Is a ‘Best of Both Worlds’-approach possible?
How Traditional, Cognitive and Critical Geopolitics could complement one another in the study of (the role of ‘territoriality’ in) foreign policy and international politics

David Criekemans
Abstract

To what extent does ‘territoriality’ still play a role in foreign policy, and –by elaboration– in international politics? While the “Globalisation-thesis” suggests the (relative) decline of the importance of territoriality, one must acknowledge that territorially embedded explanatory variables often can provide the beginning of an answer to very pressing questions in international politics. The most important and potentially most dangerous disputes in the world, are very often exactly those conflicts in which ‘territoriality’ plays a crucial role (e.g. in the Balkans, in the Caucasus, in the Middle East, etc.). Early geopolitical scholars at the beginning of the 20th century considered geographically embedded ‘environmental variables’ as the most ‘permanent’ and/or unchangeable variables to which a foreign policy could be susceptible (cf. “traditional” geopolitical analyses). Since then however, societies have evolved; the development of a range of technologies has promoted the idea that we are less depended upon nature compared to a century ago. Furthermore, within the academic world a more nuanced appreciation has developed regarding the nature of these ‘territorially embedded factors’. The following question thus touches upon the very core of the field of study called ‘Geopolitics'; to what extent is territoriality still relevant to understand foreign policy, and –by elaboration– international problems in the early 21st century world?

This paper argues that part of the problem in solving this question lies in resolving the ‘confusion of tongues’ which was caused by the development of the quite diverse ‘research traditions’ within Geopolitics itself. Based upon a critical-genealogical reconstruction, we try to identify the most important research traditions in Geopolitics. Which of these ‘geopolitical research traditions’ developed ‘fundamentally new visions’ regarding the relationship between ‘territoriality’ and ‘politics’, and –by elaboration– regarding the epistemological question what kind of academic knowledge is feasible about this relationship? Is a ‘Best of Both Worlds’-approach possible?

Biography

Dr. David Criekemans is a Postdoctoral Researcher in International Politics at the University of Antwerp (Belgium). MA International Politics (Antwerp, 1996), European Master of Public Administration (Leuven, 1997), Ph.D. International Relations (Antwerp, 2005). In 2005, he completed and defended his Ph. D. on the intellectual history of Geopolitics (1890-2005), and its relation to Theory of International Relations. The manuscript (written in Dutch) was published by the Scientific Publisher Garant (Antwerp, Belgium / Apeldoorn, the Netherlands) under the title “Geopolitics, ‘geographical consciousness’ of foreign policy?” (original title in Dutch: “Geopolitiek, ‘geografisch geweten’ van de buitenlandse politiek?”), ISBN 90-441-1969-9.

Since then, David Criekemans has become active as a Research Coordinator and Senior Researcher “European and Global Relations” at the newly established Flemish Centre for International Policy, located on the city campus of the University of Antwerp. In this centre, a long term research project on geopolitical analysis is currently running. This paper forms part of that endeavour to try to further ‘refine’ geopolitical analysis in international relations. Within this research programme, another project is underway titled “Geopolitics of Energy: the relations between the European Union and Russia” (with junior researcher Sofie Vanmaele). Also, a different project is in progress on “the comparative study of sub-state and small state diplomacy” (with junior researcher Manuel Duran). Since 1998, Dr. Criekemans has contributed as a researcher and adviser to different policy-oriented research projects on Flemish foreign policy at the University of Antwerp (Belgium); “the political and strategic importance of a Flemish cooperation with the Nordic countries” (1998-1999), “the possibilities and opportunities for growth for Flanders in intergovernmental multilateral organisations” (1999-2001), “a future perspective on a Flemish policy towards Central- and Eastern Europe” (2003).

Last but not least, David Criekemans is a Lecturer in Geopolitics at the Royal Military Academy in Brussels (Belgium), and also at the International Centre for Geopolitical Studies (ICGS) in Geneva (Switzerland).
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Today, in the early 21st century, one can say that the geopolitical analysis of international relations is studied once again in a growing number of countries, both by political geographers, by specialists in international relations, and by historians. Geopolitics, in its essence, draws attention to the question what role ‘territoriality’ still plays; in international politics, or on the identity and foreign policy of a political entity. During the high days of the 1990s, some scholars and writers believed that in the ‘age of globalisation’, the world was becoming “flat”, and hence ‘territoriality’ would increasingly retreat as an explanatory factor. One could state that the current affairs in the early 21st century to a certain extent form a ‘contra-point’ to the beliefs of mainstream thinkers during the 1990s. The terrorist attacks on September 11th, 2001 in New York and Washington, D.C., heralded the return of the geostrategical perspective to international relations, and caused a debate on the effect, if any, of these ‘events’ on the course of international politics. It also re-posed one of the central questions in international politics; what is ‘power’? The growth of economies such as China, India and Brazil from 2003 onwards reminded observers of international politics that ‘history had not ended’, and that a rise in energy prices and shifting international spheres of influences gradually also changed the fabric of the international-political relations. The debate which was started by the former American vice-president Al Gore on ‘climate change’, via his documentary ‘An Inconvenient Truth’ in 2005, heralded a return of ‘ecology’ as a factor to seriously take into account in the study in international politics. Through all the societal and global changes of the last years, one can state that Geopolitics seems again to be relevant and highly useful as a specific perspective to study what is happening in the world, how nations’ foreign policies prioritize, how they try to give meaning to what is happening in the world, and how they themselves try to ‘shape’ events.

While the “Globalisation-thesis” suggests the (relative) decline of the importance of territoriality, one must acknowledge that territorially embedded explanatory variables often can provide the beginning of an answer to very pressing questions in international politics. The most important and potentially most dangerous disputes in the world, are very often exactly those conflicts in which ‘territoriality’ plays a crucial role (e.g. in the Balkans, in the Caucasus, in the Middle East, etc.). Early geopolitical scholars at the beginning of the 20th century considered geographically embedded ‘environmental variables’ as the most ‘permanent’ and/or unchangeable variables to which a foreign policy could be susceptible (cf. “traditional” geopolitical analyses). Since then however, societies have evolved; the development of a range of technologies has promoted the idea that we are less depended upon nature compared to a century ago. Furthermore, within the academic world a more nuanced appreciation has developed regarding the very nature of these ‘territorially embedded factors’. The following question thus touches upon the very core of the field of study called ‘Geopolitics’; to what extent does ‘territoriality’ still play a role in foreign policy, and —by elaboration— in international politics? This paper argues that part of the problem in solving this question lies in resolving the ‘confusion of tongues’ which was caused by the development of the quite diverse ‘research traditions’ within Geopolitics itself. Based upon a

1 In 1978, the science philosopher Larry Laudan wrote the following about the scientific growth of research fields (Laudan 1978: 183-184): “My claim is, that even if (perhaps especially if) we are interested in single concepts, we must begin with an analysis of research traditions, for it is the changing fortunes of the latter that generally serve to
critical-genealogical reconstruction\(^2\), we try to identify the most important research traditions in Geopolitics. Which of these ‘geopolitical research traditions’ developed fundamentally new visions regarding the relationship between ‘territoriality’ and ‘politics’, and –by elaboration– regarding the epistemological question what kind of academic knowledge is feasible about this relationship? Following the work of the science philosopher Larry Laudan, and more specifically his book “Progress and Its Problems: Towards a Theory of Scientific Growth”, one can defend the idea that the analysis of scientific concepts and approaches (in our case; the geopolitical approach to the study of foreign policy and international politics) should necessarily start from an historical analysis of the development of this approach within a broader societal and scientific context. In the opinion of Laudan, so-called “research traditions” form the most ideal ‘unit of analysis’ to study the specificity and applicability of a scientific concept and approach (such as ‘Geopolitics’ in our case). Laudan defines ‘ontology’ and ‘methodology’ as the foundations of a ‘research tradition’.\(^3\) Laudan does not mention explicitly the ‘epistemology’, though one could state that also this element forms a basic component of ‘his’ research traditions. A ‘research tradition’ or ‘paradigm’ can be defined as “a kind of common heritage of which researchers make use to analyze problems” (Labohm 1998: 53), or also as “a series of basic views which contain central principles which in themselves are upheld as ‘truths’” (Mortelmans 2000: 5-6). This –at first glance seemingly impenetrable– base which lies at the foundation of each variant of social sciences, only becomes accessible when we divide a ‘research tradition’ or ‘paradigm’ into its three most fundamental basic components; ‘ontology’ \(^4\), ‘epistemology’ \(^5\) and ‘methodology’.\(^6\) The ontological question refers to the political, the epistemological question refers to the scientific and both have their own methodological consequences (Hay 2002: 59-88).

