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Robert Ištók, Dominika Plavčanová¹

GEOSTRATEGIC POSITION OF SLOVAKIA (SELECTED ISSUES)

Abstract:

Geostrategic analyses of position of the state are focused on evaluation of its location and geographic, demographic, economic and military attributes in geopolitical context, mainly in the comparison with neighbouring countries. From the small and middle state's point of view are those analysis linked with their foreign policy orientation and at the same time they contribute to its national interests formulation. Submitted analysis presents the position of Slovak Republic in the Central-European space and points to selected geostrategic specifics in relation with neighbouring countries, as well as to broader geopolitical space. It also briefly analyse geopolitical contexts of Slovakia's integration process with western structures.

Key words: geostrategy, geopolitics, Slovakia

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Introduction

The relationship between geopolitics and geostrategy is often seen from different perspectives. In available literature, we can find the characteristics of geo-strategy as a sub-discipline of geopolitics (Sykulski 2009), while their relationship is understood in terms of their equal status in the political thinking (Baczwarow-Suliborski 2002) or even in terms of the status of geopolitics as an auxiliary discipline of geostrategic studies (Dobczyński ed. 2013).

In all connections, the concept of geo-strategy is originally understood in the military context. Interconnection with geopolitics is very narrow and geostrategy without geopolitical substrate loses its beneficial value. C. Jean (2003) promotes the idea that geo-strategy is a "military geopolitics" with which we can identify.

Therefore, from our point of view it is natural that the subjects of geostrategic analysis in terms of the state are primarily geopolitical aspects, in terms of evaluating its position and especially the balance of physical and social-geographical features in comparison with neighboring countries. Part of this analysis should be more detailed assessment of the specifics that affect its position in the surrounding geopolitical environment. The evaluation of these aspects can clearly contribute to the development of military doctrines of major powers and at the minimum to the formulation of national interests of middle and small size states.

From the position of medium/middle and small states, geostrategy is therefore primarily related to the line of their foreign policy. Linking with geopolitics rests with the geopolitical environment in which states operate and the subject of changes is primarily related to the decline, respectively connected with the strengthening of existing centers of power, but also with the emergence of new ones. Medium/middle and small states need to react flexibly to such changes. State has to accept geostrategy, which reflects the objectively existing geopolitical conditions (Dobczyński ed. 2013).

In the geopolitical context it is necessary to mention that the term "geostrategy" has appeared after the World War II and replaces by the Nazis discredited term "geopolitics". Thus, the analysis had indeed geopolitical nature, but it was presented as "geo-strategic". Thus, the concept of "geostrategy" became superior to geopolitics. Today, we can conclude that geostrategy is essentially military geopolitics. As L. Moczulski (2009) writes, geostrategy is a part of geopolitics, which focuses on peace and military rivalry between the military potentials. However, these potentials are closely linked to geopolitical aspects.

The submitted analysis presents the position of the Slovak Republic in Central Europe and highlights the selected geostrategic specifics in relation to neighboring countries, and to the broader geopolitical space. It also briefly analyzes the geopolitical context during the process of Slovakia's integration into western structures.

Slovakia's position in space-political structure

Slovakia is according to its area (49,034 km²) on the 126th place among the countries of the world and in terms of population (5,445 thousands) on the 110th place. This would suggest that Slovakia belongs to the small states. According to the geopolitical classifications of states, in this aspect is Slovakia rated as a small state (Bucek et al. 2009).

It may be stated that the criterion of "size" of the state is very vague and imprecise. Its assessment depends on a subjective approach, of who evaluates the size. In this context, it is about the perception of its citizens (amateurs and professionals), as well as its political leaders, respectively foreign observers. The state is thus small if it presents itself as small and if the others think it is (Drulák 1997).

While the former Czechoslovakia was considered as a medium size country, both successor states are different. Not only Slovak geographers, but also political scientists consider Slovakia in this regard as a small state. Slovak geographer K. Ivanička (1999) writes that the population and area rank the Slovak Republic among small countries. Also according to D. Šmihula (2000), Slovakia is "within its geographic and demographic parameters small Central European state." These assessments are based on the basic geographic data - area and population.

In recent years the number of small states in the world is growing. In addition, it can be stated that many of these countries prosper well. The situation in the post-Cold War gave the opportunity to rise for a number of separate states, most of which can be considered in terms of its population and area as small. At the same time open system of world economy helps viable existence of small states (Drulák 1998). These findings are encouraging for Slovakia.

Size of the state do not depends only on the size of its population and area. Also the other indicators should be taken into account. Several authors have already focused on the issue of hierarchical typology of states. It should be emphasized that an important factor in assessing the size of the state is the extent of its power, understood as the ability to influence the behavior of other states according to its own plans, respectively on enforcement of its will to assert its interests in various regions. These capabilities are limited in many states. "Small" in this context thus means "not too strong" (Drulák 1997). Mentioned skills depend on several factors which are very diverse in nature, and basic geographical parameters (area and population) are although significant, but in that context not always decisive. If we analyze the position of Slovakia in terms of its "size" (also from the aspect of the scope of authority) and the relationship to its neighbors, respectively to other countries of Central Europe, then we must conclude that Slovakia is in this area the "least powerful" state.

It should be noted that the "size" is an important factor influencing the conduct of states, but it is influenced also by the other factors (e.g. the economic level, geographic location, nature and stability of the political system, respectively institutional organization of the state). Therefore, even states that are approximately the same size in terms of area and population would not be similar in other characteristics. If we compare countries which have approximately the same population as Slovakia (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Denmark, Finland, Georgia, Croatia, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Nicaragua, Papua - New Guinea, Turkmenistan), we can conclude that this is a very heterogeneous group of countries, belonging to different levels of "size". Slovakia by taking into account several criteria belongs among the "biggest" state in this group.

Finally, in the issue of "size" and "smallness" of Slovakia should be emphasized that these indicators in terms of state's position an important role plays the international prestige acquired by state success in domestic and foreign policy, the level of the economy, the quality of science and research as well as the participation in integration processes and engaging in international missions in the framework of humanitarian assistance, respectively peacekeepers. In this context, the position of Slovakia since its declaration of independence has improved.

The defining characteristics of Slovakia include its inland location. It appears that in the case of relatively small Europe (as

opposed to other continents) it does not mean that the position of the state has only the negative effects. The nuanced approach is represented by the access to the Danube waterway. As Klein (2000) writes, "even though the Danube touches the borders of Slovakia only in the southwest, the geopolitical space of Slovakia is crucially influenced by this European communications corridor." The Danube strengthens its economic and transport position and connects it with the countries of Southeast and Western Europe, with which it has a direct territorial contact. Finally, it also provides access to the Black Sea through the canal Rhine - Main - Danube and to the North Sea. Certain advantages for Slovakia as a European landlocked country present the possibility of developing transit transport, supported by extensive trade between the countries of the integrating continent. The traditional weakness of the inland location of states, consisting in terrestrial borders as barriers to access to the sea, has been removed in Europe, after the creation and expansion of the Schengen system, which Slovakia joined in the end of 2007.

Establishment of Slovakia into Western structures

If we agree with the statement of G. Baziur (2014), the Slovak identity formation has been linked to separatist-emancipatory movements of Slovaks in relation to Hungary, then we can conclude that these processes continued during Slovakia's membership of the Czechoslovak State (1918-1939 and 1945-1992). In the

groundbreaking historical periods there has been consolidated effort of independence. After the collapse of the communist bloc in the years 1989 - 1990, these efforts resulted on January 1, 1993 by the emergence of the independent Slovak Republic.

After the split of Czechoslovakia into two independent states the Slovak Republic went through a complex way with the ambition to establish itself within the framework of Western civilization with all the political and economic consequences that goes with it. This objective was complicated to gain by several factors. In particular, gaining independence in 1993 as a result of a long emancipation process meant a new experience for Slovakia. Unlike its neighbors, Slovakia was previously part of larger state structures, and within them it still acted as a weaker part. The advantage was that the new Slovak Republic immediately after its creation was acknowledged by all powers, as well as many other countries in the world.

The period after 1993 can be characterized by the search for its own path in transformation strategy, which was marked by several problems. These resulted mainly from internal political changes. In addition, political and economic developments in Slovakia were affected by a lack of experience in dealing with new problems related to the transformation of the political and economic system. Integration ambitions of Slovakia were from 1990 to 1998 broken by the government policy of Vladimir Meciar, leader of the (HZDS) Movement for a Democratic Slovakia. In this period there have been

several negative interventions in the establishment of Slovakia as a trustworthy country ready to join the European Union and NATO.

In May 1993 Zbigniew Brzezinski visited Slovakia, where he met with top political leaders led by Vladimir Meciar. At this meeting, the American political scientist outlined alternative scenarios of geopolitical destiny of Slovakia, in case if it does not reach the first group of countries that will be taken into Western structures, like other countries of the Visegrad Group. Such a development seen as a "geopolitical adventure" and its implementation would mean "a tragedy for all the inhabitants of Slovakia." He pointed out the proximity of the "oval violence", which will concentrate conflicts and hence the security risks.

Nevertheless, during the government of Vladimir Meciar there was no significant shift in the question of Slovakia's integration into Western structures. The country was ranked among the "Carpathian democracy", a term reflecting the insufficient degree of political transformation in the context of authoritarian rule of the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS). Government policy has opted for a "geopolitical adventure".

An important part of the political development in the years 1993-1997 was a discussion about the entry into Western structures, particularly into NATO. Vladimir Meciar expressed his conviction about the importance of geopolitical position of Slovakia, which itself will ensure the adoption of the country into NATO. Very famous became

his saying "not without us" in terms of the geopolitical features of Slovakia as a bridge between East and West. But at the same time he forgot that the evaluation of the geostrategic and geopolitical position of Slovakia cannot build the illusion of self-importance.

Slovak analyst Alexander Duleba (1997) expressed concern that after the admission of Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary into NATO, its further expansion is blocked and Slovakia will become part of "the new Central Europe". Besides Slovakia it will constitute of Romania, Bulgaria and Ukraine - countries that have not reached a sufficient degree of internal transformation in order to be considered as stable partners. Slovakia's participation in such a "gray zone" would mean its internal political and international political degradation.

Slovakia thus fell out of the first wave of NATO enlargement, when Poland, Czech Republic and Hungary became member states in 1999. Previously it changed the rhetoric of government officials under questioning the need of Slovakia's accession to the organization. The culmination of this policy was the referendum thwarted by the government, in which in March 1997 citizens of the country expressed their will to entry NATO. During this period, gradually enforce opinions, supporting the prospects of Slovakia as a neutral state. These ideas were based on the premise that Slovakia is a small country and therefore its foreign policy should be oriented towards neutrality guaranteed by the European powers and neighboring states (Carpenter 1994).

