

Geopolitics has long been frowned upon by public opinion. Following World War II, it became the most unpopular of the social sciences. It had been accused of being a "German science" which didn't really mean much, except that it owes its initial impetus to the political geography principles enunciated by the German geographer Friederich Ratzel - the term "geopolitics" being used for the first time by the Swedish geographer Rudolf Kjéllen in 1889. In his book "Politische Geographie oder die Geographie der Staaten, des Verkehrs und des Krieges (1897)" Ratzel analyzed the interactions of the state, considered as a living body, in terms of its geography and its space. One of his disciples was the Bavarian General Karl Haushofer, founder of the "Zeitschrift für Geopolitik". It was only by an obvious confusion between space in the geopolitical sense and "Lebensraum" that a connection/ proximity between Karl Haushofer and National Socialism was brought into question. This was wrongly so, and not only because Haushofer never was an ideologue of the 3rd Reich. More importantly, Hitler had much more sympathy for the Anglo Saxons than he had for the Slavs. He waged a war against Russia, a continental power, yet he would have preferred to ally with Great Britain, a sea power. Had he subscribed to the thesis of geopolitics he would have done the exact opposite.

Moreover, the definition of this discipline's field of study or its status has never ceased to be a problem. Geopolitics studies the influence of geography on politics and history, that is to say, the relationship between space and power (political, economic or other). Yet the definition remains fuzzy, which explains that the reality of both the concept and the relationship to its objective have been disputed. It has therefore been described as a discipline aiming to legitimize retrospectively historical events or political decisions.

These criticisms do not, however, go to the bottom of things: That we can identify through history, geographical constants of political action is, as a matter of fact, indisputable. Geopolitics remains thus, a discipline of great value and great importance. It is, even, essential to refer to it in a world in transition, where all the cards are being redistributed worldwide. Geopolitics puts into perspective the weight of merely ideological factors, unstable by definition, and recalls the existence of large constants that transcend political regimes as well as the intellectual debates.

Of all the concepts specific to Geopolitics, one of the most significant is undoubtedly the dialectical opposition between Sea and Land. " World history, said Carl Schmitt, is the story of the fight of maritime powers against continental powers and of continental powers against maritime powers." It was also the Admiral Castex' opinion as well as that of many other geopoliticians. Halford Mackinder, for example, defines the power of Great Britain by the domination of the oceans and seas. He perceives the planet as a whole composed of a " Global Ocean" and a "Global Island", corresponding to the entire Eurasian space as well as Africa , and " peripheral islands" , America and Australia. In order to dominate the world, we must seize the global island and primarily its "heart" , the Heartland, the real world's geographical pivot stretching from Central Europe to Western Siberia and towards the Mediterranean, from Middle-East and South Asia. One of the first English great navigators, Sir Walter Raleigh, used to say: " Whoever controls the seas controls world trade; whoever controls world trade holds all the treasures of the world in his possession, and in fact, the whole world."

In the history of mankind, the confrontation between Land and Sea is the age-old struggle between the European continental logic and the "insular" logic embodied nowadays by the US. But the opposition between Land and Sea goes well beyond the perspectives offered by Geopolitics. The Land is a space formed by territories differentiated by borders. Its logic is

based on sharp distinctions between war and peace, combatants and non-combatants, political action and trade. It is therefore the place of politics and history par excellence. " Political existence is pure telluric nature" (Adriano Scianca). The sea is an homogenous area/stretch, the negation of differences, limits and borders. It is a space of indistinctness, the liquid equivalent of the desert. Being centre-less, it only knows ebb and flow and this is how it is related to postmodern globalization. The actual world is indeed a "liquid" world (Zygmunt Bauman), which tends to eliminate everything that is "earthly", stable, solid, consistent, sustainable, and differentiated. It is a world of flux carried by networks. Trade itself, as well as the logic of it is also formed in the manner of ebb and flow.

Geopolitics has regained its legitimacy with the various conflicts that have arisen since the 1970' s. Most of these conflicts have been carried out by the US. Marked from their puritan origins by the conviction of being the "new chosen people" the Americans have intended to establish themselves as a universal model, which would bring to the world the benefits of "the American way of life" that is to say a model of a commercial civilization, based on the primacy of exchange value and the logic of profit. This planetary mission would be their "Manifest Destiny" . Geopolitics is precisely the discipline which helps to explain the constants of their foreign policy.