Laudan’s analytical framework of ‘research traditions’ is also excellent for theory-evaluation. According to Laudan, the evaluation of each scientific doctrine should concentrate itself upon the problem-solving progress and effectiveness of the research tradition with which it is linked. It is then also very important to study the intellectual history of research traditions (Laudan 1978: 194): “For until we know how a research tradition has fared through time (especially relative to its extant rivals) we are in no position to appraise its rational credentials.” In order to be able to make a judgement about a research tradition, one must investigate the problem-solving capacity of its most recent theories, within a comparative context (Laudan 1978: 109, 119-120). According to Laudan, a ‘scientific revolution’ takes place when a research tradition has developed a stage of development in which scientists feel themselves obligated to consider the new tradition as a serious contender in the allegiance of themselves and their colleagues (Laudan 1978: 138).

\(^2\) This paper is based upon Ph.D. work which was conducted between 1999 and 2005 at the University of Antwerp (Belgium), titled: “Geopolitiek, ‘geografisch geweten’ van de buitenlandse politiek? A critical, genealogical study into the essence & usability of the geopolitical approach in the study of foreign policy”. The Ph.D. manuscript was also published in Dutch at the beginning of 2007; Criekemans David.- Geopolitiek, ‘geografisch geweten’ van de buitenlandse politiek?.- Antwerpen: Garant, 2007.- 848 p.: ill.- ISBN 90-441-1969-9 .

\(^3\) As Laudan puts it (Laudan 1978: 80-81): “Put simplistically, a research tradition is thus a set of ontological and methodological “do’s” and “don’ts”. […] a preliminary working definition of a research tradition could be put as follows: a research tradition is a set of general assumptions about the entities and processes in a domain of study, and about the appropriate methods to be used for investigating the problems and constructing the theories in that domain.”

\(^4\) “Ontology refers to the claims or assumptions that a particular approach to social [or, by extension, political] enquiry makes about the nature of social [or political] reality – claims about what exists, what it looks like, what units make it up and how these units interact with one another.” [op. cit. Norman Blaikie, in: Hay 2002: 61].

\(^5\) “Epistemology refers to the claims or assumptions made about the ways in which it is possible to gain knowledge of reality.” [op. cit. Norman Blaikie, in: Hay 2002: 62-63].

\(^6\) “Methodology is the analysis of how research should or does proceed.” [op. cit. Norman Blaikie, in: Hay 2002: 63].
This paper is structured as follows;

- **First**, we will try to situate ‘Geopolitics’; our position will be that ‘Geopolitics’ could be re-defined as a ‘joint project’ between Political Geography and International Relations;

- **Second**, we will try to create some clarity in the jungle of geopolitical research traditions. In a first movement, we will critically look at existing categorizations of ‘Geopolitics’. In a second movement, we will try to develop a “final” categorization. In a third movement, we will categorize some of the most important geopolitical authors since 1899 based upon their epistemological vision regarding the (feasibility of scientific knowledge about) the relation between ‘territoriality’ and (foreign) policy.

- **Third**, we will further study the genealogy of the main research traditions within Geopolitics, and we will ask the *quo vadis*-question.
  
  o Based upon our Ph.D. work, we will claim that within the broader scientific field of ‘Geopolitics’, three “research traditions” can be discerned within the academic literature which from an epistemological view constitute a ‘significant step forward’ in the way in which they tried to provide insight into the relationship between ‘territoriality’ and ‘politics’; ‘Classical or Traditional Geopolitics’ (°1899), ‘Cognitive Geopolitics’ (°1956) and ‘Critical Geopolitics’ (°1988-92). ‘Cognitive Geopolitics’ is the label we use for the important work of the IR-scholars Harold and Margaret Sprout on cognitive behavioralism and the study of foreign policy, which was hardly detected by scholars in Political Geography (PG). It can be considered as an *anti-thesis* to ‘Traditional Geopolitics’ developed from International Relations (IR). On the other hand, ‘Critical Geopolitics’ can be considered an *anti-thesis* to ‘Traditional Geopolitics’ developed from Political Geography. It however remains on its part relatively undetected by IR-scholars.

  o The central question we will try to tackle is about the desirability and feasibility of a more comprehensive geopolitical model (or framework) of analysis for the study of questions of foreign policy. We will claim that it would perhaps be possible to develop in the future a ‘Best of Both Worlds’-approach in which the insights of Traditional, Cognitive and Critical Geopolitics are combined so as to provide a way out to the seemingly contradictory trend of a simultaneous weakening and strengthening of the role of space and territoriality in the international system.

- **Fourth**, we will end this paper by looking beyond the scope of this paper; could ‘Geopolitics’ develop towards a new ‘geographical consciousness’ of foreign policy?
1. Re-defining Geopolitics as a ‘joint project’ of Political Geography and International Relations

To a certain degree, ‘Geopolitics’ experiences an ‘identity problem’. When reading the literature, it is often unclear to pinpoint how a certain author views the relation between ‘Geopolitics’ and ‘Political Geography’ or between ‘Geopolitics’ and ‘International Relations’. The division that is often stated between these fields of study is to a certain degree an artificial one. One could also defend the thesis that ‘Geopolitics’ in fact constitutes a joint project or common field of study between Political Geography on the one hand, and International Relations on the other hand:

![Figure 1: Geopolitics as a ‘joint project’ of both Political Geography (PG) & International Relations (IR)](image)

The idea above is also supported by a number of geopolitical scholars. In his pivotal article ‘The origin and evolution of geopolitics’, the IR-specialist Ladis D. Kristof already defended this point of view (Kristof 1960: 20): “Geopolitics should cover all the field parallel to, and intermedial between, political science and political geography, and, indeed, there have been a few such studies.”. But why does ‘Geopolitics’ have such difficulties in presenting itself as a joint project of both Political Geography and International Relations? The main explanation should be sought in the way in which scientists within Political Geography (PG) and International Relations (IR) are organised (inter)nationally. Each, they have at their disposal their own academic structures, journals and means of finances, as a result of which a tendency could arise to “shut oneself” in one’s own field of study, without being too much aware of the relevant developments within the complementary subfields of other scientific fields of study. Luckily, this situation has gradually improved over the last couple of years.

When one would embrace the idea of ‘Geopolitics’ as a ‘joint project’ of both PG and IR, one could define it as follows (Criekemans 2007):

“Geopolitics is the scientific field of study belonging to both Political Geography and International Relations, which investigates the interaction between politically acting (wo)men and their surrounding territoriality (in its three dimensions; physical-geographical, human-geographical and spatial).”
Further building upon this definition, one could state that both political geographers and specialists in international relations can learn much from each other regarding the dynamics at play between ‘territoriality’ and ‘foreign politics’. The history of Geopolitics as a scientific field constitutes in essence the search for the different ways in which dimensions of ‘territoriality’ influence aspects of (foreign) policy, and vice versa. Throughout its history as a scientific field, different authors have proposed divergent sets of ontological and epistemological claims, resulting in the choice for a specific methodology as a tool for geopolitical analysis. If one analyzes the vast geopolitical scholarly work which has been produced since in 1899 the Swedish political scientist Rudolf Kjellén coined the term ‘Geopolitics’, it is possible to detect a certain number of research traditions which each propose to study rather different ways in which ‘territoriality’ and ‘politics’ interact.

If one would only read today’s scholarly geopolitical work, one could perhaps come to the conclusion that there is only one geopolitical research tradition; ‘Critical Geopolitics’. In this approach, Geopolitics is reconceptualized as a discursive process not limited to a small group of ‘wise’ men and women. Geopolitical reasoning starts at a simple level and pervades the daily practice of international politics. In short, Critical Geopolitics is the study of the spatialization of international politics by core powers and hegemonic states. Or, as Klaus Dodds explains, Critical Geopolitics explores the geographical assumptions and understandings underpinning foreign policy-making and theories of world politics. Explanations are sought to determine how geographical labels and designations enter into popular, practical and formal discourse rather than to imply a strong causal relationship between global physical geography and state behaviour (see: Dodds, 2005). The question can also be posed whether ‘Geopolitics’ can be reduced to a mere analysis of popular, practical and formal discourses, as the Critical Geopolitics-project today seems to argue. The academic question thus arises whether the Critical Geopolitics-paradigm is the only tool available to achieve a better understanding of today’s geopolitical relations. In the near future, the academic debate should perhaps focus on the question how Geopolitics should further develop from an epistemological and methodological point of view. Is a partial integration and/or combination of existing geopolitical paradigms a viable option, so as to be able to generate a better insight into the ‘geopolitical evolutions’ in current world politics? This paper wants to make a contribution to that endeavour.