In 1998, the government of Vladimir Meciar had been replaced by a new political class, consisting of a broad coalition of formerly opposition parties and movements. Prime Minister Mikulas Dzurinda, who performed the post in two terms (1998 - 2006), focused government policies on stabilization the internal situation and transformation of the economy. In foreign policy, Slovakia focused on intensifying preparations for entry into Western structures. These actions led in 2004 to the adoption of the Slovak Republic to the European Union and NATO.

After the integration into these clusters Slovakia took up positions on their eastern border. At the same time after its accession to the Schengen area Slovakia presents part of its eastern border. It is the border with Ukraine, which is the largest neighbor of the Slovak Republic. In terms of security the eastern border with Ukraine represents the greatest threat for Slovakia and it is linked to the separatist conflicts and tensions in the east Ukrainian-Russian relations. Another threat stems from patent transport lines of energy carriers that lead from Russia through Ukrainian territory.

Slovak political elites after 1998 partly modernize and open up the economy and ensure the democratic development of the country along the lines of developed Western democracies. Slovakia's integration into the European Union and NATO has substantially changed its international status. Slovakia increased its political weight in the global context since it became an ally of the most developed

countries of the West. In addition, membership in Western structures allows Slovakia to assert its interests more effectively towards the other States.

Geostrategic position of Slovakia in relation to neighboring countries

As we already mentioned, the division of Czechoslovakia in 1993 meant a fundamental geopolitical change for Slovakia. While Czech-Slovakia was among the countries of medium size, Slovak Republic moves towards a small state. In relation to its neighbors Slovakia came to the new position of power and at the same time transformed the relative importance of the neighboring countries for Slovak politics (Tesař 1994).

Figure 1: Slovakia and neighboring countries - basic demographic and economic indicators

Slovakia and its neighbors - basic, demographic and economic indicators				
State	Area (km²)	The number of inhabitants (mil; 2015)	GDP (mld. USD; 2014)	GDP per capita (USD; 2014)
Slovakia	49 035	5,445	152,6	28 600
Poland	312 885	38,562	954,5	25 100
Ukraine	603 550	44,429	370,8	8 700
Hungary	93 028	9,898	246,4	24 900
Austria	83 871	8,666	395,5	46 400
Czech Rep.	78 867	10,645	314,6	29 900

Source: according to ciafactbook.com

An analysis of the data presented in Figure 1 does show that the Slovak Republic is in all indicators of absolute last. All the neighbors are not only larger, but also demographically numerous. In Europe, Slovakia has so between land-locked States specific position. Excluding the smallest States (San Marino, Liechtenstein, Andorra and Luxembourg), then Slovakia has the biggest difference between its territorial and demographic potential and the same indicators of neighboring countries - Czech Republic is more than a third larger and Hungary has nearly twice the population.

When comparing the basic economic indicators, Slovakia is on the last place in terms of gross domestic product, which is absolute data. The analysis of data relating to the conversion of the gross domestic product (GDP) per capita of Slovakia is on the third place among neighboring states. On the other hand, the country is characterized by the highest level of unemployment.

In the context of analysis of geostrategic situation of the state is essential to take into account also military indicators. According to available data, the position of Slovakia among neighboring countries is more balanced. Its military budget in 2014 almost reached the level of Hungary. Relative to other countries in the context of the military budget and numbers of military personnel is a place of Slovakia in relation to neighboring countries adequate to his position in terms of demographic indicators.

Figure 2: Slovakia and the neighboring states - Military indicators

Slovakia and its neighbors - basic, demographic and economic indicators				
State	Military budget (mld. USD; 2014)	Military personal (thousands, 2014)	Demographic indicator (the number of MP per thousand capita)	Territorial indicator (the number of MP per 100 km²)
Slovakia	1,025	13,50	2,47	27,53
Poland	9,360	120,00	3,11	38,35
Ukraine	4,880	160,00	3,60	26,51
Hungary	1,040	20,00	2,02	21,50
Austria	3,220	29,50	3,40	35,17
Czech Republic	2,220	21,06	1,98	26,70

Source: according to ciafactbook.com

When analyzing the relative indicators, the position of the Slovakia is at the average. The demographic military indicator (frequency of military personnel per thousand inhabitants) is the fourth largest country (before the Czech Republic and Hungary). In comparison of the military territorial indicators (number of military personnel to 100 km²) Slovakia occupies the third place (before Hungary, Ukraine and the Czech Republic).

Conclusion

Slovak Republic, described as a post-communist country has gradually become a fully accepted country of the international community. It turned out that the assumption of Slovakia as an

independent state, which "could in the international interactions more efficiently start using its geographical location, natural, economic and human potential as was the dysfunctional unitaristic Czechoslovak Federation" (Zatlakaj 1992) was true. As Halás writes (2005), also nowadays there is a challenge for Slovakia that consists of "stabilization and transformation of political, economic and social system."

Slovakia is characterized by the small size of the territory, low population and also limited natural and economic resources. These characteristics influence the extent of spatial framework, which may promote Slovakia as a power factor. Past performance of the country as an independent state allows us to agree with the M. Veress (2005), which considers the Slovak Republic to be the culmination of geopolitical developments of Slovak territory and the ideal framework for the completion ethno genesis of Slovaks. Geostrategic position of Slovakia in the context of neighboring countries, as well as its successful integration into Western structures allows us to believe that the country will steadily fulfill its function in relation to its citizens.

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Stanley D. Brunn¹

GEOPOLITICS IN A TOPSY-TURVY WORLD: TEN FUTURISTIC PERSPECTIVES

Abstract:

The paper is based on the following: my studying, teaching, writing and experiencing political geography and global geopolitics for half a century, from my experiences traveling in nearly 80 countries on all continents, from teaching in more than two dozen countries (large and small in the Global North and the Global South) on five continents, and from my professional career interests studying human and human/environmental futures (Brunn 1974, 1981, 1984, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2015, forthcoming). All of these personal and professional ingredients are essential in addressing the topic for this topic because I think it is important for everyone looking at local, regional or international geopolitics to know “where the author is coming from” and “where we are going or where we might be going.”

Permit me to make three points at the outset, which are woven into the discussion below. First, the year is 2016, it is not 2001 or 1989 or 1968 or 1948. Second, it is important in looking at geopolitical futures to look forward, not backwards, about what might be the

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“state and the shape” of the political world. And in that perspective to explore some “new and different” worlds about what “might or could be.” Third, the future is and will not simply a repetition of the past, much as we might think it is or hope it is. There are new actors on regional and world stages, new approaches to seeing a problem, new technologies and from those some new political and geopolitical realities.

Key words: geopolitics, future, hot spots, world.

Introduction

In writing about the worlds of the future and future worlds, there are a number of ways to proceed. One would be to take a detailed, careful and critical look at “what is going on” in the world today. This approach would be sort of a reflective “state of the world” assessment. Such a perspective certainly has merit as it would primarily be based on a critical analysis of present situations and events. A second approach would be to look at major contemporary geopolitical events in specific regions and also what might be or is on the agenda of the United Nations, which is the best forum from which to view the international political arena. In early 2016 this approach would call for examinations of political, economic and cultural events in the Greater Middle East (from Morocco to Turkey to Central Asia), in eastern and southeastern Europe, in South Asia, East Asia, Sub Saharan Africa, Central and South America and also the U.S. These regions have “hot spots” of events reported in major international newspapers and international television networks and internet providers. A third approach would address some specific contemporary topics on regional and global scales today; this focus would certainly have to consider transborder refugee flows, boundary conflicts, terrorism, non-state militias, emerging epidemics, declining global stock markets, lower oil prices, unexpected environmental changes, global arms trade and international economic development

agendas. Realizing that each of these has merit, I decided to integrate all these themes into an overriding focus on the “dynamics of the current geopolitical worlds.” I identify what I consider ten major features of these worlds.

This thinking just expressed leads to the title of this paper: a “topsy-turvy world.” What this phrase connotes in English is a world in which there is a certain amount of dynamism, disruption, unpredictability, uncertainty and unevenness. “Topsy-turvy” actually reflects an “upside-down” world, not an even, orderly and predictable world. One observation about the current world is certain, viz., there is not “one” direction the world is moving or trending, but it is moving in “multiple directions” simultaneously and sometimes with both expected and uncertain results or impacts. Political leaders of all political philosophies, ideologies, experiences, personalities and persuasions, as well as many who advise them (many who probably look backwards more than forwards into the future), are and remain uncertain *what* is going on *where* in many cases. They are often uncertain *why* certain events and processes are unfolding *where* they are occurring and *what* those changes will mean in the immediate and short run for the many “*wheres*” on the world geopolitical map. Insecurity and unpreparedness are part of this “geometry of uncertainty” that perplexes many leaders and advisors. Forget about the long run (next ten or twenty-five years) at this point, because the world is probably best viewed as “many forks in the road ahead.”

Students of geopolitics and regional specialists on the world condition do not need to decide today which “fork or road” or which “forks or roads” to take in discussing geopolitical futures. The “roadmaps” for the future will have different sizes, shapes, names and projections than the present; that is a certainty.

Roadmaps into the Future

Below I address ten points that I think are important in describing, analyzing, predicting and understanding topsy-turvy worlds. The three major features underlying these topsy-turvy worlds are *speed, networks or connectedness, and place or placelessness* (Castells 1996). All have an impact on the major features discussed below. I present salient features of some emerging worlds as I wish to guide readers into thinking about future worlds and use their imaginations to think what these mean for places and regions and peoples they have intimate knowledge. These are not presented in any specific order, as all merit our attention.

1. Boundaries Are Important and Not Important.

The world’s nearly 200 states are living with the Westphalian legacy of nation-state boundaries. Whether we like it or not, this “bounded or territorial world” is a reality, and a perplexing legacy, that we face in today’s world where technology, mobility and knowledge makes traditional ways of looking at boundaries almost obsolete, or if not obsolete, than certainly outdated. The planet’s residents live in a

world where *boundaries make a difference* and where they do not. Boundaries can be closed, bounded and fixed features or they can be open, porous and mean virtually nothing to those entering or leaving. Many cross both kinds of boundaries daily at work, for work and to work (Schwartz 1986; Everard 2000; Duranske 2008). Think about the flows of legal and illegal refugees who are fleeing oppression and repression in Central America and Southwest Asia. And those we don't hear about in Central and Southern Africa? Do refugees know what physical boundaries mean? And also think for a moment where (countries) they are *not* going or entering, not even in small numbers? Very interesting is the list of major political world powers where refugees know they are unwanted, unwelcomed and not tolerated. At the other end of the spectrum are transboundary environments where one crosses with ease. There are no boundary markers, no state customs agents, and no physical barriers. Unlimited and barrier-free movements are hallmarks of much of the EU, as we know today. Boundaries can also make a difference for three other economic groups, viz., (a) business investors looking for good "safe" tax havens, (b) corporations seeking to remove trade barriers for the export of raw materials and finished products and (c) those engaged in illegal sales (drugs, military products and human trafficking). International trade barriers are in many cases as nationally protected as those state boundaries are in the EU. Hindered by the many "rich country protective trade barriers" are poor and geographically disadvantaged

(those landlocked or with short coastlines) countries in the Global South. Finally, in this discussion on boundaries we cannot forget the worlds of social media where users of the internet, iPhones and other personal electronic communication devices are changing not only human relations, but the importance of boundaries. Many refugees carry cell phones as these are essential not only for contacts with homes they left, but for human survival in new spaces they move and interact. More on this topic below.

