



INTRODUCTION TO GEOPOLITICS

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In this introductory article to Geopolitics, we want to discuss some issues related to this discipline.

First of all, we would like to combat the misunderstandings and lies that certain war propaganda has spread at a certain time concerning this science. Geopolitics is not part of the "Nazi" doctrine. In the first place, its origins are much earlier. Secondly, one of its creators, [Halford Mackinder](#), was an Englishman, very committed to the foreign policy of the British Empire, to the point of being one of the ideologists of the Treaty of Versailles. Thirdly, another of its creators, the German Karl Haushofer (contrary to what was disclosed at the time by the British press) was not Hitler's "*eminence grise*," but was persecuted by the Nazis, interned in Dachau and his eldest son murdered.

But fourthly, and above all, the essence of the Nazi doctrine was not geopolitics, but raciology. The major strategic decisions taken by Hitler and his collaborators were based on his theory of the "Aryan race," according to which the expansion of Germany was to be at the expense of the Slavic peoples, supposedly "inferior races," while alliance with the English and French, who were also of the "Aryan race," was to be sought. Haushofer, based on geopolitical presuppositions, defended the Germany-Russia alliance, following Mackinder's idea of uniting Europe with the "Heartland;" he also defended German support for the peoples subjugated by the British Empire to rebel against it. None of these proposals pleased Hitler, who despised the Slavs, and who had written in *Mein Kampf* that the British Empire and the Catholic Church were the main bastions of Western Civilization. The real ideologue of Nazism was not Haushofer, but Alfred Rosenberg, the author of [The Myth of the 20th Century](#).

Another interesting question is the epistemological and gnoseological status of geopolitics: Is it a science? Is it a technology? Is it an interdisciplinary field? What are its relations with other disciplines? In the light of possible answers to these questions, we will outline a short history of geopolitics.

Finally, we will analyze the possible role of geopolitics in the elaboration of a new discourse in International Relations Theory and in the theoretical foundations of a multipolar world, as advocated by [Alexander Dugin](#).

Vindication of Geopolitics

At the end of World War II, with the victory of the Allies over Germany, Italy and Japan, there was a

formidable ideological and propaganda offensive aimed at showing that the defeated nations were ruled by political regimes that represented the incarnation of "Absolute Evil." The National Socialist regime was the favorite target of these campaigns, especially when the existence of concentration camps was discovered, where members of certain racial or religious minorities (Gypsies, Jews) had been exterminated. Propagandists magnified the crimes of the defeated, while concealing their own (atomic bombing of two Japanese cities of no strategic interest, napalm bombing of the city of Dresden, murder and rape of the civilian population, especially by Soviet troops).

But the viciousness of the propagandists did not stop there. Personalities of German intellectual life, who had been silenced, side-lined and even persecuted by Nazism, were accused of collaborating with it, solely on the grounds that they had flirted with it in its origins (what German could not sympathize in principle with a movement that sought to revise the Versailles Treaty?) Such was the case with Ernst Jünger, Martin Heidegger or Karl Haushofer.

Karl Haushofer, one of the creators of geopolitics, was born on August 27, 1869 in Munich. In 1887 he chose a military career, and in 1890 he became an artillery officer in the Bavarian army. In 1896 he married Martha Mayer-Doos, a woman of Jewish origin (a curious choice for a supposed "Nazi"). From this marriage two sons were born, Albrecht and Heinz.

Professor at the War Academy in 1904, he was sent to Japan in 1908 to organize the Imperial Navy. In 1913, back in Germany, he presented his first work for the general public, *Dai Nihon, Betrachtungen über Groß-Japans Wehrkraft, Weltstellung und Zukunft* ("Dai Nihon [Greater Japan] Reflections on Greater Japan's Military Strength, World Position, and Future"). The same year he began studying geography at the University of Munich. He was mobilized in 1914, and, after the armistice, appointed commander of the 1st Bavarian Artillery Brigade. He returned to the university, received his doctorate in 1919, and left his military career to devote himself to teaching.