2. Trying to create some clarity in the jungle of geopolitical research traditions

When one studies the geopolitical literature more into depth, it is clear that there exists a vast diversity of different geopolitical research traditions. A mere enumeration already provides us an inkling into the sheer complexity and number of geopolitical research traditions, each with their own interpretation of (the relationship between) “territoriality” and “politics”;

I. “Classical or traditional interpretations”, in which states are assumed to generate their ‘power’ from the basis of their material, geographical ‘embeddedness’ (for example, see Rudolf Kjellén’s original conceptualization of Geopolitics) (Kjellén, 1924).

II. “Pseudo-scientific, ethno-nationalistic variants”, in which geopolitical notions become intermingled with ethno-nationalistic “theories”, which try to “scientifically” legitimize the foreign policy-actions or dreams of/over a specific area (e.g. the German geopolitical school between 1939 and 1944, for example: Hesch, 1934), or currently a number of variants of ‘geopolitical theories’ in Russia (read: Solovyev, 2004).

III. "Possibilistic Geopolitics" as developed and exercised by the French geographers during the interbellum period, in which the environment is approached as being both ‘constraining’ and ‘enabling’, and in which man is considered to be able to make choices (Vidal de la Blache, 1898; Vidal de la Blache, 1926).

IV. "Cognitive interpretations", in which ‘territoriality’ is approached as being ‘perceived’ by central political decision-makers, and in which a crucial conceptual distinction is made between the ‘operational milieu’ and the ‘psycho-milieu’ (Sprout & Sprout, 1971), which also gave rise to the concept of mental maps (Gould & White, 1974; Henrikson, 1980).

V. "Realpolitical Geopolitics", such as the ideas of Henry Kissinger, by which an approach is meant which focuses on the balance between the great powers in international relations. Via a process of Realistic self-calculation, they try to maximize their national interest (see: Kissinger, 1979; Kissinger, 1994). This concerns an approach in which ‘material territoriality’ is almost completely absent, in favour of an immaterial interpretation without any ties with Political Geography.

VI. "Global Geopolitics", in which the international relations are viewed from a geographical perspective, yet the analysis itself has a clear IR-nature. “Geopolitical factors” can be interpreted in a narrow, material way (see for example: Brzezinski, 1997) or have attention for the dimension of the perception of these ‘environmental factors’ by key political decision makers (see for example: Gray, 1996).

VII. "Neutralised Geopolitics" or "non-prescriptive Political Geography" as it was practised by the American political-geographers during the fifties and sixties of the last century, in which analysts stubbornly tried to dispose ‘Political Geography’ of its historical connection with ‘Geopolitics’, due to its alleged collusion with German national-socialism. Within "Neutralised Geopolitics", the employed concepts are depoliticized as much as possible and researchers refrain from giving policy-advises to foreign & international-political elites (read: Hepple, 1986).

VIII. "Prescriptive Political Geography" after the example of Saul B. Cohen, in which Political Geography is (again) employed to provide insight into the dynamics within international relations via a holistic, political-geographical analysis and furthermore also to “distil” some policy-advises out of this analysis (see for example: Cohen, 1963).

IX. The approach of the "French geopolitical Hérodote-school", in which the idea stands central that representations of territoriality generate a strong influence upon the questions one tries to study. They are being considered as “the whole of ideas and perceptions of political, religious or other nature which form the driving force behind social groups, and which structures their vision upon the world.” (e.g. Lacoste, 1982 & 1984)

X. "New Geopolitics", in which one often tries to gain insight into the role which ‘geographical factors’ play in war & peace, often via quantitative studies(e.g. Starr, 1991 & 1992).

XI. "Critical interpretations", in which territoriality is approached as being ‘constructed’ within a broader political-societal context (Ó Tuathail & Agnew, 1992; Ó Tuathail, 1996; Dodds, 1994a & 1994b).

XII. "Minimal" interpretations, in which “geopolitical factors” as independent variables are narrowed down to the group of scarce, strategic and geographically locatable resources. The domain of Geopolitics is, as a consequence, being reduced to the study of the way in which this scarcity is being politicized (some of many examples; Feis, 1938; Brooks, 1941; Anderson & Anderson; 1998).
XIII. "Maximal" interpretations, in which "geopolitical factors" as independent variables are expanded so much that they fall outside (the material & immaterial manifestations of) the dimensions of territoriality. In other words, within this approach so many variables fall under the denominator "geopolitical factors" that the distinction between 'Geopolitics' and 'International Relations' because of this becomes paper-thin. Hence, we call this variant "Geopolitical Relations" (some examples: Pipurnov, 1994; Claval, 1996).

2.1. Existing ‘categorisations’ of geopolitical literature (Deudney, Mamadouh)

Above, a concise overview has been provided of the different interpretations of 'Geopolitics' one often finds in the literature. The question can be posed however to what extent these variants of geopolitical literature can be called "revolutionary" from a scientific point of view, in other words: have each of these interpretations contributed to a renewed vision on the relation between 'territoriality' on the one hand, and (foreign) 'policy' on the other hand? How do they relate to one another?

In the past, some scholars have attempted to categorize the current geopolitical literature. Two important contributions along this line were developed by the IR-scholar Daniel Deudney and by the political geographer Virginie Mamadouh (Deudney 1997; Mamadouh 1998a; Mamadouh 1998b). Deudney's insights into the existing geopolitical literature are mostly limited to the Anglo-American literature and provide only a superficial picture of the interpretation of 'Geopolitics' outside the field of study of International Relations. The political-geographer Virginie Mamadouh studied the interpretation of "geopolitics" from a more broader perspective; both the interpretations of political-geographers and IR-specialists, and also looking at publications coming from more diverse language areas.

First, we briefly investigate Deudney's concise inventarisation. This is mainly historically driven, and remains rather descriptive. By and large, he identifies five different variants. The majority of them already came to light in our initial inventarisation, namely:

1. (German) 'Geopolitik', described by Deudney as "extreme statist realism cast in Darwinian metaphors" (Deudney 1997: 94). This cluster corresponds with what we initially indicated as 'Traditional' and/or 'Ethno-nationalistic Geopolitics';

2. 'Realism plus Geography' in which 'geopolitics' is used as a synonym for Realism generally (e.g. Henry Kissinger's 'Realpolitical Geopolitics'), and for Realism with an emphasis upon geographical factors (e.g. Colin S. Gray 'Global Geopolitics');

3. 'Political Geography', or what we earlier designated as 'neutralised Geopolitics';

4. 'Classical global Geopolitics', what Deudney defines as "the relationship between world politics and the material forces unleashed by the industrial revolution" (Deudney 1997: 97). Deudney mentions here such authors as Mahan, Ratzel, Mackinder, Haushofer, Spykman, Vidal de la Blache, etc. This category seems somewhat –though not fully– to correspond with our 'Prescriptive Political Geography' and 'Global Geopolitics';

5. New in Deudney's categorisation is that he mentions a pre-modern variant of Geopolitics, namely: 'Physiopolitics', in which such authors as Jean Bodin and Montesquieu thought that the political relations between human groups are influenced by a group of strictly natural environmental factors such as climate and topology. One could therefore also speak about a 'naturalised Geopolitics'.

Some geopolitical variants which we identified in our short summary, are however not mentioned by Deudney (for instance; the "minimal interpretation" regarding the politicization of scarce resources, the "maximal interpretation", the French geopolitical Hérodote-school, etc.). In other words, one remains looking for another, more comprehensive systematic overview.
Second, we investigate the categorisation of Virginie Mamadouh. Before starting, it is important to remark that Mamadouh mentions the existence of a ‘Classical Geopolitics’, which is characterized by the vision that: (1°) the state is conceived as a living organism, (2°) therefore borders are conceived as flexible (they change in the course of the ‘life’ of the state, in other words a state enlarges its territory when its strengths are growing at the expense of older states in decline); finally, (3°) following social Darwinism, the evolution of the political organism is determined by its environment (cf. “geographical determinism” as opposed to the ‘possibilism’ advocated by the French school of geography) (Mamadouh 1998b: 238). Mamadouh however does not fully examine the question whether there exists a difference between a ‘Classical Geopolitics’ and the ethno-nationalistic variant which we identified earlier. On this issue, she limits herself to the following judgement (Mamadouh 1998b: 238):

“A few would like to reserve the use of the term ‘geopolitics’ for the German theories of the first half of the twentieth century and the schools they directly influenced, as in Mussolini’s Italy and Franco’s Spain (Raffestin, 1995; Blouet, 1994). This is completely unrealistic in view of the contemporary popularity of the word among political geographers, political scientists interested in international relations, military experts and the media. Consequently we need to examine how the term is currently used.”

