

## **Techno-Geopolitics; a pro classical geopolitics challenging critical approach**

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### **Abstract**

Geopolitics as a multidisciplinary view has been defined most succinctly as the relation of international political power to geographical setting. This definition has three principle conceptual components, the international system of states, political power and geography each of which has a significant relation to technology, this notion is initially based on the study of effects of geography on politics especially in an international scale, witnessed a post structural orientation with the idea –called critical geopolitics- that nation-states are not the only legitimate units of geopolitical analysis. But new technologies with their capabilities provided for states in shaping and reshaping the geographical environment and changing it into a dominant discourse, reveal as a pro classical geopolitics challenging the critical approach in this regard.

**Keywords:** Critical geopolitics, Traditional geopolitics, Techno-geopolitics.

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### **1. Introduction**

Geopolitics is among the applied concepts that are used in political literature of today's world. But like many other things, its history is older than its formal creation in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. That is, the politicians and military officials from ancient times knew well that geography was power and were aware of its effects on the balance of power in a region. That is why geography played and is still playing an important role in regional equations and hence, there were many struggles and wars broken out for changing the geography of a territory and achieving military and political success in those lands. Therefore, the effect of geographical elements on the power of a political unit was a phenomenon existed before the birth of the concept of geopolitics. This classical concept was stressed on since the 19<sup>th</sup> century to be located in a formal academic frame called geopolitics.

With the addition of this new-comer to the reunion of existed sciences, now the universities and academies have tried to clarify its different dimensions. Therefore, geopolitics became the study of the effects of geography on international politics and international relationships which tries to make a cognitive base for political behavior in terms of geographical variables. But this was not the end of such scientific story because since the late 1980s, a new concept critical geopolitics being a radical critical perspective on the discipline of political geography to becoming a recognized area of research.

### **2. Methodology**

This paper with adaptive method and rely on library resources, looking Prove this theory that technology is a powerful instrument at the disposal put of all actors including governmental and nongovernmental, But due to three factors: government access to information, wealth and communications further than the other actors, power and usability of technology has greater.

### 3. Theoretical Framework

#### 3-1. Geopolitics

**Geopolitics**, from Greek Γη (earth) and Πολιτική (politics), is the study of the effects of geography (both human and physical) on international politics and international relations (Devetak et al, 2012: 492). Geopolitics is a method of foreign policy analysis which seeks to understand, explain, and predict international political behavior primarily in terms of geographical variables. Typical geographical variables are the physical location, size, climate, topography, demography, natural resources, and technological advances of the state being evaluated (Evans& Newnham, 1998). Traditionally, the term has applied primarily to the impact of geography on politics, but its usage has evolved over the past century to encompass wider connotations.

Geopolitics traditionally studies the links between political power and geographic space, and examines strategic prescriptions based on the relative importance of land power and sea power in world history. The geopolitical tradition had some consistent concerns with geopolitical correlations of power in world politics, the identification of international core areas, and the relationships between naval and terrestrial capabilities (Osterud, 1988: 192).

Academically, the study of geopolitics analyses geography, history, and social science with reference to spatial and patterns at various scales. Also, the study of geopolitics includes the study of the ensemble of relations between the interests of international political actors, interests focused to an area, space, geographical element or ways, relations which create a geopolitical system(Toncea, 2006).

Geopolitics is multidisciplinary in scope, and includes all aspects of the social sciences—with particular emphasis on political geography, international relations, the territorial aspects of political science and international law. The practice directly and indirectly impacts businesses and economies (J.Mark, 2013).

The term "Geopolitics" was coined at the beginning of the twentieth century by Rudolf Kjellén, a Swedish political scientist, who was inspired by the German geographer Friedrich Ratzel. Ratzel published *Politische*

*Geographie (political geography)* in 1897; that book was later popularized in English by the Austro-Hungarian historian Emil Reich and the American diplomat Robert Strausz-Hupé (a faculty member of the University of Pennsylvania). Although Halford Mackinder had a pioneering role in the field, he never used the term geopolitics himself (Gerry, 2009).