In 1919, he met Rudolf Hess, with whom he struck up a close friendship, and through whom he came into contact with National Socialist circles. Hess would protect Haushofer's wife, of Jewish origin, and their children, considered semi-Jewish after the promulgation of the Nuremberg Laws. Bad start for the supposed "Hitler's *eminence grise*" according to English propagandists.

In 1924, he founded the prestigious *Zeitschrift für Geopolitik* [Journal of Geopolitics], together with his colleague Ernst Obst, gathering around it a prestigious team of researchers. Initially, the ideas

developed by Haushofer were well received by Hitler and National Socialist circles. In fact, the geopolitical concept of *Lebensraum* (living space) was incorporated into Nazi terminology, but always subordinated to the racist idea of the "Aryan race." In 1936, the NSDAP defined geopolitics as "The science of the territorial and racial foundations which determine the development of peoples and states."

Soon things changed. The defense of the German-Russian alliance advocated by Haushofer, based on the geopolitical criterion of the "heartland" and not on racist criteria, did not please Hitler and the Nazi leadership. The idea of supporting the peoples subject to the British Empire (supposed "inferior races") so that they would rise up was not to the liking of the hierarchy either. In fact, since 1933, Haushofer was watched by agents of the regime, although for the time being he was not harassed, thanks to the protection of his friend Rudolf Hess.

From 1941, with the flight of Hess to England and his disappearance from the political scene, the situation of Haushofer and his sons grew complicated. His son Albrecht was arrested and Haushofer himself was interrogated by the Gestapo. After the failed attempt on Hitler's life on July 20, 1944, Haushofer was interned in Dachau, and his son Heinz imprisoned in the Moabit prison in Berlin. Later, he was released, but his other son, Albrecht, was murdered in April 1945.

In spite of all this, with the Allied victory the persecution of Haushofer intensified, because according to the British press he was "the Hitler's eminence grise." Judged in Nuremberg, he was acquitted. But his title of honorary professor was withdrawn, along with his right to a pension. In March 1946, Haushofer and his wife Martha committed suicide. A little before, he had written his last work, "Apologie der Geopolitik" ("An Apology of Geopolitics"), where he clearly disassociated his work from Nazism.

The Gnoseological Status of Geopolitics

Gnoseology, epistemology or theory of knowledge is that part of philosophical discourse which deals with the problem of knowledge, the scientific method, the demarcation of scientific knowledge and the classification of sciences. It is within this conceptual framework that essential questions arise: What is geopolitics? Is it a science? Is it an interdisciplinary field? Is it a technology?

Some authors have tried to solve the problem, arguing that geopolitics can actually be subsumed

under geography. They are partly right, for in the origins of geopolitics we find geographers as the main protagonists. Frederick Ratzel's pioneering work, published in 1896, bore the title, *Politische Geographie* (*Political Geography*), and Mackinder (author of *The Geographical Pivot of History*) and Haushoffer himself were also geographers.

However, subsuming geopolitics in geography does not solve the problem of its gnoseological status, since, as Lacoste [has pointed out](#), the absolute absence of any theoretical reflection among geographers is surprising. The epistemological debate, the crisis of foundations or the methodological problems that have arisen in many disciplines have led to the emergence of so-called "particular philosophies" (philosophy of history, of physics, of biology, etc.). None of this has occurred in geography, when paradoxically, the situation of this discipline as a "hinge" between the natural sciences (geomorphology, botany) and the social sciences (history, economics) seems to make it an ideal field for this type of debate.

To define the gnoseological status of geopolitics, we will take into account the following variables:

1. The existence of an object of study and a method.
2. The relationship with other sciences or disciplines
3. The existence of a scientific community or "invisible college."
4. The existence or not of a unifying theory (paradigm) and of research programs or traditions.

