paris, 1982, apud Christian Dandel *op. cit.*, in *loc. cit.*, p. 298, nota 30.
- ²⁵ E. A. Pozdneakov, *Gheopolitika*, Moskva, p. 46.
- ²⁶ Christian Dandel, op. cit., in loc. cit., p. 300.
- ²⁷ Apud, E. A Pozdneakov, op. cit., p. 46.
- ²⁸ Ibidem.
- ²⁹ Ladis K. D. Kristof, "Geopolitica domeniu de studiu", in vol. E. I. Emandi, Gh. Buzatu, V. S. Cucu, *op. cit.*, p. 318.
- ³⁰ François Caron, "Géopolitique et géostratégie", in Géostratégique, nr. 58, 1995. L'Institut de Stratégie Comparée, Paris, pp. 32-33;
- ³¹ Paul Kennedy, Naissance et déclin de grands puissances, Payot, 1992, p. 27.
- ³² Ferruccio Botti, "Le concept de géostratégie et son application à la nation italienne dans les théories du général Durando (1846)", in *Geostratégique*, nr. 58, 1955, pp. 124-125.
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- ³⁵ Paul Kennedy, op. cit., p. 27.
- ³⁶ Elements de géostratégie et défense de la France, l'Institut d'Études de Securité, février, 1995, p. 13.
- ³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 13.
- ³⁸ André Vigorie, Géostratégie des océans, Caen, 1990, p. 9.
- ³⁹ Martin Motte, op. cit., in loc. cit., p. 118.
- ⁴⁰ Hervé Conteau-Bégariem op. cit., in loc. cit., p. 24.
- ⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p. 19.
- ⁴² Christian Dandel, op. cit., in loc. cit., p. 304.
- ⁴³ Ion Conea, op. cit., in loc. cit., p. 64.
- 44 Christian Dandel, op. cit., in loc. cit., p. 303.
- 45 Ibidem.
- 46 Sergiu Tămaș, op. cit., p. 237.
- ⁴⁷ V. Haseldonsky, "Metodologia gestionării crizei", dissertation à *Academia de Înalte Studii Militare*, București, 15 03. 1977.