2. Human Mobility as a Basic Human Right.

The world's states, let alone the world's leaders have never reached agreement on this important point, but it might in the near future. The basic question that arises in a world where the global exchange of global information about many subjects increases dramatically each year is whether human mobility might also be considered a "right" in the same sense as access to quality food, housing, living standards, health and security. The United Nations has long expressed concerns about human rights. In point of fact, refugee issues were important in its founding. But those rights as now expressed by states and organizations are tied to a given territorial space or, as was just discussed, state boundaries. Defining one's rights basically means that we are addressing moral concerns (Smith 1994, 2000; Lee and Smith 2004). And moral concerns relate to values. Sometimes when observing what is transpiring on the world scenes with respect to human mobility (economic opportunities or fleeing repression), one

might question where “morality” concerns are expressed, especially when responding to a crisis, whether it is a religious or ethnic conflict, a major natural disaster, a new disease outbreak, a refugee population or a prolonged famine. One could certainly make the case that mobility and migration issues are a major concern today for much of the EU and Central America. Perhaps those concerns, at least expressed by political leaders, are more in word and law (for example, carefully constructed nuanced words) than in actual daily practice (those who are seeking asylum). Rights are tied to space and boundaries. How governments and citizens respond to these pressing legal and human rights issues will reveal much about our “moral” stance with respect to others (insiders and outsiders). If all individuals sought to move *when* and *where* they wish, the result would not be massive cross-border migrations because most people would remain where they are, as they do now. Regardless what social scientists might have us believe with their studies emphasizing cross-border migration (perhaps even an obsession with migration rather than permanent places of residence) and volumes of published studies on migration processes and migrating people, what is important to know is that most people on the planet do not move; that is, they have and wish to retain strong ties to place and to family, land and local traditions.

3. Religion as a Vastly Understudied and Understood Topic.

One could make a very strong case that religion is a major catalyst for conflict in today's world. This statement would not be hard to document in looking at South Asia, Southeast Asia, Central Asia, the Middle East and even parts of East and Central Europe and Sub Saharan Africa. And these conflicts are not only military, but also appear in civil discourses in the Global North. I would also submit that religion has been a major source of conflict in many regional and global wars in the past, not only in eras of European exploration and discovery, but in post-colonial decades and in post Cold War regions. I suspect a close reading of history and political science texts would also reveal that religion was a major ingredient in many of these conflicts. Having said this, I maintain that religion is not a subject studied seriously, or taken seriously, by those studying diplomacy, conflicts, governments, laws and international relations. It is a subject "shunned" by many scholarly communities in the West (and perhaps elsewhere), perhaps because many scholars themselves are not religious oriented or think that it is not a serious factor important in understanding a region's or country's deep or recent history or even its contemporary culture and political events. Without a background in religion institutions or religion in history and society, elected leaders and of those in diplomatic corps are bound to make blunders, mistakes and gaffes, some serious, about interpreting what is actually transpiring. A case in point is the number of Foreign Service personnel

and even ambassadors in Europe and North America who probably knew very little or nothing about Arab culture, Shia and Shiite religious factions, historical and contemporary Islam, before 2001. And I suspect those “gaps” remain today in our understanding or misunderstanding about the growth of Pentecostal movements in Africa, emerging religious communities in China, secularization in Latin America and Europe and the Islamic diaspora fueled by petroeconomies in the Middle East. A focus on religion and culture as an integral part of international diplomacy training would help all countries recognize the importance of this vital cultural element in the political world. A serious study of the religion/culture/politics intersections would also likely mean one would have to face or confront some of the morality issues raised above.

4. Conflict as Exceptionalism.

Perhaps this topic should be placed at the start of this presentation or perhaps it should be listed near the end. What I am suggesting is that political analysts studying geopolitics and international relations need to place in some perspective what is going on in historical and contemporary political worlds. Those professional scholars and leaders who seek to keep abreast about what is going on in the world today could and might assume that the world indeed has always been and is really a topsy-turvy and confusing world. It could easily be described as a place of endless and understandable chaos with regular reports in the print and visual media about civil wars, bombings,

terrorist acts and plots, non-state militias, assassinations, cross-border conflicts, clandestine and violent drug cartels, military threats, rigged elections and verbal threats by populist leaders. These are among the topics that “make news” and feed the frenzied international thinking that the world indeed is in terrible shape and getting worse. All these events and news reports, visual and narrative, however, need to be kept in some global perspective. Given that there are nearly 200 states, large and small, on the world political map, only a small fraction, a very small fraction, are ever mentioned in the regional and global news on any given day as experiencing some violent political action or military event. From my perspective there are weeks that go by with few or no reports from some regions and more than that for many countries. That is, they are not “newsworthy” in a world experiencing or reporting state or interstate violence. Perhaps the reasons for the absences of such reporting is that reporters are “not there,” which may be the case. If there are no reporters to cover a sensational or newsworthy violent or military act, then presumably there is “no news.” Is this really true? I do not think so. What we do know that the geographical distribution of print and visual reporters for any major global or continental newspaper or television news organization is very, very uneven. Some regions have many reporters within their “reporting territories,” such as the Middle East, Europe, North America and East Asia and other regions, including most of Africa, have very few. Under-reporting does not mean nothing is

happening (Mayer 2002). Rather it just means that what is happening there is determined by someone (a gatekeeper or a person/office that makes decisions what to report) or some organization as not deemed worthy of informing readers and viewers. Perhaps decisions are made about “what is newsworthy” from the perspective of the Global North or rich countries and regions, not the world’s poor regions. I make this point because the kinds of violent, sensational and catastrophic news portrayed in major newspapers and on tv screens around the world are exceptional, atypical or unusual events, even if they are excessively violent. Certain regions dominate “bad or unpleasant news” coverage more than others (Campbell and Power 2010). Forgotten amidst the global reports and reporting are the daily stories where people live together in harmony, raise families, celebrate holidays, live civil lives, enjoy neighborly hospitality, attend worship, sporting and music events, and express love in many different ways.

5. Geopolitical Visual Branding.

The point has been made by a number of social scientists that the world we live in is a world where speed and fluidity are keys, but also that it is a “visual” and highly visual world. It is not a world where text or narrative or words are most important today, but a world where “what is seen” is considered most important (Ditmer 2010). This point is easily evident in the previous point about political conflicts, environmental disasters and human suffering. States themselves recognize this point or are struggling to recognize what this “visual

world” means and how to adjust for it. It is a world where many a state seeks to “brand itself” itself in some way. That is, the state searches for the most effective ways to present itself both to its own national populations and diverse audiences, perhaps in some form of “brand nationalism,” but also to outsiders, whether they be neighbors, friends or foes. Does it wish to be “seen” as environmentally friendly, hospitable to new minorities, attractive to international businesses and safe for global tourist markets and fighting terrorists (Der Derien 2010)? How this branding is done will depend on those who can prepare effective branding labels and then disseminate it in some attractive, appealing and wholesome ways. The branding may be done in a tightly controlled state-media office where the “media arm” or office is constantly using its resources to generate support for a political leader and his (yes, usually men) programs. Those labels may be promoting economic initiatives, showing support for a friendly leader elsewhere, punishing opposition leaders for unpopular views and displaying weapons on national holidays that are meant to drum up support for nationalist agendas. The brands may be inaccurate and deceptive, but they are effective ways to seek ways to inform and perhaps pacify an information-hungry and nationalistic-oriented public. Words used in speeches about adversaries or friends may be used in the official branding. The branding may also include timely photo opportunities with other leaders at a conference or leaders in front of some military hardware, gigantic development project or

heritage cultural event. The state's official webpage is another example where the state can promote itself to whomever it wishes through images of leaders, friends, students and observing parades, opening factories and welcoming dignitaries. The successful state using visual imagery knows that in many cases a short visual "clip" of an event (meeting with a friend or former adversary or being seen with citizens at some popular event) represents a powerful instrument for both foreign and domestic audiences, much more powerful than a lengthy radio or newspaper interview. Images are power and more powerful than words. In the brief time (less than ten seconds) that one sees a "branding" event, the viewer can form lasting impressions about leaders and events. Branding is a form of "visual geopolitics" which itself is an increasing important concern for those within governments and those scholars studying geopolitical relations (Hughes 2007; MacDonald 2010; MacDonald, Hughes and Dodds 2010).

6. Bottom-up Geographies and the Hidden Power of Social Media.

A point was made above about the importance of social media in today's world. This is an increasing cultural phenomenon that is evident in all world regions; its users are everywhere, in rural areas and big cities, in remote rural areas and in gigantic gateway cities. Its users include the young and very young, the middle aged and also elders, refugees and migrants, old and new diaspora members,

tourists and travelers, pilgrims and immobile populations, members of possessed and dispossessed groups, military militias and ad hoc grassroots opposition groups. (Bottom-up refers to those at the lower end of social and economic categories.) The worlds of social media, which are both text and visual, are challenging many of the traditional forms of citizen involvement, identity, community action and citizen-leader communication (Holmes 1997; Smith and Guarnizo 1998; Kim and Hart 2002; Singh 2002). One might think of other information/communication technologies that changed the political landscape in the past, not only individual, family and community lives, but also locations of organizations and institutions (schools, governments, hospitals, work places, leisure and worship places, libraries, etc.). The introduction of the telephone and later television were in a few locations at the outset, but they then diffused slowly, much slower than the contemporary globalization or internationalization of contemporary social media (cell phones, apps, blogs, websites, etc.). Social media are important in today's geopolitical world for two reasons. First, is that many (probably most) governments do not know precisely how to deal with all the accompanying issues (personal and private) related to its use: the messaging, images being transferred to almost anyone anywhere and establishing regulations on what is legal and permissible. These information/communication/technology issues are complex and many government leaders, whether elected or selected and whether in

democratic or tyrannical states, are trying to find ways to best deal with them. Social media technology is developing much faster than any regulations that might be set up to restrict or control its use. This phenomenon presents a challenging problem for many states. The second issue is that social media can be seen as a “bottom up” way of expressing views and addressing concerns; it is not a “top-down” process. A wide diversity of groups use social media for all kinds of purposes including political empowerment, social protest, health care, law enforcement and citizen surveillance, family connections, economic advancement, non-state militia recruiting, human trafficking, risk management, disease warnings, threatened biodiversity ecosystems, personal and professional opportunities are seen as ways traditional groups, communities and even individuals can and might assume some greater control over their own destinies. Many of these uses are not clear cut, but “blurred” with respect to legality, permissibility or illegality. The short and medium and long term impacts of these “new social media worlds” have yet to unfold. And they are likely to unfold in some unexpected and unpredictable new ways.