There are various definitions of geopolitics, but all of them refer to the influence (determining or conditioning) of geographic factors on the politics of states. This places geopolitics in a "hinge" situation between the natural sciences (geomorphology, climatology) and the social sciences (politics). The object of study of geopolitics is therefore dual (or triune): geographical factors, the politics of states and the influence of the former on the latter.

Its methodology also presents a duality: in its analysis of geographical factors, it uses methods from the natural sciences, while in its analysis of political factors it uses methods from the social sciences.

As for its relationship with other sciences or disciplines, it should be noted that geopolitics was born within the framework of geography (in fact it can be considered a branch or specialty of the same), but it ended up having its own identity.

Another interesting aspect to note is that geopolitics has never been configured as a "knowledge for the sake of knowledge," but rather theory has always been deeply linked to praxis. Moreover, we can affirm that before geopolitics was constituted as a discipline, even before the name itself existed, there was already a geopolitical praxis. In the dialectic of States and Empires, in the development of diplomatic and military strategies, the geographical factor, the domination and appropriation of space, has always been taken into account.

It was at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century when the name "geopolitics" was born, and scientific communities began to form, basically in universities (in geography faculties) or in military schools. The appearance of specialized journals was another characteristic linked to the birth of scientific communities, such as the *Journal of Geopolitics*, founded in 1924 by Haushofer and Obst, which was the first of its kind.

Finally, there is no unified theory or paradigm shared by all schools and authors of geopolitics. Since geopolitics is a "science of space," the place occupied by a school or an author is fundamental. Thus, one can speak of a "geopolitics of the sea," of a "geopolitics of the land," and, more recently, of a "geopolitics of the air." However, there is a set of basic concepts, elaborated by Mackinder, such as "Heartland," which are shared by most schools.

Brief History of Geopolitics

In attempting to describe the historical development of geopolitics, it is necessary to distinguish what would be geopolitical praxis from the birth of geopolitics as a discipline. Geopolitical praxis is inseparable from the dialectics of states and empires. As Gustavo Bueno has rightly pointed out, in every political society we must distinguish a Basal Layer (control or sovereignty over a territory, which will be the Land of the Fathers or Homeland), the Conjunctive Layer (the institutions of government) and the Cortical Layer (relations with other political societies, i.e., diplomacy and war). Both the Basal and Cortical Layers imply a geopolitical praxis.

The term "geopolitics" and the beginnings of the discipline date back to 1897, when Friedrich Ratzel published *Politische Geographie* (*Political Geography*). Ratzel's ideas were later developed by Rudolf Kjellén, in his book, *Der Staat als Lebensform* (*The State as a Way of Life*), published in 1917. He defined geopolitics as "the influence of geographical factors, in the broadest sense of the word, on the political development of peoples and states." For Kjellén, Geopolitics is one of the five branches that make up

the state; the others being Cratopolitics, Demopolitics, Sociopolitics and Economopolitics.

In the first half of the twentieth century, the two great figures who emerged were Karl Haushofer, whom we have already dealt with, and the Englishman [Sir Halford Mackinder](#).

The geopolitical concept of the "Heartland" was introduced by Mackinder, and linked to the geographical existence of endorheic basins, i.e., large river basins that flow into enclosed seas (Caspian Sea, Black Sea). The Heartland is the sum of a series of contiguous river basins whose waters flow into bodies of water inaccessible to oceanic navigation. These are the endorheic basins of Central Eurasia, plus the part of the Arctic Ocean basin frozen in the Northern Route with an ice cover of between 1.2 and 2 meters, and therefore impracticable much of the year—except for atomic-powered icebreakers (which only the Russian Federation possesses) and similar vessels.

Mackinder's golden rule may be summarized as follows: "Whoever unites Europe with the Heartland will dominate the Heartland and thus the Earth." The Heartland lacks a clear nerve-center and can be defined as a gigantic and robust body in search of a brain. Since there are no natural geographical barriers (mountain ranges, deserts, seas, etc.) between the Heartland and Europe, the most viable "head" of the Heartland is clearly Europe, followed at a great distance by China, Iran and India.