Mamadouh developed an extraordinary interesting and clear overview, based upon merely four categories. The Dutch political-geographer claims to be able to ‘categorize’ a substantial amount of the current geopolitical literature within the table below, but in order to realize this she has developed quite broad categories:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practical/applied</th>
<th>Academic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>States</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>neo-classical geopolitics, geopolitics, géostrategie, geoconomics</td>
<td>non-geopolitics, political geography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other political actors</td>
<td>géopolitique interne et externe</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>post-structuralistic geopolitics</td>
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<td></td>
<td>critical geopolitics</td>
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*Figure 2: Four contemporary geopolitical approaches according to political-geographer Mamadouh*

The fact that these categories are rather broad, is also acknowledged by Mamadouh herself (Mamadouh 1998b: 238): “The names and the delimitation of these ‘geopolitical schools’ is somewhat arbitrary but it reduces effectively the great diversity encountered in the publications related in one way or the other to geopolitics.” Two dimensions help in determining the distinction between the four approaches: on the one hand whether the ‘geopolitical’ researchers want to formulate practical policy-advice or not (or as Mamadouh states: “the distance to the object under study”), and on the other hand what level of analysis is employed by the researcher (or as Mamadouh states: “the position towards the state system”); some see states as principle geopolitical actors, there where others devote more attention to other political actors than the state, or to the “internal diversity or conflicts of interests inside these states”.

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8 In the article, Virginie Mamadouh does however indirectly refer to this distinction: “At the end of the Second World War the term Geopolitik was tightly associated with nazi-propaganda. The American geographers Isaiah Bowman and Nicholas Spykman introduced the expression ‘democratic geopolitics’ to label geopolitics in service of a democratic regime (O’Loughlin, 1994, p. ix) but it was in vain, the term felt into abeyance.” (Mamadouh, 1998: 237-238).
At what points does Mamadouh’s categorisation come to similar or different results in comparison with our own, initial ‘inventory’?

- **First**, a parallel is the category ‘non-geopolitics’, which is to a large extent similar compared to our own ‘neutralised Geopolitics’.

- **Second**, the category of ‘subversive Geopolitics’ runs to a large extent parallel to the ‘French Hérodote-school’ which we identified earlier, and which Mamadouh explicitly mentions and discusses extensively.

- Especially the **third category**, which Mamadouh designates with the term ‘neo-classical Geopolitics’, could be criticized as rather problematic. According to the Dutch political geographer in this grouping “the strategic value of specific attributes of territories play the leading role” (Mamadouh 1998b: 238). This value can be of political, economical and/or military-strategic nature. One could state this is an exceptionally broad category, under which (too?) many different variants of ‘Geopolitics’ can be housed, without paying too much attention to their mutual diversity. In this regard, Mamadouh for instance mentions among others studies on scarce resources, (neo-)Kissingerian approaches, studies about the geopolitics of the nuclear arms race (which come close to what we have identified as a ‘maximal definition’ of Geopolitics), and geopolitical-strategical studies like those of Colin S. Gray. The bringing together of all these variants in one very sizeable category is perhaps somewhat counter-productive. Indeed, perhaps an essential point of criticism is that in this broad category the different examples which Mamadouh quotes, all utilize rather different conceptualisations of “territoriality”. Within the ‘minimal interpretation’ of Geopolitics, this interpretation is explicitly material, namely: (natural) resources. With Colin S. Gray ‘territoriality’ is also interpreted materially, yet present within his analyses in two shapes; both explicitly (geography in a “narrow” sense) as implicitly (geography in its “broad” – e.g. psychological – meaning). Within the approach of Kissinger, territoriality is mostly interpreted in a non-material way; most attention is given to keeping the ‘balance of power’ between the great powers within the world system.

- The **fourth category** which Mamadouh mentions, is ‘Critical Geopolitics’. According to Mamadouh, this variant of geopolitical literature should mostly be situated within Political Geography. ‘Critical Geopolitics’ is interested in the de-construction of geopolitical ideas/codes/visions in foreign policy, via discourse analysis. Mamadouh identifies what she calls “three dimensions” to ‘Critical Geopolitics’; the deconstruction of geopolitical traditions, the deconstruction of contemporary discourses and the exploration of the meaning of spatial concepts such as ‘place’ and ‘politics’ (Ó Tuathail, 1994) (Mamadouh 1998b: 244).

How should we evaluate Mamadouh’s categorisation of today’s geopolitical literature? It is certainly a contribution with merit; it tries to achieve more clarity into the geopolitical literature, but at the same time raises new questions. Especially Mamadouh’s category of ‘neo-classical Geopolitics’ is somewhat problematic; it entails an enormous diversity in geopolitical literature. Although Mamadouh’s model certainly is useful, its broad categories offer relatively modest insights into the historical evolution of the social-scientific thinking about the relationship between ‘territoriality’ and ‘politics’. Abstraction is made of certain interpretations of Geopolitics which are placed into one category, but which assume substantially different dynamics at play between ‘territoriality’ and ‘politics’. Mamadouh only modestly refers to French possibilism (end of the 19th--beginning of the 20th century), which constituted a fundamental critique to & alternative for the ‘geographical determinism’ of the German geopolitical school. Moreover, she does not mention one of the most important reactions to ‘geographical determinism’ developed from the field of International Relations; the ‘cognitive behavioralism’ of Harold & Margaret Sprout and their “continuum” (synthesis of possible philosophical-theoretical positions to conceptualize the relation territoriality–politics). Therefore, there is a certain need for a more comprehensive categorisation which combines the respective strengths of the contributions of both Deudney and Mamadouh (insight into historical development & clarity) with more completeness and a better insight into the dynamics that are at play between the dimensions of ‘territoriality’ and the different aspects of ‘(foreign) policy’.
2.2. Towards a ‘final’ categorisation? Attention for the degree of presence of material territoriality and for the position of a respective geopolitical approach on the IR-PG-continuum

Hereafter, we develop our own overview of the ‘geopolitical literature’. Question is how such an overview should best be constructed. What are the criteria which a comprehensive plan should satisfy? On the one hand a schematic overview of the geopolitical literature should be as broad as possible (to be able to incorporate all most important variants of ‘geopolitical literature’). On the other hand the overview should provide some insight into the reciprocal relationship between these different interpretations of the ‘geopolitical approach’. Only then will it become possible to represent the ‘geopolitical literature’ at a single glance. In below, we develop a number of additional considerations which could help in giving direction to developing a comprehensive overview:

- Categorisations of ‘geopolitical literature’ often have the inclination to ‘stare blind’ to those authors which actually utilize the term ‘geopolitics’ in their writings. However, it is perhaps more interesting to pose the question what the opinion of some authors is regarding the way ‘territoriality’ in their view relates to ‘politics’. The question whether these authors think of themselves as ‘geo-political scientists’ then becomes rather subordinate. There are those authors who believe in a strictly narrow, material interpretation of ‘territoriality’ (e.g. strategic natural resources). Others, mainly cognitive-behavioralist inspired authors within e.g. Foreign Policy Analysis, interprete ‘territoriality’ in terms of ‘perception’. Yet others employ an almost immaterial interpretation of ‘territoriality’. In brief, it is exactly in the area of the interpretation of ‘territoriality’ that authors can thoroughly differ from opinion, while approaches that are similar also seem to show a certain kinship with one another regarding their interpretation of ‘territoriality’. Taking this idea into account, it seems appropriate to fill in one of the basic indicators of our own overview as follows; ‘the degree of the presence of material territoriality’ in the respective approach. Three great categories can in this case be distinguished; (1°) a ‘narrow’ geographical (this means; a mere material) territoriality, (2°) a ‘broad’ geographical (this means ‘material’, but also ideal/subjective) territoriality, and (3°) an ideal-intersubjective territoriality. Of course, between these ‘strict’ categories also positions-in-between exist; the ‘Geopolitics of scarce resources’ only has eyes for interpretations of ‘territoriality’ as the politics of scarcity (e.g. in oil, natural gas and water), there where for instance Zbigniew Brzezinski’s narrow interpretation of ‘Global Geopolitics’ devotes explicit attention to both the geopolitics of scarce natural resources and to (the alleged global competition for) ‘territorial spheres of influence’ (e.g. the ‘Arc of Crisis’-concept). Colin S. Gray’s broader interpretation of ‘Global Geopolitics’ also has attention for these aspects, but additionally considers that the “perception of environmental variables by central decision-makers in foreign policy” should be incorporated within the geopolitical ‘framework of analysis’.