7. Political/Environmental Worlds.

Initially natural scientists informed us about changes occurring in the earth’s physical environment. Their reports were about disappearing plant and animal species, shifting biodiversity zones, rising ocean temperatures, shrinking glaciers, rising coastlines and finally greater

frequencies of catastrophic events and more populations at risk. Social/environmental scientists eventually agreed that the earth's physical environments were changing and affecting agricultural productivity and responsible for unusual seasonal temperature variations and precipitation levels. Political leaders were among the last to recognize and accept these emerging "earth/environmental realities," perhaps because what we are dealing with are long term conditions and they are used to looking at "the future" as "my next election," not some projected events twenty or fifty years in the future (Dalby 2013; Kahn 2013). Perhaps they were also in a "denial" mode in which they could assume that politics had nothing to do with creating or even solving the problem. Scientific communities in the natural and human sciences around the world are now being looked at for not only describing what is actually transpiring in many parts of the planet, but also presenting and projecting scenarios that range from "doing little to doing much." It needs to be stated that not every member of the public in any country, nor all elected or selected leaders, agree that this is a serious nature and a political problem worth tackling. Some leaders hide behind religion and others are just skeptical of humans being able to exert any long term changes on planet earth's environment. Why this is an important geopolitical issue is that the uses or misuses of natural resources as related to economic and energy policies are basically political. How short and long term economic goals are related to the human condition is

probably a concern that most governments would probably agree is important to them. Answers have to do with issues not only related to the work environment, but also the living environment and human/environment ecosystems. It is in the living environmental arena where air and water quality, human safety and security and protection from hazards and disasters are at the heart of the hazard/politics debate. These issues not easy for political leaders to address as noted above, just like those related to religion, because many political leaders do not have a strong environmental science or science or social science background. A university training in engineering, law, and economics is not the same as a training in the social, policy, environmental and health sciences, all which would most likely make one sensitive, or somewhat sensitive, to issues about human need and bettering the lives of children, women, elders, the impoverished, the undernourished, the marginalized and those at most risk to environmental disasters. Most political are probably drawn to political and public service because they are more interested in regulations, business and economic development and public law rather than climate change, disappearing or threatened ecosystems, hazard mitigation and environmental security. Morality issues are also at play in ecological and environmental policy, just as they are in cases related to religion and human rights. Recognizing that the planet's livelihood is in jeopardy and neglecting an understanding of the

political/environmental intersections itself is an important call to action by those who practice and study geopolitics.

8. The Geopolitics of Power and the Powerless.

At its root geopolitics is all about power: *who* has it, *where* is it and *how* is it being used? These words reflect the basic ingredients of geopolitics at any point in a region's deep or contemporary history (O'Tauthail and Dalby 1998). Defining "power" in this context also can and does vary spatially or geographically (Driver 2003). A common schematic used by political geographers, political scientists and others studying comparative politics and international relations is to look at the world in a world systems context, that is, either as a "core-periphery" or "core-semiperiphery-periphery" set of concentric circles. One can depict these zones or rings and apply them to study the world at any given time, for example, the beginning of a century or after a major world war or after a major international event such as the end of colonization or rise of OPEC or the termination of a long running regional conflict. Who (what state or states) are in the core and who are in the periphery are important questions, but so are those who write and use this model to influence global and regional policies? It is tempting to say that the rich are the powerful and the most influential? And they are writing about themselves and their friends. And what are they writing about the periphery or even the semi-periphery? Does anyone with credibility and influence writing about the periphery come from the periphery? Who speaks for them and

what those states consider important? I suggest the above because in an increasingly globally connected world the powerless are being recognized, somewhat belatedly, by the global “core” countries as having and wanting “a place” at that table of what is being discussed or proposed about their future. Rather than a “top-down” approach where the “core” speaks or tries to speak for the “periphery,” the periphery wishes to make its presence known and heard. In major international bodies such as the United Nations Security Council or the International Monetary Fund and many other international organizations, there are calls for greater representation from what is commonly today referred to as the Global South. These are labeled “fourth or fifth world states,” by some scholars. Expanding the UN Security Council to include Brazil, India, Egypt, Iran, Indonesia, Mexico and Nigeria might be one way to have the “powerless” voices heard and seen (Clover 1999; Smith 2009; Vlad, Hurduzeu and Josan 2011). Their agendas on global trade, immigration, climate change, water, biodiversity protection, women and children, regional conflict and even UN decision making might challenge the “core,” but the world’s demographics are on “their side” as they represent increasing percentages of the world’s population compared to the shrinking percentages for France, the United Kingdom and Russia. Behind these thoughts of greater representation of “the poor” in global politics is again the point made above that political leaders and major political parties in core countries especially need to know more about Global

South worlds, not just their economic plights, but environmental, religious and cultural worlds.

9. Living in Fluid, Dynamic and Unexpected Worlds.

I have made the point above that the world is far from static and certain. It is also far from being “even” on almost any human condition variable or indicator. The world is not one which is still or standing still. Rather it is one experiencing internal and external changes almost daily and in many countries. Adjusting to this fluidity, dynamism and exponential growth in networking at all scales represent one of the challenges facing political leaders everywhere. It is not only important that they know this is “the new norm” for many countries and regions, but that they seek to understand “*what is going on where and why.*” That is a basic geopolitical question today facing all countries, large and small, rich and poor, new and old, democratic and tyrannical. This worldview is difficult, and I would acknowledge very difficult, to understand fully for many globally-oriented leaders and their advisors as well as their informed citizenry. The “knowledge” world is a major feature of today’s world, whether it be economic, environmental, social or political (Keohane and Nye 1998; Rosenau 2002). And knowledge is usually associated with power and know-how (Ronfeldt and Arguilla 1999; Rosecrance 1999; Rosenau and Singh 2002). While certainty and an air of knowledge may be an admirable quality of the political leadership, as it looks good for “local” and extra-local branding, it may be that sometimes mistakes are made, or

have been made, and need to be admitted. These may be honest mistakes simply because a previous leader did not think carefully and clearly about a statement or a policy proposed and supported. Or it may be that the leader received poor advice, simply because the advisors did have good training in regional geopolitics, religion, or culture or in the environmental sciences. The topsy-turvy world in truth means that even in the most powerful, influential and rich countries and their elected leaders and advisors may not and will not have all the desired information they need to properly assess and solve a problem. This observation becomes especially critical when one is assessing visual information and receiving massive amounts of electronic information either from official sources (Google Earth and the internet) or from social media sources. All government intelligence communities, which are in the “knowledge business,” have gaps, some wide and some deep, in what they know or don’t know about “*what is going on where.*” To pretend to have complete and accurate knowledge is illusory.

10. Mapping Geopolitics in a Topsy-Turvy World.

I have just outlined what are some distinctive features of the emerging geopolitical worlds. Mapping these will be tricky and often difficult. The familiar map with states and boundaries printed with different colors and using different projections will simply be a map “frozen in time,” that is, when it was produced by the state for official purposes. It is one that appears in children’s and university students’ classrooms

and is displayed in embassies, government offices and libraries around the world. This is far more complicated because the world itself is more complicated. It does not reveal the complex networks that exist among those in diplomatic, adversarial, military, commercial, scholarly and environmental communities. One could easily argue that networks today are more important than cores and peripheries or even maps showing two-dimensional state territories. The case can also be made that states today are mere “points” not territorial units of different sizes and shapes on a world map. One could imagine a map with the core regions being a mix of commercial cores in some states, but other parts of the same state may be in a periphery or perhaps even in a deep periphery. One could also imagine that the networks of humanitarian aid between Middle East countries and those in Europe today are fluid and dynamic and change by the day. And those related to the Middle East and South Asian conflicts are also changing by the day. In short, what is needed to construct a meaningful contemporary and future geopolitical map for the world or for a region or even for an individual country is an understanding of the very ingredients that result from the dynamic world. That is a world with local and regional mixes in changing culture, economies, environments and politics and their mixes are occurring on the ground not in some abstract spaces.

Where We Go From Here?

What I have called attention to in this statement are some salient or distinguishing features of the current world geopolitical map. These may not be new ideas for many readers, but perhaps what is new is that they are presented in a coherent package that ask each of us scholars, political leaders and citizens to reflect on what they mean. Looking at/into the future means that some critical thinking about geopolitics and also instruction in geopolitics. There are many theories and models about global and regional geopolitics that are useful and important in understanding “what is happening where and why” in a political world. But it is equally important that we look at “conditions on the ground,” that is, where people live, where policies are enacted and how they affect those at local scales.

What is important as we move forward to further understand “the future geopolitical worlds” is that we are both open to learning and also “unlearning.” In my view, there are three kinds of learning that are at play here. One is “unlearning,” that is, we find out that some things we learned in our training, and early in personal or professional life, are just no longer true or applicable. It makes little sense to continue to adopt old ideas and theories that no longer apply. Second, we need to “relearn,” that is, to discover what is the world like today, which may be drastically different than five or fifteen or twenty years ago. Relearning is sometimes difficult especially if issues are important today were not important when we were trained.

Examples can be issues about the environment change, religion, women, children, diseases and health care, immigration, information technologies, ad hoc militias and even democratization. Third, when we “relearn,” we are really admitting that we have to learn something different, which may be a different feature of a culture such as religion or new international diaspora unknown previously to us or emerging intersections of topics, such as cybersecurity and cyberwarfare, social media and branding, environmental security and ethics or the empowerment of women and marginalized groups. Universities and schools of Foreign Service and international diplomacy that train professionals need to confront these new geopolitical realities if they are to prepare for the kinds of geopolitical topsy-turvy worlds that their children and grandchildren will face. Failure to have a sound knowledge about these new topics of a geopolitical nature as well as some flexibility in thinking will likely lead to further misunderstandings and conflicts at local and national and regional scales. The challenges are also there for those who teach, study and practice geopolitics and who also need to be willing to unlearn, relearn and continuously learn. My final point is a simple one, but an important one. With the current changes that are occurring on the world geopolitical map and the changes that will be occurring everywhere in the next five, ten, and twenty-five years, one point we need to remember.

“The final political map has not been drawn.”

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Rafał Koszek¹

GEOPOLITICS IN THE GEOGRAPHICAL WORK OF STRABO

Abstract:

Strabo of Amasia is recognized to be one of the greatest ancient geographers. His monumental work *Geography* is the first geographical treatise which encompasses the whole known world of that time. Although geopolitics as an independent area of knowledge appeared in the end of the nineteenth century, its origins can be found in the Antiquity. Due to the similarity and relations between geopolitics and geography it is justified to seek sources of geopolitics in the works of the earliest geographers.