The march of European humanity into the heart of Asia culminated when Greek culture was introduced as far as Mongolia—today the Mongolian language is written in Cyrillic characters of Greek-Byzantine heritage, meaning that the fall of Constantinople actually projected Byzantine influence much further East than the Orthodox emperors could ever have imagined. However, Europe's task does not end here, for only Europe can undertake the enterprise that will turn the Heartland into the powerful enclosed space, prophesied by Mackinder.

In order to delve deeper into the subject, it is necessary to familiarize ourselves with the Mackinderian cosmogony, which divided the planet into several clearly defined geopolitical domains.

The World-Island is the union of Europe, Asia and Africa, and the closest thing there is in the emerged lands to Panthalassa or Universal Ocean. Within the World Island is Eurasia, the sum of Europe and Asia, which is a reality all the more separate from Africa ever since the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, which allowed maritime power to envelop both continents.

The Heartland no longer needs any introduction. Mackinderian theory assumes that the Heartland is a geographical reality within the World Island, just as the World Island is a geographical reality within the World Ocean.

The Rimland, also called the Inner Crescent or Marginal Crescent, is a huge strip of land surrounding the Heartland and consists of the ocean basins annexed to it. Pentalasia, the Balkans, Scandinavia, Germany, France, Spain, and most of China and India lie in the Rimland.

The Outer or Insular Crescent is a set of peripheral overseas domains, separated from the Inner Crescent by deserts, seas and icy spaces. Sub-Saharan Africa, the British Isles, the Americas, Japan, Taiwan, Indonesia and Australia are in the Outer Crescent.

The Mediterranean Ocean (Midland Ocean) is the Heartland of maritime power. Mackinder defined the Mediterranean Ocean as the northern half of the Atlantic plus all the tributary maritime spaces (Baltic, Hudson Bay, Mediterranean, Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico). Recall that the largest river basins in the world are those that flow into the Atlantic—then come those of the Arctic and only in third place come the Pacific basins.

Notice that these geopolitical ideas have guided British foreign policy and strategy. In both World War I and World War II, British diplomacy succeeded in preventing a German-Russian alliance that would have united Europe with the Heartland. In fact, Mackinder, far from being a simple intellectual, was a person very committed to British diplomacy and foreign policy. He was one of the ideologues of the Treaty of Versailles, whose purpose was the political and military neutralization of Germany. He was also one of the ideologists of the English support for the White Russians, in their fight against the Bolsheviks. The aim was to fragment Russia into a series of small feudatory states of the British Empire, although the Bolshevik victory frustrated this plan.

As we have already mentioned, after World War II the term "Geopolitics" was stigmatized and associated with the Nazi regime. This propaganda campaign, directed mainly against Haushofer, did not prevent geopolitical concepts from continuing to be used in the dialectics of states and empires, especially in the US-USSR confrontation that led to the Cold War.

The first European to publish a non-German version of geopolitics was the Frenchman Jacques Ancel,

with his work *Geopolitique*, in 1936. Although very critical of the Germans, whom he accused of being "pedants with a scientific appearance," Ancel revised the concept of "frontier" and "nation" along the lines initiated by Ratzel.

In the United States, thanks to the work of German geographers, who had taken refuge in that country, works related to geopolitical issues began to be published in 1941. The most significant example is that of Hans W. Weigert, a refugee in the United States since 1938 and a professor at Trinity College in Chicago. In 1942 he published *Generals and Geographers: The Twilight of Geopolitics*, where he describes the central concepts and ideas of the classical authors, and vindicates the work of Haushofer, exempting him from any relation with the Nazi regime. Other North American authors, such as Alfred Thayer Mahan, Andreas Dorpalan or Nicholas J. Spykman were not so sympathetic to Haushofer and devoted themselves to distorting German geopolitics, and even to rejecting the term as opposed to that of "Political Geography."