### **3-2. Critical Geopolitics**

Critical geopolitics investigates the geographical assumptions and designations that enter into the making of world politics (Agnew 2003:2). It seeks to illuminate and explain the practices by which political actors spatialize international politics and represent it as a “world” characterized by particular types of places (Ó Tuathail and Agnew 1992:190). This strand of analysis approaches geopolitics not as a neutral consideration of regional “geographical” facts, but as a deeply ideological and politicized form of analysis. Eschewing the traditional question of how geography does or can influence politics, it investigates how geographical claims and assumptions function in political debates and political practice. In so doing, it seeks to disrupt mainstream geopolitical discourses: not to study the geography of politics within regional, commonsense places, but to foreground “the politics of the geographical specification of politics” (Dalby 1991:274). Critical geopolitics is not a neatly delimited field, but the diverse works characterized as such all focus on the processes through which political practice is bound up with territorial definition.

A substantial part of critical geopolitics seeks to unpack the rigid territorial assumptions of traditional geopolitical thinking. Thus, numerous analyses dissect post-Cold War geopolitics to reveal the continued reliance on binary understandings of power and spatiality, on notions of East and West, security and danger, freedom and oppression. More recently, geographic scholarship has foregrounded how the “war on terror” works with these same binaries (Agnew 2003; Gregory 2004; Gregory and Pred 2006). In particular, much of critical geopolitics problematizes the statist conceptions of power in social sciences – a conceptualization that John Agnew calls the “territorial trap.” Along with

political geography more generally, critical geopolitics argues that spatiality is not confined to territoriality, either historically or today (Murphy 1996). It advances the drift away from rigidly territorialized understandings of politics toward more nuanced understandings of the complex spatialities of power (Agnew 1999; 2005b; Dalby 2002; Elden 2005; Sparke 2005). State power, it shows, is not limited to or contained within the territory of the state; it is also exercised not territorially or in space-spanning networks (Kuus and Agnew 2008). It is applied differentially in different spheres and to different subjects (Gregory 2006; Painter 2006; Sparke 2006). The argument is not that geography or borders no longer matter. In fact, the celebrations of borderless world also equate spatiality with state territoriality, mistakenly taking the transformations of state power for the “end of geography” (Agnew 2005b). This applies not just to popular writers like Thomas Friedman (for a critique, see Sparke 2005). Proclamations of the transnational governmentality termed Empire by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2000) also betray insensitivity to the intricate topographies of power (Sparke 2005; Coleman and Agnew 2007). Critical geopolitics argues that the emerging forms of global governance do not “flatten” space; to the contrary, they increase spatial differentiation globally (Albert and Reuber 2007:550). In terms of the state, the key questions to address are not about the “real” sources, meanings or limits of state sovereignty in some general or universal sense, but, more specifically, about how state power is discursively and practically produced in territorial and non-territorial forms (Kuus and Agnew 2008; Painter 2008). The task is to decenter but not to write off state power by examining its incoherencies and contradictions (Coleman 2005:202). Such investigations must also be mindful of the increasing complexity of regional integration and differentiation (Agnew 2005a). Rationality here does not refer to any regime constellation, such as the European Union (EU) or the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). It rather refers to the multilayered socioeconomic and cultural processes through which “regionness” is produced and sustained (Sidaway

2002; Albert and Reuber 2007:551). This drift away from state-based analysis of world politics links up with interest in subjectivity and identity across the social sciences. For the assumption that international politics is a fundamentally territorial (as distinct from spatial) politics of 8 states is closely bound up with the notion that states are the basic subjects of international politics (Kuus and Agnew 2008). Critical geopolitics departs from both of these assumptions. It does not examine the identities or actions of pre-given subjects; it rather investigates the processes by which political subjects are formed in the first place. It shows that the sovereign state is not the basis for, but the effect of, discourses of sovereignty, security, and identity. Put differently, state identity and interest do not precede foreign policy, but are forged through foreign policy practices. The enactments of state interest and identity are therefore among the key themes of critical geopolitics. The principal object of this scholarship is not the state as an object but statecraft as a multitude of practices (Coleman 2007:609). As a part of this interest in political subjectivity and subject-formation, there has been tremendous interest in identity politics, that is, in the geographical demarcation of Self and Other, “our” space and “theirs.” This strand of work has been so voluminous that critical geopolitics is sometimes accused of over valorizing culture and identity at the expense of economic issues. Much of this “cultural” work has focused on the construction of national spaces and the geopolitical cultures of particular states (e.g. Campbell 1998; Sharp 2000; Toal 2003; Jeffrey 2008). It shows that geographical claims about cultural borders and homelands are central to narratives of national identity. There is also an extensive literature on bordering practices. It argues that international borders are best viewed not as lines representing already existing political entities called states or nations. Rather, these entities themselves are constituted through bordering practices.