Therefore, it seems to be quite reasonable to examine the Strabo's contribution to the development of geopolitical concepts. The main aim of this article is to prove the thesis that Strabo is the forerunner of geography, as well as of geopolitics. Research is based on Strabo's work *Geography*. It consists of seventeen books. The two initial books include a theoretical introduction to the next fifteen books, which describe particular regions of the ancient *oikoumene*. The paper presents geopolitical ideas contained in the general introduction, as

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well as in the depiction of different regions. One of the most meaningful concepts, repeatedly expressed by Strabo, is that geography should serve the needs of states and their authorities. It helps the rulers to govern their countries and provides information about the others, what is useful both for foreign policy and international trade. It is probably the description of the Italian Peninsula where we can find the most expressive example of Strabo's geopolitical thinking. He analyses its geographical features in terms of its security as well as its internal and international economic opportunities. He also noticed the superiority of the Roman Empire in comparison to the other nations. The geopolitical ideas are visible in the description of particular cities as well. This article takes into account Sinopê, located on the southern coast of The Black Sea and the city of Rome.

Key words: Antiquity, geography, geopolitics, Strabo

1. Introduction

Strabo of Amasia (64 BC – 23 AD), the author of a monumental work *Geography*, is traditionally regarded as one of the greatest ancient geographers. His treatise consists of seventeen books and attempts to encompass the whole known world. It is for a long time the object of geographers' interest because there are preserved very few ancient works of that kind. Although geopolitics arose in the end of the nineteenth century, it is possible to find geopolitical concepts in the Antiquity. Due to the similarity and significant relations between geography and geopolitics, it is justified to seek geopolitical ideas in writings of the ancient geographers.

Authors of contemporary geopolitical handbooks often mention Strabo when they describe the ancient sources of their field of study. Nevertheless, they either fail to depict his ideas and achievements (e.g. Cohen 2009, Ugarte 1981), or explain them in a very limited way (e.g. Moczulski 2010, Potulski 2010). Therefore, it seems to be quite reasonable to examine Strabo's contribution to the development of geopolitical concepts. The main aim of this article is to prove the thesis that Strabo is the forerunner of geography, as well as of geopolitics. The research is based on an English translation of *Geography*, which was published in the beginning of the twentieth century². The paper consist of three major parts. The first one

² Author of this paper used the translation made by Horace Leonard Jones (1917-1932), which available on the website maintained by Bill Thayer. It contains a lot of translations of

describes Strabo of Amasia and his monumental work. In the second part one can find a brief depiction of political geography and geopolitics, their essence as well as some similarities and differences. The third part is an attempt at presentation of the most meaningful geopolitical ideas contained in *Geography*.

2. Strabo and his *Geography*

Strabo's *Geography* was published in the very beginning of the first century AD. According to the most of the published sources, the origin of geographical thought dates back to the eight century BC. Human beings always wanted to know what is behind the horizon line and on the other side of mountain ridges. The interest in geography arose from the everyday human needs. Greeks, who have lived on the Mediterranean and the Black Sea coasts, waged wars and trade mainly by sea. Thus, they needed information about sea routes and other countries. Geographical knowledge was also essential for Romans, who operated mostly by road.

Strabo was born in 64 BC in Amasia which was the largest city of the Pontus region of that time. He used Greek to compose his treatise. The only source that give us information about Strabo's life is *Geography*. He was growing up in an aristocratic family, therefore he

ancient writings: e.g. *Natural History* (Pliny the Elder), *Roman Histories* (Polybius), *Gallic War* (Caesar).

received a great education. His first teacher was Aristodemus of Nysa³. Young Strabo moved to Nysa which was then an important cultural centre. Local scholars were focused on Homer's epics. Aristodemus, the teacher of rhetoric and grammar, was also mainly interested in works of Homer. This might have influenced Strabo, who mentioned the author of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* for many times, since he considered him as the founder of geography. When Strabo was about twenty years old, he moved to Rome. There he had two teachers: Xenarchus of Seleucia and Tyrranion of Amisus. In that time Rome became the most important intellectual centre, where the Greek scholars acquainted Romans with their cultural heritage. As a result, Strabo received great education that enabled him to describe the whole *oikoumene*, comprising a wide range of information (Dueck 2000).

"I have travelled westward from Armenia as far as the regions of Tyrrhenia opposite Sardinia, and southward from the Euxine Sea⁴ as far as the frontiers of Ethiopia. And you could not find another person among the writers on geography who has travelled over much more of the distances just mentioned than I" (Strabo 1917-1932, 2.5.11⁵)

Although it may not be true that Strabo was the one who travelled the greatest distance among all geographers, he indeed

³ Nysa – ancient city located in the south-eastern part of Asia Minor, whose remains are in Sultanhisar district of Aydın Province of Turkey.

⁴ Euxine Sea – The Black Sea

⁵ 2.5.11 – book. chapter. paragraph

travelled a lot. He knew very well Asia Minor where he was born. He visited for instance the Italian Peninsula, Greece and Egypt. Nevertheless, he didn't see many places and regions that he had described in *Geography* (e.g. Iberia, Germany). He explains this issue as follows: "And men who are eager to learn proceed in just that way: they trust (...) those who have seen or wandered over any region, no matter what, some in this and some in that part of the earth, and they form in one diagram their mental image of the whole inhabited world" (Strabo 1917, 2.5.11)

The main aim of Strabo's treatise was to depict regions of the whole *oikoumene*. In that time there was a significant increase of information about different places due to the territorial expansion of the Roman Empire. *Geography* consists of seventeen books. The two initial books comprise a general introduction to the next fifteen books, which describe particular regions of the inhabited world. The regional description starts from Iberia, which contain contemporary Spain and Portugal. The fourth book encompasses the ancient Gaul, British Isles and Shetland. In the fifth and sixth books one can find information about the Italian Peninsula. The next book deals with a few regions: Germany, Mysia, Dacia, Crimea, Illyria, Pannonia and Epirus. Greece is depicted in the next three books. From the eleventh to the fourteenth book there is a description of Asia Minor and the islands: Samos, Chios, Rodos and Cyprus. The fifteen book includes Persia and India. In the next book one can find information about Mesopotamia, Syria,

Phoenicia, Judea. The last book contains the description of Egypt, Ethiopia and Libya (North Africa).

Strabo's work is consistent and interesting, it is based on a well-considered plan (Dueck 2000). In compliance with a traditional division of ancient *oikoumene*, the inhabited world is separated into three parts: Asia, Europe and Libya. The order of the description of subsequent regions proceeds from west to east, in line with the ancient tradition, too. There is a visible division of the society into two groups. On the one hand there were civilized people, on the other there were barbarians (Almagor 2005).

4. Geopolitics and political geography

In order to examine Strabo's contribution to the development of geopolitical ideas, it is necessary to show various methods of understanding and different assumptions between political geography and geopolitics, which are known from literature. Most of the contemporary scholars do not consider what is political geography and geopolitics. Some of them say it is the same and numerous geographers avoid to use the term geopolitics.

Geopolitics is a field of study that investigate the influence of geographical factors on the behaviour and other centres of power. It was Rudolf Kjellen who for the first time formulated the name and meaning of geopolitics. As well as in political geography, it's subject matter include geographical and political phenomena. Nonetheless,

these fields of study differ significantly in terms of the purpose of research and methods. Political geography examines the influence of political factors (e.g. political system, administrative decisions) on human activities and the changes in landscape. Geopolitics operates in the opposite direction, it tries to discover how geographical factors impact the decisions of states or other centres of power. Thus, political geography is focused on the landscape, in contrast geopolitics centres on the political structures (e.g. states). The explanatory element in political geography is the explained element in geography, and vice versa. The geographical factors and phenomena are all objects and processes that occur on the surface of the earth and differ in terms of location.

5. Geopolitics in the Strabo's work

“And that other argument, it seems to me, is adduced with special force in reference to present-day conditions, namely, that the greater part of geography subserves the needs of states; for the scene of the activities of states is land and sea, the dwelling-place of man. The scene is small when the activities are of small importance, and large when they are of large importance; and the largest is the scene that embraces all the rest (which we call by the special name of “the inhabited world”) and this, therefore, would be the scene of activities of the largest importance. Moreover, the greatest generals are without exception men who are able to hold sway over land and sea, and to

unite nations and cities under one government and political administration. It is therefore plain that geography as a whole has a direct bearing upon the activities of commanders; for it describes continents and seas – not only the sea inside the limits of the whole inhabited world, but also those outside these limits. And the description which geography gives is of importance to these men who are concerned as to whether this is so or otherwise, and whether known or unknown. For thus they can manage their various affairs in a more satisfactory manner, if they know how large a country is, how it lies, and what are its peculiarities either of sky or soil. But because different kings rule in different quarters of the world, and carry on their activities from different centres and starting-points, and keep extending the borders of their empires, it is impossible either for them or for geographers to be equally familiar with all parts of the world; nay, the phrase “more or less” is a fault much in evidence in kings and geographers. For even if the whole inhabited world formed one empire or state, it would hardly follow that all parts of that empire would be equally well known; nay, it would not be true even in that case, but the nearer regions would be better known. And it would be quite proper to describe these regions in greater detail, in order to make them known, for they are also nearer to the needs of the state. Therefore it would not be remarkable even if one person were a proper chorographer for the Indians, another for the Ethiopians, and still another for the Greeks and Romans” (Strabo 1917-1932, 1.1.16.)

The above text comes from the first book of Strabo's Geography. As it was earlier mentioned, the two initial books include a general introduction to the description of particular regions of oikoumene. In the first book Strabo presents the main concepts of his work. The above quotation is probably the most appropriate résumé of geopolitical ideas presented in Geography.

Strabo repeatedly expresses statement that geography should serve the needs of politicians and rulers. This means that he meets the basic geopolitical requirement that geopolitics investigates how the geographical factors influence on states and other centres of power. He emphasizes that the better the ruler is acquainted with location and diversification of the state, the better he can govern it. In other place of Geography, not included in the above quotation, Strabo mentions that in a geographical treatise one should not list all details, but depict a region in a way that is accessible for politicians. Thus, there is a need of appropriate selection of information in order to make it useful for the rulers.

The second part of the quotation applies to the regional diversification of geographical knowledge. Strabo claims that regions where the rulers live affects their geographical perception. He also pays attention to the acquaintance of their own region which is necessary for them. In this ideas we can find relations with one of the modern subdiscipline of geopolitics – the regional geopolitics. In accordance with its assumptions, individual countries conduct policy in

line with their particular advantages. Therefore we have for instance German geopolitics, France geopolitics, Polish geopolitics, which serve the needs of individual states and are different from each other.