- A second element which can contribute to a better interpretation of the reciprocal relationship of different geopolitical approaches, lies in the question within which scientific field of study (International Relations or Political Geography) a specific approach originated and with whom it resounded. This is relevant since one can expect that some interpretations written by political-geographers may rather have a descriptive character, there where IR-specialists possibly will have the inclination to dare develop explanatory or prescriptive analyses. One could defend the idea that there exists a kind of virtual continuum; analyses which treat the relationship between ‘territoriality’ and ‘politics’ will display more or less characteristics of an international-political or political-geographical analysis. For instance, the a-political ‘Neutralised Geopolitics’ finds itself to the far side of the political-geographical spectrum. Compared
with this, the French geopolitical Hérodote-school can be seen as an already important step in the direction of International Relations—annex—Political Sciences; as one of the first after 1945, these French geopolitical scholars re-introduced in the 1970s and 80s the ‘analysis of societal questions with a high political dimension’ within Political Geography. The French geopolitical Hérodote-school did not fully resonate within International Relations. By contrast, the interesting “geopolitical” work of the American political-geographer Saul B. Cohen, did have an impact upon some IR-scholars (for instance upon the geo-strategical thinker Colin S. Gray). A second reason one would wish to ‘localize’ a certain ‘geopolitical approach’ on the ‘IR-PG-continuum’, is to be able to visually represent to which extent a certain “geopolitical” approach (e.g. coming from PG) has succeeded in resonating within the other science field (e.g. IR), or vice versa. Here, we bring into remembrance our earlier vision that the best way to represent ‘Geopolitics’ is as a common field of study of both International Relations and Political Geography.

- A variant ‘outside of category’ are those interpretations of ‘Geopolitics’ which one could call “spurious”. We refer here to those approaches which call themselves ‘geopolitical analyses’ but in practice do not (really) study the interaction between ‘territoriality’ and ‘politics’. One of the more extreme examples of this is the German geopolitical school after 1933, in which gradually racial and ethnical reasonings started to take precedence over the relationship between ‘territoriality’ and ‘politics’.9 As a consequence, such forms of ‘Neo-classical, ethno-nationalistic Geopolitics’ should be placed outside the overview developed on the next page.

Hereafter, we develop our own overview of the different variants of ‘Geopolitics’. From this, a number of conclusions can be drawn:

- First, only a limited number of the proposed interpretations of ‘Geopolitics’ succeed in being utilized by both political geographers and IR-specialists as a common frame of reference. On the contrary, often one field of study reacts or even fulminates against the other because of the alleged deficiencies that were developed by the other. In this framework, one can for instance think about the French geopolitical Hérodote-school, which rather fiercely reacted against the ‘geopolitical interpretation’ by such strategically oriented IR-specialists such as Zbigniew Brzezinski, Colin Gray and Henry Kissinger.

- Second, within the field of International Relations, most scholars still are scarcely acquainted with one of the most important ‘anti-theses’ to ‘Classical Geopolitics’; the relatively still young and dynamic research tradition of ‘Critical Geopolitics’. Conversely, only a limited number of contemporary political-geographers seem to know about the reaction and the alternative of the IR-specialists Harold and Margaret Sprout (which we call ‘Cognitive Geopolitics’). Both alternatives to the research tradition of ‘Classical Geopolitics’ each do have their own merites. In other words, the question which therefore can be posed is whether there does not possibly exist some room to “fuse” both ‘anti-theses’ one way or another into a kind of ‘Reflexive-Cognitive Geopolitics’. For the moment, we will not yet explore this option. We will develop this idea further under 3.2..

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9 See for instance a revealing article which was written by the German scholar Richard Hennig, meant as a fierce response to those geopolitical thinkers who started inter-mingling ‘geopolitics’ with the Nazi-ideology: “‘Geo’ bedeutet doch nun einmal die Gaea, die Erde oder den Raum im weitesten Sinne des Wortes mit allen seinen Eigenschaften, also in jedem Falle etwas Unbelebtes und Unbewältiges. Was aber hat mit dieser Gaea die Rasse zu tun? […] Die Einwirkung der Rasse auf die Völkerschicksale könnte das nur wenig gewandelte Wort ‘Genopolitik’, abgeleitet von γένος=Rasse, sprachlich korrekt wiedergeben. Über den klaren Begriff der Gaea möge man nicht vergewaltigen! ‘Das Wort Sie sollen lassen stahn!’” (Hennig 1941). Gradually, Hennig became isolated.
Towards a final categorisation of the "limitless" number of possible geopolitical conceptualisations?

Figure 3

- **Position on the IR-PG-continuum**
  - Manifest IR-character
  - Manifest Political-Geographical character

- **Geopolitics of scarce (natural) resources**
  - Zbigniew Brzezinski's Global Geopolitics

- **Classical or Traditional Geopolitics**
  - 1899
  - French school of positivism (< 1945)
  - Physiopolitics or 'naturalised' Geopolitics

- **Neo-classical or 'ethno-nationalistic' Geopolitics**
  - Colin S. Gray's Global Geopolitics

- **'Cognitive' Geopolitics**
  - 1956
  - "New" Geopolitics (Starr, Siverson, a.o.) 1991
  - Prescriptive Political Geography (e.g. Saul B. Cohen)

- **Reflexive-Cognitive Geopolitics**
  - 1999 / 2008

- **Critical Geopolitics**
  - 1990

- **Realpolitik Geopolitics**
  - (e.g. Henry Kissinger)

- **Degree of the presence of material territoriality**
  - Explicit: narrow geographical material
  - Implicit: Geography in the broad sense from material-objective to ideal-subjective
  - Quasi inexistent: non-material geographical ideal-intersubjective
2.3. Categorisation of geopolitical authors based upon their epistemological vision regarding the (feasibility of scientific knowledge about) the relation between ‘territoriality’ and (foreign) policy

The idea which one can sometimes still find in the academic literature (see for instance: Kuzniar, 2000; Fettweis 2003) that every geopolitical author is in reality a ‘geographical determinist’, is a myth without much empirical base. The reality is quite to the contrary. If one were to closely investigate the key texts of some of the most prominent geopolitical scholars during the past century, one would come to a much more nuanced appreciation. This criticism is only applicable to some of the more controversial texts written during the German classical geopolitical school of the 1930s. Also, one could sometimes detect ‘geographical determinist’ thought-patterns in for instance the writings of the Polish-American IR-specialist Zbigniew Brzezinski.

During the 1950s, the American political scientists Harold and Margaret Sprout developed a quite interesting categorization of the different possible epistemological postures concerning the relationship territoriality–politics. The Sprouts identified a true diversity of possible postures. This illustrates the broad spectrum of the ‘geopolitical literature’, which only really becomes tangible if one tries to ‘localize’ the position of individual ‘geopolitical’ authors within broad meta-theoretical frameworks. On the next page, the reader will find an overview of our critical-genealogical survey. Interestingly, as time went by since the development of ‘Geopolitics’ as a field of science, more ‘geopolitical analysts’ have devoted more attention to the freedom of man. The following possible epistemological positions regarding the feasibility of scientific knowledge about the relationship territoriality–politics can be discerned:

- ‘Environmental determinism’
- ‘Normative naturalism’
- ‘Free will environmentalism’
- ‘Environmental possibilism’
- ‘Environmental probabilism’
- ‘Cognitive behavioralism’
- ‘Social constructivism’

Most ‘geopolitical scholars’ will in their respective analyses limit themselves to only one epistemological position. One exception, and attempt to develop a more comprehensive geopolitical analysis, is from the IR-specialist Harvey Starr, who proposed to combine multiple positions in sequence10. There is also another geopolitical author, the Belgian IR-scholar Vincent Legrand who proposed in 1999 an interesting idea, in his article titled ‘Foreign policy decision-making theories: some steps towards a more reflexive cognitive behavioralism’ published in the Belgian academic IR-journal ‘Studia Diplomatica’ (Legrand 1999). According to Legrand, a potential useable ‘geopolitical’ position lies in the integration of a number of insights of critical theory in cognitive behavioralism. In his opinion, the perception of central decision-makers cannot be seen separate from the “giving of meaning” within the broader societal and political context. Legrand points to an interesting idea. The question which indeed poses itself into the future, is whether there is no room to “fuse together” the most important insights about the relationship territoriality—politics which have developed within International Relations and Political Geography, a ‘Reflexive-Cognitive Geopolitics’. Could one not state that both ‘Cognitive’ and ‘Critical Geopolitics’ in many ways are complementary to one another? We will come back to this under 3.2., in which we will investigate more closely the possibilities to develop a ‘more comprehensive’ geopolitical model of analysis.