We must also mention the Austrian-born geopolitical scientist, Robert Strausz-Hupé, who published, in 1942, *Geopolitics: The Struggle for Space and Power*, in which he emphasized geographical factors in politics and power relations.

In the foreign policy of the United States, the use of concepts and strategies based on geopolitics had been a constant, ever since James Monroe, in 1823, announced his doctrine "America for the Americans," which is logical, since geopolitical praxis has been a constant in the history of the dialectics of States and Empires. Along the same lines, we should cite *Manifest Destiny* (1840), the *Roosevelt Corollary* (1905) or Wilson's *Fourteen Points* (1918).

Logically, the beginning of the Cold War meant the reuse of these concepts and strategies, even though the term "Geopolitics" was rejected and associated with Nazism. Along this line, we must quote Nicholas Spykman, who in his work *America Strategy in World Politics*, published in 1942, tried to reach a balance for the term "Geopolitics," which on the one hand he associated with the Nazi regime, and on the other hand considered synonym for "political geography," and finally recognizing its important utility in security policy.

For Spykman, the United States was to be the world's hegemonic power, with enough power to impose its law both at home and abroad. In fact, he was the ideologue of the policy of control over the Latin American nations, with the imposition of puppet military dictatorships. Many of his postulates were

included in the [National Security Act](#) (1947) of the United States.

Inspired by Spykman (and also by Mackinder) was George F. Kennan's article, "[The Sources of Soviet Conduct](#)," published in 1947 in Foreign Affairs magazine, under the pseudonym "X." The practical conclusion of these policies was an expansive foreign policy, aimed at creating "clones of the US doctrine" in Latin America, the Caribbean and Southeast Asia, to contain "communist expansion." It should be noted that current globalization is nothing more than an extension of these policies to the whole world.

Finally, mention should be made of various geopolitical schools of thought that emerged in Latin American nations. In Mexico we must mention Jorge A. Vivó Escoto and Alberto Escalona Ramos. The former published in 1943 *La Geopolítica Sobre la necesidad de dar una nueva organización a la geografía política del Caribe* (*Geopolitics. On the Need to Give a New Organization to the Political Geography of the Caribbean*), in which Haushofer's thought is still associated with Nazism, although Escoto also recognized that Geopolitics and Nazism are not equivalent. Much harsher was Leonardo Martín Echevarría, professor of the UNAM, who, in his book *Human Geography* (1948) defined Geopolitics as "a partial and vicious contemplation of human Geography, distorted by German geographers."

Geopolitics received a new impulse in Mexico in 1959, with the publication of *Geopolítica mundial y Geoeconomía* (*World Geopolitics and Geoeconomics*) by Alberto Escalona Ramos, in which the author extensively develops the historical, geographical and political arguments of a global nature that support his proposals.

In Brazil, we must mention Milton Santos as the great representative of the Brazilian school, which emerged from the Faculty of Philosophy, Sciences and Letters of the University of São Paulo, and the foundation of the journal *Geógrafos Brasileños* in 1934.

In Peru, mention should be made of Israel Lira and the Centro de Estudios Crisolistas which, although not specifically dedicated to Geopolitics, but to the dissemination and adaptation of Dugin's Fourth Political Theory, often uses geopolitical concepts.

Finally, it is worth mentioning the interest awakened by Geopolitics at the Escuela Superior de Guerra in Argentina and in intellectual circles linked to radical Peronism.

Geopolitics and Multipolarity

Geopolitics is a fundamental instrument in the elaboration of Aleksandr Dugin's theory of Multipolarity. Dugin basically uses two concepts drawn from geopolitics: that of "Heartland," which we have already examined, and the distinction between Earth and Sea Civilizations, as developed by Carl Schmitt.