Strabo also expresses an interesting idea that there is a possibility to unite nations and cities under one government and one political administration. Although he doesn't develop this concept, but we may assume that there were theoretical considerations about this issue. It can be connected with the contemporary idea of global geopolitics, which deals with the ways of obtaining a global dominion by any centre of power. To conclude, in the theoretical part of his work, Strabo presents some preliminary geopolitical concepts, nevertheless he doesn't use the word geopolitics. We can see that his geographical ideas are tightly connected with the needs of states and in his opinion, geographical knowledge is very important in conducting state's policy. The concept of geography as a field of study that serve the needs of states can be found in the writings of one of the most important polish geopoliticians – Eugeniusz Romer. One of his most influential work was even entitled Geography in service of the state (Romer 1926). One can find this idea in the contemporary, geopolitical papers as well. Mackubin T. Owens claims that "Perhaps the most important influence on strategy making, however, is geography (...)" The geographic setting imposes distinctive constraints on a nation's policy and strategy while at the same time providing distinctive opportunities" (Owens 2015, 463-464). He defines geopolitics as "the

relation of international political power to the geographical setting. Geopolitics is essentially the study of the political and strategic relevance of geography to the pursuit of international power” (Owens 2015, 464).

Turning now to the second part of Geography which includes the description of particular regions of the inhabited world, we are going to examine how Strabo realizes his theoretical assumptions. At the turn of the ages Rome was the greatest military and political power. Strabo, who for many years lived there, was undoubtedly acquainted with the city of Rome and the whole Italian Peninsula. Moreover, he probably was a patriot of the Roman Empire what might have influenced his notion about this region. This is perhaps not particularly strange, as the political circumstances for a long impact the scholar’s activities.

The sixth book of Geography contains information about the Italian Peninsula. After the three initial chapters which in detail depict different parts of the Peninsula, in the last, fourth chapter the author gives a synthetic characteristics of Italia and tells a historical story about the development of the Roman Empire. The description of the Italian Peninsula is, from a geopolitical point of view, one of the most important and interesting excerpt of Strabo’s narration.

“Such, indeed, is the size and such the character of Italy. And while I have already mentioned many things which have caused the Romans at the present time to be exalted to so great a height, I shall

now indicate the most important things. One is, that, like an island, Italy is securely guarded by the seas on all sides, except in a few regions, and even these are fortified by mountains that are hardly passable. A second is that along most of it is harbourless and that the harbours it does have are large and admirable. The former is useful in meeting attacks from the outside, while the latter is helpful in making counter-attacks and in promoting an abundant commerce. A third is that it is characterised by many differences of air and temperature, on which depend the greater variation, whether for better or for worse, in animals, plants, and, in short, everything that is useful for the support of life. Its length extends from north to south, generally speaking, and Sicily counts as an addition to its length, already so great. Now mild temperature and harsh temperature of the air are judged by heat, cold, and their intermediates; and so from this it necessarily follows that what is now Italy, situated as it is between the two extremes and extending to such a length, shares very largely in the temperate zone and in a very large number of ways. And the following is still another advantage which has fallen to the lot of Italy; since the Apenine Mountains extend through the whole of its length and leave on both sides plains and hills which bear fine fruits, there is no part of it which does not enjoy the blessings of both mountain and plain. And add also to this the size and number of its rivers and its lakes, and, besides these, the fountains of water, both hot and cold, which in many places nature has provided as an aid to health, and then again its good supply

of mines all sorts. Neither can one worthily describe Italy's abundant supply of fuel, and of food both for men and beast, and the excellence of its fruits. Further, since it lies intermediate between the largest races on the one hand, and Greece and the best parts of Libya on the other, it not only is naturally well suited to hegemony, because it surpasses the countries that surround it both in the valour of its people and in size, but also can easily avail itself of their services, because it is close to them" (Strabo 1917-1932, 6.4.1)

Other kind of geopolitical concepts in Strabo's Geography occurs is the description of cities. To illustrate, we can compare depictions of two cities: Sinopê and Rome. Sinopê lies on the southern coast of The Black Sea. Strabo called it "the most noteworthy of the cities in that part of the world" (Strabo 1917-1932, 12.3.11) According to Geography, Sinopê was established by Greeks from Miletus who built there a naval base. In the time of Strabo the city was under the Roman control.

"Sinopê is beautifully equipped both by nature and by nature and by human foresight, for it is situated on the neck of a peninsula, and has on either side of the isthmus harbours and roadsteads and wonderful pelamydes-fisheries, of which I have already made mention, saying that the Sinopeans get the second catch and the Byzantians the third. Furthermore, the peninsula is protected all round by ridgy shores, which have hollowed-out places in them, rock-cavities, as it were, which the people call "choenicides", these are filled with water

when the sea arises, and therefore the place is hard to approach, not only because of this, but also because the whole surface of the rock is prickly and impassable for bare feet. Higher up, however, and above the city, the ground is fertile and adorned with diversified market-gardens; and especially the suburbs of the city. The city itself is beautifully walled, and is also splendidly adorned with gymnasium and market-place and colonnades. But although it was such a city, still it was twice captured, first by Pharnaces, who unexpectedly attacked it all of a sudden, and later by Leucullus and by the tyrant who was garrisoned within it, being besieged both inside and outside at the same time" (Strabo 1917-1932, 12.3.11)

"In the interior, the first city above Ostia is Rome, and it is the only city that is situated on the Tiber (...) And in my opinion, the first founders took the same course of reasoning both for themselves and for their successors, namely, that it was appropriate for the Romans to depend for their safety and general welfare, not on their fortifications, but on their arms and their own valour, in the belief that it is not walls that protect men but men protect walls. All the outset, then, since the fertile and extensive country round about belonged to others, and since the terrain of the city was so easy to attack, there was nothing fortunate in their position to call for congratulations, but when by their valour and their toil they had made the country their own property, there was obviously a concourse, so to speak, of blessings that surpassed all natural advantages; and it is because of this concourse of

blessings that the city, although it has grown to such an extent, holds out in the way it does" (Strabo 1917-1932, 5.3.7)

We can observe that Strabo takes into account very different factors to assess the strength of cities. He doesn't limit his consideration to the natural features of places. It has to be noticed that he recognizes the human factor in the process of their development. Sinopê has had many natural advantages to be a strong city, nevertheless it was twice conquered. Conversely, although Rome hadn't been located in a favourable location, but due to the human factor it became a very strong centre of power. One can find similar concept in the earlier mentioned work of Eugeniusz Romer "Thus all natural conditions are in fact relative. The human soul, thought, will, life changes everything!" (Romer 1926, 186)

As we can see, Strabo's Geography aims to assess the strength of particular countries and cities using geographical analysis. That is indeed the perspective of geopolitics.

6. Conclusions

Strabo of Amasia was ordinarily perceived as one of the greatest forerunners of geography. His monumental treatise Geography is treated as one of the most important geographical sources of the Antiquity. Nevertheless, when we study his work, we can find some concepts that indicate the geopolitical character of his dissertation. Obviously, we must remember that there was no word

“geopolitics” in the time of Strabo, it appeared in the end of the nineteenth century. Geographical narration conducted by Strabo is often similar to the geopolitical way of thinking. He claims that geography should serve the needs of states and their rulers. The acquaintance of their own region and the description of other countries allows them to conduct an appropriate policy. Strabo recognizes the natural advantages of different places, but he doesn't forget about human's decisions, behavior, mode of live. Moreover, he is able to see the most important role of the human's factor in historical and contemporary processes. He frequently uses the geopolitical perspective to describe particular regions or places. Not only the problem of security is taken into consideration. Also the ideas about economic circumstances are important factors in conducting policy. He frequently mentions the natural resources, trade, which influence the situation of particular countries. As a result, Strabo can be treated as one of the most important forerunners of geography, as well as of geopolitics.

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AN EXAMINATION OF GEOGRAPHY AND GEOPOLITICS IN THE LIGHT OF TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT

Abstract:

As numerous researchers in Poland and abroad say, geography no longer influences the development of political realities, since contemporary technology has allowed us to free ourselves from earthly limitations and to overcome the constraints applied by the earth. They further conclude that the power of nations and growth of societal and economic wellbeing are no longer dependent upon specific resources, localizations, or climates, but instead are conditioned through a certain attained base of production and level of technology. The purpose of the article is to formulate arguments which could show that such views are unjustified and entirely unwarranted, and that there is a need to make efforts at the restoration of classical concepts in geography and geopolitics as the useful means to understand the world.

Key words: geography, geopolitics, technology, international affairs

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Geography as a scientific discipline arose from the primary conviction that there exist links between categories of phenomena and processes which are seemingly foreign and juxtaposed to one another. This view guided the work of Alexander von Humboldt, the classic French geographers as well as geographers of the Polish school such as Wincenty Pol, Wacław Nałkowski, and especially Eugeniusz Romer and his followers. These figures often and with great conviction expressed the above mentioned view both explicitly and implicitly. Most important for them was the desire to present the unity of phenomena, which today would be called “natural” with those, which are considered to be in a general way totally different in nature, i.e. those phenomena having to do with people and the items they produce. We mean the unity of the world including man along with everything which exists without his participation, the unity of society and untamed nature, man and the land, as well as the relationship between nature and culture. This unity is expressed by the fundamental geographical precept defined by the “paradox of Humboldt”. This principle is presently utilized in many different contexts, but not always correctly used by the politicians of the European Union. This maxim simply states that the necessary condition for the unity of a given whole is its internal differentiation (“unity in diversity”). Only such a structural differentiation implicates the cooperation of particular elements, which are complementary, indicating a certain interdependence.

The examination of the interdependence of phenomena within the world, especially those interrelationships which are not so obvious, was the main goal of geographical study during the classical period of development within our discipline. One of these interdependencies is expressed in the relationship between localization (that is to say between the characteristics and phenomena which are influenced mostly by their localization), and the history of societies and nations². The interdependence of these variables serves as the basic foundation for the study of geopolitics which arose from geography. It's critics have often pointed to the mistake of determinism according to which the relationship between society and its biophysical surroundings are treated as a one-directional influence upon society and its traits, and therefore upon the fate of nations. In geography and in geopolitics as well, the relationships between differing types of phenomena, are examined within the context of interdependent categories of multifaceted influences. To be sure, biophysical conditions do influence the functioning of nations and societies. On the other hand however, societies and nations also affect these conditions, coordinating them and putting them to use in accordance to their own needs. Those societies and nations do that not only in association with technical and economic developments but

² Such a global approach advocated one of the classics of Polish geography Wacław Nałkowski. His first scientific treatise of 1885 was titled "Influence of the geographical location on national characteristics, and thus on the peoples' activities and the development of education, or even on the overall history" (Nałkowski 1963).

also according to the aspirations resulting from cultural conditions. Mainly due to the cultural factors, those relationships between societies and biophysical conditions maintain a quality of probability instead of determinism³. Numerous determinist models and explanations can be found in existing literature, which have as their goal the illustration of the ties between society and the land. These models should be treated as over-simplifications put into place for educational purposes only. The accusation then of determinism from those opponents of the disciplines of geopolitics and geography, lack cogent argumentation within a scientific context.