10 In the ‘New Geopolitics-school’, Harvey Starr developed an ‘opportunity and willingness-framework’. Both ‘opportunity’ and ‘willingness’ are deemed crucial to understand (the foreign policy of) an actor. ‘Opportunity’ is more or less regarded as equal to ‘environmental possibilism’, whereas ‘willingness’ is regarded as equal to ‘environmental probabilism’ and ‘cognitive behavioralism’ (see: Papadakis & Starr, 1987; Starr, 1991).
Categorisation of geopolitical authors based upon their epistemological vision regarding the feasibility of scientific knowledge about the relationship between ‘territoriality’ --- (foreign) policy

Environmental determinism

Free-will environmentalism

Environmental Possibilism

Environmental Probabilism

Cognitive Behavioralism

Social Constructivism

REFLEXIVE-COGNITIVE BEHAVIORALISM

SPROUTS-CONTINUUM 1956

"Sprouts-Continuum" 1956

Environmental determinism has generally relied on the thesis that some set of environmental factors, less than the total milieu, is something that we can account for or that provides a firm basis for prediction. Both the psychological behavior of human beings and the empirical outcomes of their undertakings. Applied rigorously, this philosophical posture envisages man as a sort of chip in the stream of history. He is borne along by a current which he is incapable of resisting, within a channel from which he cannot escape. [ ] man has no capacity for choice.

Free-will environmentalism

In this watered-down doctrine of environmental determinism, man is assumed to have a free will. Nature gives him instructions, but he is capable of choosing, however unwisely, to disregard them.

"Sprouts-Continuum" 1956

SPROUTS-CONTINUUM 1956

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3. The genealogy of the ‘research traditions’ within Geopolitics and the quo vadis?-question

One can safely state that Geopolitics ‘houses’ within itself an impressive number of “research traditions”. The diagram in below offers an overview which we developed in the framework of our own Ph.D-research. It also offers an insight into the question how the genealogy of Geopolitics is related to the genealogy of International Relations (see ‘influence’ & ‘reaction’).
3.1. The properties of the “most important” geopolitical research traditions

The next step is to develop a thorough comparison of the most important geopolitical research traditions. For that purpose, the following question should be posed first; which of the formerly mentioned ‘geopolitical research traditions’ developed ‘fundamentally new visions’ regarding the relationship between ‘territoriality’ and ‘politics’? From the ‘jungle’ of the geopolitical literature, we identify three research traditions which from an epistemological point of view constitute(d) a ‘significant step forward’ in the way in which the relationship between ‘territoriality’ and ‘politics’ can be provided some insight; ‘Classical Geopolitics’ (°1899), ‘Cognitive Geopolitics’ (°1956) and ‘Critical Geopolitics’ (°1988-92).

There where ‘Cognitive Geopolitics’ constitutes a reaction to ‘Classical Geopolitics’ from the field of study of IR, ‘Critical Geopolitics’ represents the most important anti-thesis to ‘Classical Geopolitics’ from Political Geography. Critics will rightly remark that the ‘cognitive behavioralism’ of Harold and Margaret Sprout in fact constituted an in-between-stage in the direction of the later developed ‘Critical Geopolitics’. Viewed from the perspective of the ‘big waves’, the genealogy of ‘Geopolitics’ can be summarized as a tale about the evolution of the epistemological thinking about the relationship ‘territoriality’—‘politics’.

Since 1945, ‘geopolitical scholars’ became less convinced of the feasibility of ‘universal scientific knowledge’ about the relation territoriality—politics. Therefore, they limited themselves more to a ‘moderate universalism’, through which the ‘more tangible’ level of analysis of the decision-maker became central (cf. Harold and Margaret Sprout), see:

![Figure 6: The conceptual revolution of Harold and Margaret Sprout: cognitive behavioralism and foreign policy analysis](image)

Since the 1990s, ‘Critical Geopolitics’, has developed into a quite substantial body of thought, concentrating on ‘puncturing’ existing conventions about meanings which can be assigned to ‘territoriality’ by politics.

In the next pages, we offer a systematic comparative overview of the features of classical, cognitive and critical geopolitical research traditions to different ‘parameters’; (1°) their ontological and epistemological assumptions, (2°) their methodology, (3°) their vision regarding the relationship between ‘territoriality’ and (foreign) policy (what [in]dependent variables?), (4°) their respective applicability upon the study of foreign policy, (5°) the respective value of the ‘claims’ made in their analyses and (5°) the possible critiques one could formulate against them. From this in depth-comparison, their fundamentally different vision concerning ontology, epistemology and methodology becomes even more clear:
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Central feature</th>
<th><strong>THEESIS</strong></th>
<th>Most important “ANTI-THESIS” from IR</th>
<th>Most important “ANTI-THESIS” from PG</th>
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<tr>
<td>‘Classical Geopolitics’</td>
<td>‘Cognitive Geopolitics’ (originated in 1899, Rudolf Kjellén)</td>
<td>To gain insight into the way in which the ‘cognitive perception of the spatial environment’ by decision-making elites plays a key role in the designing &amp; specification of foreign policy.</td>
<td>To gain insight into the way in which the international-political environment is “being constructed” within a broader societal and political context &amp; is “given meaning” via the discourse as “power structure”. Interference of “geopolitical self-representations &amp; identity” on foreign policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Central feature</strong></td>
<td><strong>Genesis</strong></td>
<td><strong>Unit of Analysis</strong></td>
<td><strong>Affinity with which IR-research tradition?</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **The inter-state tensions at the end of the 19th century** | **State level / World system-level** | **Micro-level; analysis of the environmental perception by the foreign policy-decision-maker** | **“Missing link” behind the scenes in the intellectual development of ‘REALISM’:**
- Not an unimportant source of inspiration of the first American authors who introduced the (continental-European) concept of “power” during the 1930s in IR (Spykman, Schuman, Sprout, Earle)
- Source of inspiration of a number of American authors which during 1939-48 wrote important contributions in the further ‘tuning up’ of ‘Realism’ (Strausz-Hupé, Morgenthau) |
| | | | ‘Cognitive behavioralism’ grew from the fundamental epistemological reflection which the Sprouts developed about the (attainability of scientific knowledge regarding) the relationship territoriality—politics. In its turn, ‘cognitive behavioralism’ gave cause to:
- the development of cognitive-behavioralistic concepts in IR such as ‘perception’ & ‘misperception’ (Jervis) and ‘mental maps’
- the coming into being of the scientific IR-field of ‘Comparative Foreign Policy’ |
<p>| | | | The constructivist school within International Relations &amp; post-modernism It can however be said that the school of ‘Critical Geopolitics’ as of yet is still not generally known among IR-specialists, especially because of the structural barriers between the scientific fields of International Relations (IR) and Political Geography (PG) |
| | | | End of the taboo around ‘geopolitics’ at the end of the Cold War. Reaction to ‘pre-war’ Classical Geopolitics from the field of study of Political Geography (PG) (1980s / 1990s) |</p>
<table>
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<th>THESIS</th>
<th>Most important “ANTI-THESIS” from IR</th>
<th>Most important “ANTI-THESIS” from PG</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| ‘Classical Geopolitics’  
(originated in 1899, Rudolf Kjellén) | ‘Cognitive Geopolitics’  
(breakthrough 1956, Harold & Margaret Sprout) | ‘Critical Geopolitics’  
(originated around 1989, Ó Tuathail et al.) |
| • Statist organicism  
• ‘Erdgebundenheit’  
• Social-Darwinism  
• Absence of legislation and morality  
• Autarky  
• Expansionism provoked by ‘macro-economic tendencies’  
• World = closed political system & ‘Ganzheit’  
• Boundaries as ‘temporary stops’ | • States are the most important political entities.  
State action entails “those deeds performed by those who act on behalf of the state”  
‘Erdgebundenheit’ does not exist – the relationship between ‘territoriality’ and ‘politics’ is active from an ‘ecological triad’ (environment, environd entities and the mutual relationship). Moreover, there exists an ‘operational’ and a ‘psycho’-environment.  
Besides the principles formulated above, one could also mention some other elements as possible ‘ontological principles’ of ‘Cognitive Geopolitics’, although one does not always see these aspects in the interpretations of other cognitive-behavioralists:  
• “There exits an uneven distribution of physical and human ‘resources’ (cf. climate patterns, topology, available resources, human societies, etc.). This unequal distribution influences in significant ways all human enterprise, interactions, relations and inter-state relations”  
• “Change and transformation are inherent to international relations. As technology develops further, also global interdependence increases”  
| ‘Critical Geopolitics’ approaches the world not as a manifest and relatively easy decipherable (material) reality (as ‘Classical Geopolitics’ did), nor as a reality which can be perceived by individual decision-makers (cf. ‘Cognitive Geopolitics’). Conversely, ‘Critical Geopolitics’ has attention for the role which social, cultural and political processes play in the ‘giving of meaning’ and ‘construction’ of the international-political reality. The external world is seen as a reality which is difficult to “grasp” as a result of complex “processes of de- and re-territorialisation” (Newman, 2000).  
‘Critical Geopolitics’ underlines the plurality of ‘space’ and the multi-formity of possible political constructions of space. Central in its approach stands the idea that the image about the “external world” in first instance is being formed / constructed within the broader society” (Ó Tuathail).  
Nevertheless, especially the “discourse” (of politicians) is considered to play a crucial role in the process of “giving meaning” and in the “construction” of international-political reality. |
<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>EPISTEMOLOGY</strong></th>
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<td>(in Greek &quot;episthēma&quot; - &quot;knowledge&quot;)</td>
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<td>ENVIRONMENT = AN OBJECTIVE GIVEN</td>
<td>ENVIRONMENT = AN OBJECTIVE GIVEN</td>
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<td>A ‘sacred’ belief in the modernist idea of “universal scientific knowledge”. It should be possible to identify and apply the ‘laws of nature’ which explain how international politics ‘works’.</td>
<td>(cf. ‘cognitive behavioralism’)</td>
</tr>
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<td>In the ‘external world’ there are certain geopolitical variables which can have a crucial, compelling impact upon the foreign policy of an actor. These variables should be understood as “OBJECTIVE influencing factors”. Those who want to gain insight into the geopolitical (power) position of a country, should in first instance develop an inventory of such maternal factors (in comparison to other countries &amp; in relation to a pre-determined policy objective).</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>‘Cognitive Geopolitics’ (breakthrough 1956, Harold &amp; Margaret Sprout)</td>
<td>ENVIRONMENT = SUBJECTIVE (cf. ‘cognitive behavioralism’)</td>
<td>ENVIRONMENT = INTER-SUBJECTIVE (cf. ‘social constructivism’)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Within this research tradition, one refuses to subscribe to the implicit assumption of ‘Classical Geopolitics’ whether it would be possible to explain or predict the (power structures within) international politics as a system based upon “objective laws of nature”.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>• ‘Cognitive Geopolitics’ states that the foreign policy-decision-making is influenced by the environment as a subjective given. Therefore, one has attention for a lower ‘unit of analysis’; this of the decision-maker, and one is especially interested in his/her perception. The first task of the geopolitical scientist is then to penetrate the ideal factors; the way in which the decision-maker attributes a certain value to his/her environment.</td>
<td>According to ‘Critical Geopolitics’, the world can be seen as a social construction, an INTER-SUBJECTIVE reality which receives its decisive form via ‘discourses’ of central political decision-makers. In other words, the question which ‘Critical Geopolitics’ poses, is not to what extent territoriality influences human agency, but how human agency “constructs” territoriality.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• With regard to the results of the foreign policy-decisions, one has attention for the ‘objective’ or operational environment.</td>
<td>Via their discourse, groups of people formulate among one another a societal consensus with certain assumptions about the external world, as well as on the way in which this world could influence the group both in a positive or negative way. Especially ‘hegemonic players’ (e.g. leaders of great powers) attribute in their discourse a certain meaning to reality, which is then diffused (and taken over by others) (e.g. the re-formulation by the US and Russia of the central ‘idealmodel’ in international relations after the attacks in the US on September, 11th 2001 as a “global battle against terrorism”). In embryonic form, such “geopolitical ideas” or appreciations originate in the broader society, yet the politicians are those who manage these ideas creatively, and who reinforce certain appreciations until they are supported by the ‘main stream’ in society.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>In short, ‘Cognitive Geopolitics’ departs from a certain tension between the ‘operational’ and the ’psychological’ environment. The IR-scholar is nevertheless supposed to be able to make this distinction his- or herself.</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘Critical Geopolitics’ (originated around 1989, Ō Tuathail et al.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>THESIS</td>
<td>Most important “ANTI-THESIS” from IR</td>
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<td>What methods should be ‘brought into action’ to provide insight into the relationship between the &quot;external world&quot; on the one hand &amp; (foreign) policy on the other hand?</td>
<td>‘Classical Geopolitics’ (originated in 1899, Rudolf Kjellén)</td>
<td>‘Cognitive Geopolitics’ (breakthrough 1956, Harold &amp; Margaret Sprout)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How can the researcher know what he thinks there is to know about the relationship territoriality—foreign policy?</td>
<td>• OVERVIEW TABLES in which individual countries or areas are being compared with one another on the basis of their ‘primary geopolitical factors’ such as location, territorial form and area, climate, population, natural resources &amp; industrial capacity, also the political and social organisation of the territory.</td>
<td>‘Cognitive Geopolitics’ develops its analysis at the level of the behaviour of individual decision-makers; to try to investigate their “beliefs” regarding the external environment (e.g. the way in which this affects their policy decisions). A clear and unequivocal ‘METHODOLOGY’ was not developed for this kind of studies. It is possible however to detect within the cognitive-behaviouralist literature of the 1960’s and 1970’s approaches which are potentially useful;</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>• In such analyses, also (‘suggestive’) MAPS can be included and incorporated as means to try to convince the reader of the so-called “inevitable consequences” of a certain geopolitical situation for foreign policy.</td>
<td>• ‘belief systems’ (O. Holsti) • ‘operational belief code-system’ (A. George) • ‘mental maps’ (P. Gould, R. White, A. Henrikson) • ‘sketch maps’ (T. Saarinen) • etc.</td>
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</table>