### **3-3. Techno-Geopolitics**

Techno-Geopolitics Regarded as a new concept of geopolitical studies, the subject of the study is to investigate the relationship between power, politics

and technology. Technology provides powerful instruments for all actors including governmental and nongovernmental put. This is new the groundwork for formation of hierarchy of power structures provides. Here is what is of most interest to information, knowledge and political power in Words of geo-political information.

#### **4. Results**

##### **4-1. Geopolitics; from Governmentalization of a Concept to a Critical Approach**

Geography of the world – as Gearoid Tuathail (1996:1) indicates- is not a product of nature but a product of histories of struggles between competing authorities over the power to recognize, occupy and administer space. Imperial systems throughout history, from classical Greece and Rome to China and Arab world, exercised the power through their ability to impose order and meaning upon space. David Barker (1993:81), for example, in his writing about the history of Ireland indicates that not only the queen’s administrators established towns, lay out roads etc., but in a certain sense, they made Ireland.

In such a sphere, Fouberg (Fouberg et al., 2012) believes that the ideas about places with their influence on political behavior were constructed by intellectuals of statecraft and these ideas affected how people processed their notion of places and politics. It is an ongoing thought tries to focus on the power relation for constructing and reconstructing our understanding in this regard.

But it should not be neglected that this governmentalization of geography from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onward gradually resulted in an atmosphere which is in line with what Foucault (1991:87) notes as a time when government as a general problem demanding public and intellectual thought explodes in terms of its relevance and significance. This intellectual stream resulted in the late 1980s and 1990s, another concept -critical geopolitics- initially analyzed the practical geopolitical language of the elites and intellectuals of statecrafts were born based on the traditional concept of geopolitics.

Critical geopolitics investigates the geographical assumption that enters

into making world politics (Agnew, 2003:2). Critical geopolitics argues that spatiality is not confined to territoriality either historically or today (Murphy, 1996). It also notes that emerging forms of global governance do not flatten space to the contrary; they increase spatial differentiation globally (Albert & Reuber, 2007:550).

The writings concerning geopolitics challenge some aspects of taken for granted geopolitical knowledge by looking at either its social production, the parameters of its discursive economy, or the combination of the two. There are two problems that cause this issue. The first is that of state as a producer, administrator and ruler of space. To some writers like Mann (1993:56) the development of modern state and geopolitics go together and the very definition of the state as a delimited territory suggests a further set of political relationships between this state and another state...that is geopolitics. The other problem, as Mattel art (1994) indicates concerns the entwining of communications, media and politics of identity in the production of geopolitical knowledge and the nation.

In brief, this new-comer with its origins in post-structuralism orientation (Foucault, 2003:6-7) holds that geographical knowledge is seen as partial, situated, embodied and more diffuse with popular geopolitical discourse. Hence, Nation-states are not the only legitimate units of geopolitical analysis. In this context, geopolitical practice results from complex constellation of competing ideas and discourses which in turn modify geopolitical practice. It is just here that technology enters the scene.

#### **4-2. Technology on Board! Is Techno-Geopolitics a Challenge for Critical Approach?**

Technology has changed and complicated the human environment. This phenomenon has not occurred in a single specific field but has touched vast fields among which political environment is notable. Hence, national governments enter today a competition with other nations as their competitors along with new actors, all privileged almost the same technologies. The result is



a global stage in which states play major roles, more complicated than ever, because technology has led to diffusion of manufacturing and trade. This diffusion is seen as a smaller but more important scale in political arena with its unique effect on legitimacy and state's power.