Telluric or Earth civilizations are characterized by a series of ideological and sociological features: Conservatism, Holism, Collective Anthropology, and worship of the values of asceticism, honor and loyalty. They are civilizations rooted in the Earth, and the values of Tradition and continuity. In contrast, the Thalassocratic or Sea civilizations are dominated by individualistic, universalistic and commercial values. The Ocean lacks borders and the navigator easily loses his roots. In antiquity, the opposition between Rome (the Land) and Carthage (the Sea) is a good example of this duality. In modernity, England is a pristine example of Thalassocratic civilization, as is the USA from a certain point in its history.

Carl Schmitt, to explain the differences between these two types of civilizations, cites the myth of the cabalist doctrines, which represented universal history as the struggle between the powerful whale, the Leviathan, against a no less powerful monster, the Behemoth, which was represented as a bull or an elephant. Both names come from the book of Job. In their struggle, the Behemoth tries to tear the Leviathan apart with its horns and tusks, while the Leviathan closes the beast's jaws and snout with its flippers to prevent it from eating and breathing. For Schmitt, this mythical image represents the blockade of a terrestrial power by a maritime one, which cuts off its means of supply to starve it out. Schmitt adds that for the kabbalistic Jews everything ends with the death of the monsters (that is, of the powers in struggle); while they, who have remained on the sidelines, eat the flesh of the dead beasts and build tents with their skins.

For Dugin, Russia has always been a telluric civilization. From Kievan Rus to the Muscovite Tsarate, the USSR or the current Russian Federation, above (or below) political or ideological differences, there is a set of common features in the course of Russian history—the continuous confrontation, both ideological and geopolitical, with the "Sea" civilizations. The Cold War and the current confrontation of Putin's Russia with the US and its allies are a good illustration of this confrontation, even with different political and ideological motivations.

To the policy of Globalization, which is an attempt to extend, in a totalitarian way, the presuppositions of

Western civilization (and especially of the USA) to the whole Earth, imposing its values (market, individualism, formal democracy) even if by force, Dugin opposes a multipolar conception, with the idea of Great Spaces that coincide with the great civilizations.

In this sense, the bloc formed by Russia and its allies coincides with Eurasia and the domain of the Heartland and has to play a fundamental role in the geopolitics of the future, in alliance with China and other emerging countries (India, Brazil) to oppose Globalization.

From this point on, the concept of Eurasianism takes on two different meanings. In its more restricted and original sense, it refers to the affirmation and defense of the Eurasian bloc and the values of the Christian-Orthodox civilization, capable of opposing the unipolar policy of the USA. But in a general sense, wherever there is defense of a national or cultural identity against globalizing homogenization, one can speak of Eurasianism in a more generic sense.

Thus, when the Poles affirm their national and Catholic identity, when the French or the Greeks stand up to the neoliberal policies of the EU, or when we Spaniards defend our Hispanic identity against separatism or against the fads "made in the USA," even without knowing it, we are doing Eurasianism.

Eurasianism thus becomes the ideological banner of all those who fight for a multipolar world, respectful not only of the differences of the great civilizations (European, Eurasian, Arab, etc.) but also of the ethnic differences and cultural particularities of the different peoples that make up each of these great civilizations.

For our part, we believe that this generic use of the term "Eurasianism" can be misleading, or be interpreted as a kind of Russian "doctrinal imperialism." We think that the application of Dugin's ideas to Spanish reality should be called Hispanism (just as in Peru our friend and colleague Israel Lira calls "Chrysolism" the application of the Fourth Political Theory to his national reality).

Dugin points out, in this sense, that the Nation State, despite its liberal origins and its contribution to the homogenization of populations as a first step towards the total homogenization of Globalization, can play a role in resisting it. While it is true that no nation state, on its own, can resist globalization, its resistance to losing power can slow down the advance of globalization. A good example is France, where the defense of the French National State by Marine Le Pen's National Front has become an

obstacle to the migratory processes and the neoliberal policies sponsored by the EU.

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***Featured:** "The City Of Candahar," from sketches by James Atkinson; engraved by Charles Haghe and Louis Haghe; published by Henry Graves in 1842.*