The period in the history of geography and geopolitics, in which representatives of these disciplines had to refute charges of determinism (both on the natural and economical planes), seems to be behind us. This does not mean however, that geography and geopolitics have been universally accepted as integral disciplines within the system of scientific knowledge. In congruence with the opinions of contemporary critics, it is the development of technology (especially that of modern means of communication linking the entire planet), which definitively ends the epoch of geography as an accepted, scientific area of study. Intercontinental air travels, ballistic missiles, satellite telecommunications as well as the internet have resulted in the fact that distance no longer serves as a barrier to

³ Founder of Polish geopolitics, Eugeniusz Romer believed that geography concerns the struggle of human will with determinism and vice versa (Romer 1964, p.107).

economic activity nor to societal development. In this context geographical location also has ceased to play a primary role of importance in such matters. With this in mind, the importance of geography is to be reduced, since it no longer possesses the ability to explain modern processes of development. This conclusion concerning the declining role of geography also carries with it a death knell for geopolitics, whose main purpose is to attempt to explain the past and present political occurrences within certain nations, through the sheer use of geographical methodologies alone (i.e. geographical location).

The attempts to undermine the status of the discipline of geography within the last decade, has been quite an uninterrupted phenomenon and its intensity has only increased with time. The effects of such pressure has resulted in a demotion of geography's position within the family of scientific disciplines, as well as geography's status within the consciousness of society. After the Second World War the effects of such a negative campaign lead to the liquidation of faculties and chairs of geography on many campuses of famous American universities (i.e. Harvard, Yale, Columbia, Cornell and Johns Hopkins), a reality which continues to this day. The analysis of documentation from that era, as well as the discussions which followed, allow one to conclude that the reason for such an unrestrained attack upon geographical studies was not waged from the outside, but instead from within geography itself, which accused itself of racism, whose main expression was found in the German

geopolitics during the Third Reich. An additional and more general cause for the demotion of geographical studies was the loss of confidence in geography's cognitive abilities in the face of "uniformization" processes. Jean Gottmann alludes to this with the following quote: *"too many are convinced that science and technology enable us to uniformize space and the minds of people. Regions and places, frontiers and boundaries do not count any longer in that philosophy"* (Karan and Mather, 2000, p. 90).

The next wave of doubt concerning the scientific status of geography occurred in the 1970's, when the famous American futurist, Alvin Toffler published a book under the title "The Future Shock". This world best-seller was translated into many different languages, bringing its author much fame. It floated various concepts, some of which did not receive any sort of confirmation in the following decades. One of the most bold and at the same time controversial claims of Toffler was expressed in a chapter entitled "The Death of Geography". In this chapter, it was not determinism nor the miscalculations of the geopolitics of German National Socialism which would constitute the main criticism of geography. Instead it was his conclusion that geography has no future since it deals with areal differentiation of the Earth surface, which disappears because of the inescapable effects of uniformization processes. Such processes Toffler argued are a result of the ever expanding culture of mass consumption as well as further economic and political integration. The

effect of such processes according to Toffler would be the disappearance of landscape differentiation because of the results of unified and accepted economic processes practiced on a world-wide scale, resulting in identical life styles regardless of region. The *naïveté* of such conclusions can be appreciated today, in the face of rampant effects of growing developmental disproportions and the resulting conflicts which are often explained away as being caused by civilizational differences. Although Toffler erred in his vision, his very popular and often uncriticized publications, without a doubt contributed to the weakening of the position of geography and geopolitics within the system of scientific knowledge. Not unnoticed are examples of outstanding representatives of the discipline of geography, leaving it for other areas of study within the realm of the social sciences. Although these are rare occurrences, one should not ignore them, since the decision to change one's area of study during the course of an advanced career is simply the result of desperation, which can lead to the partial or even total loss of one's life-long achievements.

Not long ago, the respected American quarterly „Orbis”, which analyses matters of international importance (having served well in the examination of matters of geopolitics in the past), included in the last year's spring issue an article by Christopher J. Fettweis, whose main premise was to argue against modern attempts at the restoration of geography and geopolitics, as simply unsubstantiated

and unnecessary (Fettweis 2015)⁴. According to Fettweis, geography no longer influences the development of political realities, since contemporary technology has allowed us to free ourselves from earthly limitations and „*to overcome the constraints applied by the earth*” (Fettweis, op.cit., p.246). In claiming this, Fettweis called for the abandonment of an era which has its beginning in the time of Plato and Aristotle, and during which the interdependence of politics and geographical realities was treated as an obvious fact. In order to support his claims Fettweis puts forth his own thinking on matters of classical and contemporary geopolitics, supporting them with the argumentation of two published authors from the middle of the XXth century (Harold and Margaret Sprout), who in turn borrowed from the views of the British political expert, Leopold Amery. All of those mentioned conclude that geographical factors have lost their value in the face of contemporary technological development. They further conclude that the strength of nations and growth of societal and economic wellbeing are no longer dependent upon specific resources, localizations, or climates, etc., but instead are conditioned through a

⁴ We must admit that the recent issue of “Orbis” (Fall 2015) was dedicated to geopolitics in honor of the Foreign Policy Research Institute’s 60th anniversary. In this issue there have appeared a series of articles justifying the need for geopolitical studies. They were mostly critical of the views presented by Christopher Fettweis (see e.g. Owens 2015a; Granieri 2015). Moreover the Editor of Orbis, Thomas Mackubin Owens himself criticized Fettweis’ argument in no uncertain terms in the essay introductory to the Spring issue in the “Editors Corner” (Owens 2015, p. 138-141). Nevertheless, for Polish researchers reluctant in relation to geopolitics the publication of the Fettweis’ article was a convenient excuse justifying the statement that “Orbis” joined in the crusade against geopolitics and geography.

certain attained base of production and level of technology. According to Fettweis and the authors he cites, the development of events has resulted in the hypotheses of geopolitics rendering themselves valueless. But because there are authors who continue to recognize the value of geographical factors having to do with international relations, he presents their views selectively (perhaps resulting from the space limitation of the article), to show their incompetence emanating from certain emotional attachments or ideological baggage. In this light Fettweis also treats the view of other authors, such as Robert Kaplan (2012), Jakub Grygiel (2006), C. Dale Walton (2007), Gerry Kearns (2009), and also Zbigniew Brzeziński (1997), along with many others, concluding that they are all (except himself and Harold and Margaret Sprout), in error. In the last words of his article Fettweis expresses the conviction that in the event that political geographers do not change their approach, they will simply watch from the side-lines as their research projects „*slide further into irrelevance*”.

The scope represented by “Orbis” as a respected journal and the resoluteness of Christopher Fettweis’ expressed views, prompt a detailed examination of his argumentation, since they touch upon the most important questions concerning geopolitics, as well as the conditions for its further cultivation. Has it ceased to be of importance from the point of view of development and security, who controls various territories, thoroughfares, pipelines and resources? Should

the position of our country within this part of Europe and the reality of who borders us no longer be of concern to us? Do we not need to take an interest in the important routes of transit, the direction of the flow of capital, as well as the arrangement of sources of supply concerning certain goods? If the answers to these and similar questions were not in the affirmative, it would be necessary to recognize geography and geopolitics as outmoded disciplines having outlived their usefulness. Even at first glance however, one can easily perceive that we are unable to make such an assumption. Quite the contrary, when hundreds of thousands of immigrants from the Middle East, immigrants foreign to our culture, flow into Europe, violently storming the barriers of the southern borders of Hungary, and while nations who border us seem helpless to maintain their sovereignty within their own territories, we must put even more weight on the importance of geopolitics. The proximity to our borders in which armed skirmishes take place and how close the roads of Muslim immigration come to us is a matter of the highest importance affecting the security and future of our nation. Better then for us to concentrate carefully upon maps, even though according to Fettweis' pacifistic tendencies, such things in and of themselves "*encourage the emergence of competitive, even belligerent strategies*" (Fettweis 2015,p. 247). Surely, pictorial representations delineating the borders separating countries as well as spheres of influence, have always inspired others to make changes, (both real and virtual), in existing

territorial divisions, not unlike those of a popular strategic computer games.

In his reflections, Fettweis attempts to communicate the stalwartness of his theories negating the value of geographical argumentation within the realm of political discussion, thanks to the support of three conclusions which fulfill a negative function; those being: the descriptive, predictive and prescriptive. In other words, in the opinion of Fettweis, classical geopolitics presents an untrue picture of reality, which in turn prevents the proper understanding of the inner workings which characterize international relations (1), leading to errors in the prediction of events (2), which in turn leads to bad political decision-making (3). Fettweis attempts to legitimize his theories through the use of negative examples from the history of classical geopolitics, borrowed heavily from the works of Halford Mackinder. In doing so, Fettweis attacks the fundamental position of Mackinder concerning the localization of the Heartland deep within Eurasia, and towards the end of his article negates the sensibility of discussing the idea of the “key position”, or the most advantageous localization from the point of view of attained strategic advantage. One would then pose the question at this juncture, why does it make sense for the United States of America to maintain incredibly costly army bases which are widely scattered around the globe? Why do Americans feel that it is necessary to maintain such bases in particular regions of the world? Or why does the Russian Federation feel so

strongly about the annexation of the Crimea, that it was worth the risk for it to suffer the consequences of economic sanctions from the international community at great cost to its own economy? This would be ever more perplexing since no great resources of oil or other natural riches are found in the Crimea. Of additional interest, one could pose the question, why the inheritors of the former Soviet Union do not wish to resign from their presence in the Middle East and find themselves actively supporting the Assad regime in Syria. It is doubtful that the cogent reasons for the recent Russian flyovers to help the Syrian government could be found in emotional sympathy of Putin toward Assad. More convincing are the reasons overlooked by Fettweis' arguments concerning geopolitics. The fact is, the United State and Russia do not seek dominance in various areas of the world for reasons of prestige, but instead because of "living interests" which flow from their concrete, economic needs. Each of these superpowers then, strives to expand the boundaries of economic expansion which in turn affects their banks as well as the sales markets for their goods (including weapons). These powers constantly seek to expand natural resources and trade routes (especially those having to do with energy resources), all for the purpose of having the upper hand in the process of economic decision-making which has meaning well beyond one's own region. For the world spins upon the "Wheels of Money", and geopoliticians, marking their maps according to "key positions" know very well the importance of such demarcations. Such maps

prove the inescapable, but often difficult to accept fact, that within the world there exists inequality, that there are places less blessed by nature, and that from these inequalities, injustice and conflict can result⁵. The surface of our planet is simply varied and no technology, uniformization nor globalization can change that. As Jean Gottmann once wrote, "*The homogenization conflicts with individual liberty and human nature, and this is why space is diversified and why the study of geography is necessary*" (Karan & Mather, op.cit., p.90). This is the reason that the regional mosaic do constitute the "great chessboard", on which some locations play the role of key positions – very valuable for attaining certain goals and particular interests. In brief then, the "Tofflerite" condemnations of the importance of geography and the publications cited by Christopher Fettweis are of little value.