Since ‘Cognitive Geopolitics’ was ‘encapsulated’ within the IR-subfield of Comparative Foreign Policy, one could state that the research tradition of ‘Cognitive Geopolitics’ never to a full extent crystalized out. Today, it is possible to find publications within ‘Environmental Psychology’ which more or less further build upon this tradition.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>THESIS</th>
<th>Most important “ANTI-THESIS” from IR</th>
<th>Most important “ANTI-THESIS” from PG</th>
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</table>

What relationship between ‘territoriality’ and (foreign) policy?

EVENLY ATTENTION FOR:
The (alleged) ‘impact’ of material environmental factors on (foreign) policy.
Substantially less attention for the opposite relationship.

What are the (in)dependent variables?

Less applicable to studies regarding the foreign policy that is conducted by a state or political entity. However, if one performs a classical-geopolitical analysis on the basis of a possibilist epistemology, then this is ideal for so-called ‘capacity analyses’: studies about the opportunities and limits which are inherent to the environment of a political entity, which can affect the ‘operational results’ of the actions that are undertaken. With such an approach, one will then study the virtual ‘capacity’ of states to influence the international politics, INSTEAD OF working out whether & to what extent environmental factors actually generate an impact upon the daily foreign policy.

Applicable to studies about the conducted foreign policy of a state or political entity, in which one has special attention for the environmental perception of a (group of) central foreign policy-decision-makers.