A different geopolitical environment will change the power and ability of states. This phrase is concerned to shape the core of geopolitical thinking. In classical geopolitics sphere, the essential effective way of obtaining the better geographical situations was expansionism through struggles, invasions and wars. But as these ways are not acceptable today due to international laws and regulations, changing environment and shaping it in a desired way help states approach to a quasi-desired situation. It is here that technology enters the scene.

A state by means of technology along with the application of other means of obtaining, preserving and promoting power, will be able to change its geographical environment. This" neo-classical" approach is what we call techno-geopolitics.

As it is seen below, the higher the technology, the more capabilities in hands of its users, but since these users are not in the same level of power and opportunities, the same technology may have different results for authorities of state and other actors.

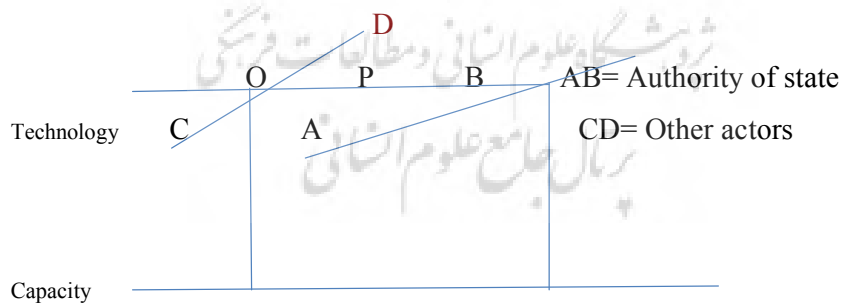


Figure 1: comparing capacity of state and other actors using the same level of technology (by the author).

It may be argued that this happens for three major reasons. First state authorities have more information than other actors. They have access to the

sources of information. This fact makes them capable of using the opportunities in right time and right place. Second, they have more money than other actors. This can be a good guarantee for implementing plans and projects in line with their goals and objectives. Furthermore, information and money make a magic formulation for power augmentation; what is not really clear for other actors to benefit from. And third, they have more relationships and more effective interactions. Although in the era of communication, having such interactions are facilitated by means of technology but again the non-governmental actors for not being in the same level of the two former elements - information and money- their relationships and interactions may not have the same efficiency as state.

New technologies in the process of changing, forming and reforming the geographical environment changes into means in hands of intellectuals of statecrafts to allocate the ideas of the “robo-leviathan” of state about the new shaped places- especially if strategic- and reforming the people’s notion of politics; what is seen in the definition of critical geopolitics. Here it may be claimed that even the concept of meta-geopolitics proposed by Nayef al-Rodhon (2012) which combines traditional and new dimensions of geopolitics to have a multidimensional view will be at service of such allocation of intellectual statecrafts. Today the “robo-leviathan” of state is in such situation that to change even the stream of discourses which other actors as his rivals have begun. This is in line with what some writers (Cigar, 1995 and Sibley, 1995) have claimed that the attempts by states in our contemporary world to violently engineer space (social, cognitive and aesthetic, all of which are entwined with the territorial) TO FIT Their nationalist, exclusionary and racist visions of the perfect order in unfortunately still part of global politics.

## **5. Conclusion**

Although the power of geography and its effect on politics was revealed from ancient times for politicians but conceptualization of such understanding was not completed until the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The birth of

geopolitics was not separated from the classical view of state's power in presenting, using or changing this concept. With the emergence of a new approach called critical geopolitics, the nation-states were not further the only legitimate unit on the scene of geopolitics. There is a complex constellation of competing ideas and discourses which play the main role. But once again, technology can change the equation for the states, now robo-leviathans, and for the classical view of geopolitics by capabilities provided for states to change the geographical environment.

The question is not that the critical geopolitics has taken a wrong way comparing with classical geopolitics, but is the fact that equation of classical-critical geopolitics has been changed since the flourishing of technologies especially in recent decade. In other words, it is true that technology in all its aspects has been presented to governmental and non-governmental actors, but the actors who have more chances to benefit from this technology is state and intellectual of statecraft.

This actor with its bigger share of information, money and relationships in comparison with other actors, will be in a situation to apply the methods of good governance - persuasion, cooperation, force and facilitation – as Spicker(2008:121) indicates and hence becomes a dominant narrator of geopolitical concepts as it was the case the first time the phenomenon was conceptualized.

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