The disbanding of the Soviet system, has at the same time made globalization possible and marked the disappearance of a tremendous competitor for American power which has then had the temptation to shape a unipolar world under its hegemony. (What has been called "The New World Order") In the aftermath of the Soviet disbanding the US find themselves as an "Empire without shadow" (Eric Hobsbawn). Confident in their technological superiority, in their military power, in the benefits given by the dollar system, they have thought that an " American century" was about to be forthcoming. Convinced to be from this point forward the world's only superpower, they have pretended to play the role of the "world police". The neo-conservatives were at the forefront of this project. This was the time Francis Fukuyama thought he could announce the "End of History", namely the triumph of liberal capitalism and the democracy of human rights as the unsurpassable horizon of our time.

At the end of the 1990s, Gorbachev's advisor Arbatov declared to the Americans: "We are dealing you the worst blow: we are going to deprive you of your enemy." Significant words. The disappearance of the Soviet "Evil Empire" threatened to eradicate all ideological legitimization of American hegemony over her allies. This meant that, from then on, the Americans needed to find an alternative enemy, which provided a threat, real or imaginary, that would allow them to establish themselves as the masters of the "New World Order". It is radical Islam, something they constantly encouraged in previous decades that will play the role of a foil. But in reality, their fundamental objective remains unchanged. This is to prevent, anywhere in the world, the emergence of a rival capable of competing with them and most importantly to control the Heartland, the "global island."

In his book *The Grand Chessboard*, published in 1997 Zbigniew Brzezinski enumerates explicitly the "geostrategic imperatives" the US must meet to maintain their global hegemony. Describing a project of "global management" of the world, he warns against the "creation or the emergence of an Eurasian coalition" that "could seek to challenge America's supremacy." In 2001, Henry Kissinger was already saying: " America must retain a presence in Asia, and its geopolitical objective must remain to prevent Asia's coalescence into an unfriendly bloc." Brzezinski recalled in his turn: " Who controls Eurasia, controls the world."

To control Eurasia, means, first of all, adopting a strategy of encirclement of Russia and China. The encirclement of Russia strategy includes the installation of new military bases in Eastern Europe, the establishment of anti missiles defense systems in Poland, Czech Republic and Romania, supporting the accession of Ukraine and Georgia to Nato, and pursuing an aggressive policy aiming to dislocate Russia's influence in key regions around the Black Sea, the Caspian Sea and the Caucasus. In terms of energy supply, this strategy leads to the control of Central Asia's pipelines - Central Asia being transformed into an American protectorate - encouraging the development of pipelines in the Caspian to bypass Russia and to reach Turkey, as well as limiting as much as possible the access of Russian tankers to the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits. It is within this context that we must put the " colour revolutions" in Serbia (2000), Georgia (2003), Ukraine (2004) and Kyrgyzstan. Far from being spontaneous movements, these were organized and supported from the outside with the endorsement of the National Endowment for Democracy, a convenient front for the CIA.

The establishment of an "arc of crisis" to destabilize Russia's traditional sphere of influence in the Caucasus, Afghanistan and Central Asia can only be understood in this context. Using the alleged "War against Terror": in Afghanistan the US and her allies have set up military bases in the former Soviet republics, including, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. The objective can be summed up in three words: encircle, destabilize, balkanize.

In parallel and simultaneously, they endeavoured to massively expand NATO in Eastern Europe and in the Balkans as far as the Russian border, even within the former Soviet Union. As of Sep 11 2001, President George Bush took a stand in favor of " a large NATO from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea " to pave the way from the Caspian and the Black Sea. That is to go from a relatively static structure to an expeditionary model of neocolonial interventions in all directions, global geostrategic centers of gravity slipping, thus, to the Middle East and Asia.

Maintaining NATO has two other goals. The first one is to continue to dissuade the EU to build up a a common and autonomous European defense force. Americans have always considered that European defense meant to them "the set up of NATO's European pillar". The second goal is to weaken the relations between Russia and Western Europe. Germany is particularly targeted, given the extent of its technological, energy and economical exchange with Russia. In this project, the EU becomes a simple American bridgehead in Eurasia.

In Middle East, where they are facing serious challenges due to the instability of the region, the failure of their military interventions and the growing isolation of their unswerving Israeli ally, the US are developing an aggressive strategy to counter the rise of Iran, which worries them because of its energy resources, its privileged relationship with China and Russia, and its increasing influence in Iraq and in the Gulf countries where there are significant Shiite minorities. Finally, they are currently engaged in a spectacular return to Africa, for two reasons, to counterbalance China's influence and to take into account the growing importance of Africa in terms of global energy supplies.