In formulating his theories concerning the importance of the Mid-Asiatic Heartland, it is quite evident that Halford Mackinder did so employing the historical knowledge available at the end of the XIXth Century, basing them also upon the transport technology available at the time (i.e. navigation by steamship, train and horsepower). One can easily conclude that the subjugation of the Heartland (or the pivot region) is crucial to gain basic influences upon culture and governance

⁵ David S. Landes is of the opinion that the revelation of the „unpleasant truth” within some compromising sectors of geography, constitutes the reason for the erosion of the geography’s status among scientific disciplines. Landes further writes that “ *geography is the bearer of bad news, and we all know therefore how such messengers are often dealt with*” (Landes 2015, p.22).

within the outlying areas as well (Rimland). On the other side, Russia for centuries played the role of Heartland, which remained secure thanks to the geographical factors, namely great distances and severe climate⁶. The history of Eurasia includes the recurrent encounters of the nomadic tribes of the Turan, with civilizations of the Near East, India, China, and Europe. As Poles, we accept such a concept, since we as a nation have often, within our own history, had to serve as the first line of defense against invasions from the East. It was so in the Middle Ages with the Tatar invasions and later with the invasions of the Turks and Kossacs, up until the XXth Century when Poles were again tested by the barbaric invasion of the Soviets in 1920, the goal of which, was to spread communism to the whole of Europe. Here, in the East of Europe, the geopolitical concepts ridiculed by Christopher Fettweis, seem well respected. In reconstructing the military campaigns from our past, one can conclude that the Polish school of geopolitics stood as a foundation of resistance which in turn saved Western civilization. Witnessing to this fact are the extensive diaries from the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, whose author was the very founder of the school of Polish geopolitics, Eugeniusz Romer. During the Paris Peace Conference, as during the Conference of Riga which concerned itself with the end of the war between Poland and Soviet Russia, Romer

⁶ A fact well known to historians is that since 1611, when over the towers of the Kremlin Polish flags fluttered, no one has managed to capture Moscow. Tragically ended all subsequent invasions derived from Rimland, including those of Napoleon and Hitler during World War II.

served as an expert in the official Polish delegation, thanks to whose geopolitical expertise, the borders of a newly formed Poland were established (Romer 2010). The pact agreed upon in 1939 between Soviet Russia and The Third Reich (known as the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact), was a result of the power of the Heartland joining forces with those of the Rimland. This was an unification act of the Heartland and Rimland powers, which carried with it great geopolitical significance and which ultimately led to the outbreak of the Second World War, something which Mackinder had feared. The Paris Peace Conference of 1919 had attempted to separate the two great powers of the East and of the West by creating buffer zones between them, of which Poland was the cornerstone. Like no other country, Poland was viciously attacked in September of 1939 from the west by Germany and from the east by the Red Army, becoming the first victim of a war which would eventually engulf the entire world. Christopher Fettweis most probably belongs to a later generation for whom the experiences of the Second World War have lost any concrete meaning, but to ignore the influences that these experiences had upon Mackinder, who had correctly read the signs of the times as indicated upon the geopolitical maps of that time, is reckless indeed. It is simply untrue that *“geopolitical theories may merely overlap with policy by coincidence rather than design”* (Fettweis, op.cit., p. 236). The Paris Peace Conference of 1919 in which famous experts and geographers from the United States took part (among others Isaiah Bowman),

serves as the most important and positive example of the influence of geopolitics put into practice (Romer 2010). The influence of geopolitics then, is of great importance for Poland which re-emerged after a century of partition as a large and free sovereign nation thanks to the fact that no one among those deliberating her fate in Paris, questioned her re-establishment on geopolitical grounds. The tragic decision by Germany and Russia to attack Poland in 1939, despite what Mackinder had warned of in his writings, had as its consequence the liquidation of the Polish “buffer-zone” as well as the outbreak of the Second World War⁷. Mackinder’s concepts found justification however when Germany attacked Russia, betraying the pact of co-operation between the Heartland and the Rimland. In the face of Fettweis’ precipitant judgments, one can deduce from this example alone the positive role geopolitics have played in shaping the historical events of the world. The outbreak of the Second World War on the other hand shows, how tragic consequences can appear when the results of geopolitical expertise are ignored.

It is important to keep in mind that Mackinder arrived at his formulations more than one hundred years ago under the influence of the specific economic, geopolitical and technological conditions which prevailed at the time. Therefore the criticisms leveled by Fettweis

⁷ Geopolitical position of the restored Polish state compatible with the concept of Mackinder, as an eastern bulwark of Europe, was presented by the Kraków scholar Jerzy Smoleński in the 30s of the last century (Smoleński 2012).

concerning Mackinder's formulation are not only unsubstantiated, but also unjust. During Mackinder's time his concept was not only viable, but served as an important element in the pool of knowledge, being readily employed and put to practical use. No one today holds that we should hold to the concept of Mackinder regarding international politics, but to completely ignore and belittle his theory's value is irresponsible evermore so since Mackinder himself is unable to enter into the discussion in order to defend his views. It is evident, that theories formulated over one hundred years ago will not necessarily maintain their vigor indefinitely. When dealing with geopolitics, there exists no one "theory" in the strict sense. The very concepts which Fettweis presents as "geopolitical theories" are really nothing more than historical generalizations possessing value in a context of probability; therefore their viability will at best, be limited to a confined period of time. Geopolitical theories do not exist simply because their testing would be very expensive and not humanitarian since it is tantamount with international competition, and sometimes could require war (performed by economic, information, cultural, or even military means). Geopoliticians accept their own situation then, according to which their concepts are verified (or falsified) in the course of live developments upon the international stage. These developments undergo changes which, in turn, automatically influence geopolitical realities, to force a certain reassessment of once established hypotheses.

Another mistake of Ch. Fettweis is stirring the geopolitical concepts (mistakenly called theories) with the products of geopolitical futurology that do not have the status of scientific theses. They are in fact the result of the simulation, strongly dependent on the initial assumptions. Calling such products of futurology geopolitical theories, as did Fettweis in relation to studies of Colin S. Gray, is a simple procedure calculated to discredit the whole geopolitics as an area of study. Where such an operation was not possible, Fettweis uses a method to ignore the facts. Examples of such conduct include to say that geopolitics was not able to predict the end of the Cold War. At this point it should be noted that the collapse of the Soviet Union and the communist system was predicted no later than the second half of the 70s of the last century⁸. As far as the very Cold War, in the current situation it is doubtful whether it actually ended. Except that now the enemy of the United States of America is no longer the Soviet Union, but much smaller and weaker Russian Federation, whose leadership remained, however, in the hands of representatives of the former communist nomenclature and the Soviet secret services. So it is clear that not announcing a final end of the Cold War, geopoliticians does

⁸ Many authors wrote of this problem in the unofficial press which appeared untouched by censors. The most renowned authors quoted along these lines were Leszek Moczulski, the founder of The Confederation of Independent Poland (pol. Konfederacja Polski Niepodległej) along with Alain Besançon, the very well known sovietolog, and Alexander Solshenitsyn, the well-known Soviet dissident. Their works, reproduced in mimeographed form, enabled Polish society to persevere through the difficult years of communist terror following the year 1981.

not mistaken. In this light, Zbigniew Brzezinski statements about the great chessboard (which Fettweis is trying to undermine), turn again to date.

The deciding factor contributing to the foiled nature of Fettweis' argumentation, lies in his mistaken conviction that a cessation of world conflict will somehow take place and that a "*golden age of peace and security*" will follow (Fettweis, op.cit., p. 239). He supports the assertion that "*warfare has been on the wane for decades*" with a number of quotations. In conjunction with this view Fettweis states, "*the empirical and theoretical literature on this phenomenon is immense and growing*". Fettweis then refers to a report by the Center for Systemic Peace published in 2011 as well as a similar report published by the Human Security Project prepared in 2009/2010. He also includes quotes from publications by J. Goldstein (2011) and S. Pinker (2011). Not one word does Fettweis devote to the many authors, who instead of falling into misguided surety concerning this imagined, new-found state of world peace, point through their own research, to quite an opposite reality, according to which over 70 conflicts of a serious nature are presently ongoing (this number being found on the website www.crisisgroup.org). In doing so Christopher Fettweis ignores the findings of such renowned centers of research such as the the Stockholm Center of Research for Peace (SIPRI), the Uppsala Conflict Data Program, COSIMO located in Heidelberg as well as the findings of American researchers of RAND,

Correlates of War. Through such a subjective selection of sources, Fettweis attempts to create within the societal awareness, a false impression of reality, one which is in direct conflict with the day to day reality as presented by daily life and by the media. In doing so, Fettweis strives to convince us that we live in a time of global security, when in fact, either all out war, military manoeuvres, amassing of military might (all resulting in hundreds of thousands of displaced persons, and other affects of military aggression), plague the international economic and political arena. It would seem prudent then to ponder what would serve as the motivation for one to proclaim such a golden era of peace and international security, when in fact the world situation is headed in the opposite direction. Not knowing the main motivation for such a divergence from the true reality of the world situation, one can only refer to its side-effects. According to Fettweis, peace is "good for humanity, it presents a challenge for geopolitics....It threatens to render tradition obsolete." As such then, Fettweis seems to tolerate geopolitics as a discipline, only during times of concrete conflicts. From the conviction that the conflicts of war are on the decline, Fettweis concludes mistakenly that geopolitics as a discipline has nothing to contribute to international relations. It is therefore important to note that no attribute of geopolitical research limits its usefulness only to times of concrete warfare, since geopolitics identifies the positioning and status of various elements within international politics during times of peace as

well. War is but one "method" of reaching a political aim, used only then, when peaceful methods prove themselves insufficient. Fortunately for the world, the great majority of conflicts are solved through diplomatic and economic means. Therefore it goes without saying that geopolitics also enjoys success in the sphere of economics, where "geo-economics" has become perhaps, the most important sub-discipline of geopolitics⁹.

Christopher Fettweis in his article, underscores his conviction that classical geopolitics more often than not, was mistaken in its "*inherently unfalsifiable theories*". Taking into consideration whether the above mentioned conclusion is subject to falsification or not, it is important to note that the the situation of "being mistaken in unfalsifiable theories" is quite common within the social sciences and it does not belong solely to the area of geopolitics. Scientific research derives its reason for being by posing certain questions to the world at large. The answer to the questions posed is most often in the negative and expressed as "no". Only occasionally does the world answer "possibly", or „maybe“, which is in itself an answer which begs for further study and research within the area under study. If one was to conclude that the answers to the questions posed by scientific research should be in the positive (as Fettweis seems to expect from

⁹ The pioneer of the Polish school of geo-economics is Wiktor Ormicki, who, before the onset of World War II, studied the flows of capital between nations and regions (Ormicki 2012).

the area of geopolitics), one might be led to put into question the truly scientific character of such research¹⁰. Let us not worry then that at times it may seem that that which we do (as geopoliticians), may seem like an excursion into the unknown.

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¹⁰ Based upon the research relating to the natural sciences (1980's) of Włodzimierz Sedlak, the creator of the Polish school of bioelectronics and the author of many unusually accurate conclusions concerning the conditions of science.

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