To develop this aggressive policy, the US are not short of technological and financial means. Despite their financial difficulties and their exceptional deficits, their military budget, which is constantly increasing, is now close to \$700 billion, a colossal amount, and equivalent to more than 40% of all military budgets combined in the world.

However, the question arises whether the United States have not reached the limits of their Imperial expansion capacity. Their domestic issues worsen. The dollar system, which they

capitalize on, teeters on the brink. The global financial crisis that started there, back in 2008 hit them with full force. Their trade gap and the public debt have reached an all time high.

In Russia, meanwhile, Vladimir Putin, who clearly perceived their intentions, clearly broke from the catastrophic era under Boris Yeltsin, who had sanctified the omnipotence of the "oligarchs."

The most recent events related to the civil war in Syria have, again, highlighted the importance of geopolitics. The extreme acumen of Vladimir Putin and his Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov against Barack Obama's indecisiveness and Francois Holland naivety, has been symptomatic. With its intervention in the Syrian affair, Russia has regained its role as a major world power and thus showed that it (Russia) is not a negligible party in international affairs, but that it will have to be reckoned with in the future.

The "unipolar moment" has therefore not lasted for 10 years. The Americans, who now only represent 5% of the world population, have overestimated their strength. The engulfing of their troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, their domestic issues, their abyssal deficits, the instability of the dollar system and the world financial crisis have imposed limits on them. It quickly becomes apparent that they will not rule the world unchallenged. The History, which Fukuyama announced the end has already returned.

A multipolar world is emerging on the back of China's rapid surge, followed by India, Brazil and even Iran. Emerging economies are growing dramatically. Their share in the world's gross domestic product in purchasing power parity has gone from 36% in 1980 to 45% in 2008 and should reach 51% in 2014.

The US Eurasian strategy has led, as a reaction, to a significant rapprochement between Russia and China, which has materialized within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, founded in June 2001, which also includes four Central Asia countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan) while Iran, Mongolia, India and Afghanistan participate as observers.

We know that in recent years, Iran has strengthened its relationship with China and Russia. This pragmatic alliance materializes today utilizing mutual geopolitical supports that have led some observers to consider the possibility to witness, in the coming years, the rise of a kind of "new Mongol Empire". Between 1206 and 1294, Genghis Khan's Turkish-Mongol Empire had spread throughout Central Asia before breaking up into four blocks. Today The SCO, whose main goal is to counter US influence in Central Asia, is associated again with Russia, China and Iran, three different countries, yet forming a real community of interests which represents 1.5 billion people. The big difference with the former Mongol Empire however, is that today Iran sees Turkey as regional rival power.

Since the end of the Soviet system, we have entered in an interregnum - a Zwischenzeit. The former Nomos of the Earth is gone but the contours of a new Nomos can only be speculated upon. The actual big world conflict is the one that opposes the Eurasian continental power to the American thalassocracy. The main question is whether we are going towards an unipolar world, an universum, or towards a multipolar world, a pluriversum.

The problem is that Europeans are rarely aware of this. Americans may have many faults but there is something we cannot deny them, they are aware of the global stakes and to try to think the world to come. In Russia and China too, they think the world to come. The Europeans, they don't think. They only care about the present moment. They live under the horizon of fate, with institutions that condemn them to powerlessness and paralysis. Europe lives in a state of weightlessness. Facing an unprecedented moral crisis, the problem of

immigration, an ageing population, economic offshoring and global competition. It appears Europe cannot defend its place in a globalized world. Bearing an identity that she (Europe) cannot anymore define, haunted by the secret desire to withdraw itself/ herself from History - thus running the risk of becoming the object of other's history - thinking men are everywhere of the same disposition. Europe is now "poor-in-world" (Heidegger). She (Europe) seems exhausted, beset by lassitude that leads to not wanting anything. Geopolitics of powerlessness? Rise of insignificance? The Euro banknotes are like its reflection: they only represent emptiness.

In the past, geopolitics applied its constraints mainly at state level, the same states that seem to have entered an irreversible crisis, at least in the western hemisphere. Now, it depends on the logic of continents which has long been hidden behind the disorderly conducts of the states but that is now more fundamental than ever. It (Geopolitics) helps to think in terms not only of countries but also of continents (Jordis Von Lohausen). The Sea against the Land, now it is US against the "rest of the world", and first against the Eurasian and European continental bloc. In this sense, the collapse of the Soviet system has clarified things. There are now only two possible positions: either being on the side of the American sea power or being on the side of the Eurasian continental power. I'm with the latter.