ESPECIALLY ATTENTION FOR:
The way in which the environment is assigned another/new ‘meaning’ starting from a political or social-societal discourse.
Or in short; attention for the influence of ‘politics’ (via a discourse) on the ‘environment’.
No belief in a direct impact of material environmental factors on (foreign) policy (cf. ‘Classical Geopolitics’).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>“Value claim” of the</strong></th>
<th><strong>THESIS</strong></th>
<th><strong>Most important “ANTI-THESIS” from IR</strong></th>
<th><strong>Most important “ANTI-THESIS” from PG</strong></th>
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</thead>
</table>
| **vested results after**  | ‘Classical Geopolitics’ | • In first instance, a DESCRIPTIVE analysis.  
• In second instance, an EXPLANATORY analysis (e.g. with regard to the gap between the ‘operational’ and ‘psychological’ environment, which the researcher is considered to be able to distinguish from one another). Whether an all-encompassing explanation of the foreign policy that is conducted, can be offered by referring to the ‘environmental perception’, is not always that clear. The researcher does however try to demonstrate a “certain link” between the (environmental-perceptual) convictions of a decision-maker on the one hand, and his/her policy-decisions on the other hand. | • In first instance, a DESCRIPTIVE analysis.  
• In second instance, a CRITICAL-INTERPRETATIVE analysis. The approach wants to make the reader aware that foreign policy-elites try to legitimize their own policy decisions & actions via subtle discursive instruments such as ”geopolitical codes”, ”geopolitical visions” or ”scripts”. Also, these analysts devote considerable attention to the way in which such ”geopolitical codes” or ”scripts” are utilized within the broader society. |
<p>| <strong>application of the</strong>    | (originated in 1899, Rudolf Kjellén) |  |  |
| <strong>‘standard’ methods of</strong> |  |  |  |
| <strong>analysis</strong>              |  |  |  |
| <strong>“Favourite” accent</strong>   | Especially so-called “geostrategical themes” | Various aspects of foreign policy | Initially about Globalisation/Geo-economics, nowadays also broader |
|                          |  |  |  |
| <strong>Quantitative presence</strong> | After 1945, ‘Classical Geopolitics’ got into disuse, although from the 1970s onwards some variants of classical-geopolitical concepts were re-introduced into the public academic debate (cf. ‘Neo-classical, Global Geopolitics’; Gray &amp; Brzezinski). Today, as a far nephew of ‘Classical Geopolitics’, especially the Geopolitics of strategic, scarce resources is studied more and more; also studies about the (politicization of) energy (oil, natural gas), and water; what impact upon the economical, political &amp; strategical relations within a region or even globally. | One will not find the term “Cognitive Geopolitics” in the literature. We developed it on the basis of the fundamental work of Harold and Margaret Sprout, and their impact upon the field of Foreign Policy Analysis. The cognitive-geopolitical variant forms an often “forgotten” geopolitical approach in the literature, which fused with and within the IR—subfield of ‘Foreign Policy Analysis’. It is however also possible to find rather similar studies within the current field of ‘Environmental Psychology’, also sometimes applied to foreign policy questions. | In ‘quantitative’ terms, the ‘Critical Geopolitics’-research tradition seems to be in a majority within the current Anglo-American scientific literature about ‘Geopolitics’. The publications within this school of thought are often mainly written by political geographers. To a certain extent, the field of International Relations still mostly has to ‘discover’ Critical Geopolitics as a research tradition, and analyse what its value could be for the study of foreign policy and international affairs. |
| <strong>of this approach in the</strong>|  |  |  |
| <strong>current literature</strong>    |  |  |  |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POSSIBLE CRITIQUES</th>
<th>THESIS</th>
<th>Most important “ANTI-THESIS” from IR</th>
<th>Most important “ANTI-THESIS” from PG</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘Classical Geopolitics’</td>
<td>‘Cognitive Geopolitics’</td>
<td>‘Critical Geopolitics’</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(originated in 1899, Rudolf Kjellén)</td>
<td>(breakthrough 1956, Harold &amp; Margaret Sprout)</td>
<td>(originated around 1989, Ó Tuathail et al.)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ‘aggressive ontological vision’</td>
<td>• blind belief in positivism (the inclination to approach convictions / ‘beliefs’ in quantitative terms)</td>
<td>• the amorphous nature or the absence of a clear position what ‘Critical Geopolitics’ actually means or entails</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ‘geographical determinism’</td>
<td>• a-historical nature of cognitive-(geopolitical) analyses</td>
<td>• is ‘Critical Geopolitics’ possible or desirable?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• ‘pseudo-science’ and embedded ideology (especially with regard to the German geopolitical school of Karl Haushofer)</td>
<td>• “methodological individualism” or the tendency to concentrate the research only upon (the deliberations and actions of an) individual decision-maker</td>
<td>• is ‘Critical Geopolitics’ also applicable to non-hegemonic states or international-political actors?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• leaning too close to policy-makers</td>
<td>• the assumption that ‘language’ forms a transparent medium, without its own dynamics (poor attention for ‘inter-subjectivity’)</td>
<td>• the relevance of ‘globalisation’, ‘computerization’ and the ‘risk-society’ &amp; the question whether the dichotomy modern—postmodern Geopolitics is superfluous</td>
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<td>• an unjust critique: ‘racism’</td>
<td></td>
<td>• lack of attention to subjectivity and ‘agency’ in Ó Tuathail’s conception of ‘Critical Geopolitics’</td>
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</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NON-EXHAUSTIVE LIST OF ‘GEOPOLITICAL CONCEPTS’ WHICH ARE CHARACTERISTIC FOR THIS RESEARCH TRADITION</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>THESIS</td>
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<tr>
<td>• ‘Global closed political system’ (Mackinder)</td>
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<td>• ‘Land power’ versus ‘Sea power’ (Mahan, Mackinder)</td>
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<td>• ‘Heartland’ or ‘Pivot Area’ (Mackinder)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• ‘Statist or imperial organicism’ (Ratzel, Mackinder)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ‘Vitally strong states’ (Ratzel, Kjellén)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• ‘Raumsinn’ or ‘Raumaufassung’ (Ratzel, Kjellén, Haushofer)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.2. The desirability and feasibility of a more comprehensive geopolitical model (or framework) of analysis for the study of questions on foreign policy

What more advanced insights can be developed on the basis of our critical-genealogical research about the (desirability and feasibility) of a more comprehensive geopolitical model or framework of analysis? Based upon the fundamental work of science philosopher Larry Laudan, we identified multiple competing (geopolitical) research traditions. Three introductory remarks can be made about these:

1. Depending on which ‘ontological vision’ one has as an analyst about the international-political reality, one will almost implicitly underwrite a different ‘geopolitical research tradition’ – the first mission of the researcher thus entails figuring out how to approach the world;
2. All too often ‘geopolitical analysts’ seem to forget that a certain ‘geopolitical research tradition’ entails a coherent whole of ontology, epistemology and methodology. Researchers should therefore situate their work within one or more of these research traditions, but also act consistent with the assumptions embedded within these schools of thought. Mapping the (un)written assumptions of the different geopolitical ‘research traditions’ helps in a clearer positioning of the work of different scholars vis-à-vis one another;
3. At the same time, these ‘geopolitical research traditions’ should also be put into perspective – they constitute a certain ‘pair of glasses’ to the international-political reality, each with their own advantages and disadvantages. Important is however that a researcher always remains aware of the possibilities and restrictions embedded within these research traditions, certainly when he or she tries to apply the theories within a specific geopolitical school of thought.

With regard to the evaluation of individual theories or broader research traditions, Laudan claimed that the evaluation of each ‘scientific doctrine’ should focus upon the problem-solving advances and effectiveness of the research tradition with which it is linked. The acceptance of a research tradition or school of thought is determined by the problem-solving effectiveness of her most recent theories. Moreover, all evaluations of theories or research traditions should be conducted within a comparative context (Laudan 1978: 109, 119-120). On the basis of such an analysis, we identified three ‘geopolitical research traditions’ as being very important indeed, since they each focus on other aspects of the relation between ‘territoriality’ and politics; ‘Classical’, ‘Cognitive’ and ‘Critical Geopolitics’. When one compares these three geopolitical schools of thought under 3.1. in our comparative charts, one must come to the following conclusion; each of these three ‘geopolitical schools of thought’ merely examine some partial aspects of the relationship between ‘territoriality’ and ‘politics’. Or, to put it more strongly; no one geopolitical research tradition seems to be able to really study the complex, vice versa interaction between ‘geo’ and ‘politics’ (cf. our operational definition of ‘geopolitics’).

Based upon this last observation, we again look at these ‘geopolitical research traditions’. In a second phase, we try to suggest a model or framework with which the ‘geopolitical dimensions’ within a ‘foreign policy’ could be analyzed in a ‘more comprehensive way’:

• Conclusion 1: when one would conduct a classical-geopolitical analysis based upon a possibilist epistemology (e.g. Strausz-Hupé, Morgenthau), then it is possible to develop so-called virtual ‘capacity analyses’ of the (future) relative power position of an area in relation to the pre-determined or -declared objectives in its foreign policy. In that case, one will produce an inventarisation of the territorially embedded, material ‘power factors’ which offer the foreign policy of a “bearer of geopolitics” (e.g. a country, a region, a city or a macro-region) certain opportunities and restrictions. Such an analysis can be very interesting as a kind of ‘first
inventory’, yet as an analytical framework it would not be capable of gaining a clear insight into the conducted foreign policy. After all, it is not possible to establish an unambiguous link between the presence/absence of certain ‘environmental variables’ and the ‘foreign policy-decision’ that was taken.

- **Conclusion 2.a.**: ‘Cognitive Geopolitics’ devotes special attention to the **impact of ‘geo’ on ‘politics’**:
  - First, the influence of the ‘psycho-milieu’ on the ‘foreign policy decisions’;
  - Second, the limiting or facilitating influence of the ‘operational milieu’ on the ‘results of the foreign policy decisions’ (the implementation of the foreign policy-decisions).

- **Conclusion 2.b.**: with regard to the reverse relationship, the impact of ‘politics’ on geo’, ‘Cognitive Geopolitics’ perhaps in a maximal interpretation is receptive to the possibility that ‘political decisions’ as such also can alter the physical (or broader; the ‘operational’) milieu in a material sense (an idea which was originally developed by the French school of possibilism of Vidal de la Blache). Yet, a foreign policy-decision can –logically– only generate a material impact on the ‘operational milieu’ if it is actually implemented ‘on the ground’. However, in practice ‘Cognitive Geopolitics’ actually spent little attention to this possible relation of influence.

- **Conclusion 3.a.**: the contemporary research tradition of ‘Critical Geopolitics’ mainly has attention for the **impact of ‘politics’ (via the discourse) upon ‘geo’**, namely:
  - the influence of the ‘foreign-political discourse’ upon the way in which the environment/milieu is given a new meaning (‘discourse as power structure’)

- **Conclusion 3.b.**: In a relative sense, ‘Critical Geopolitics’ devotes less attention to the potential reverse influence, namely: the way in which the ‘giving of meaning to the environment/milieu within the broader society’ influences the foreign policy-discourse.

The conclusions above are important. Since we discovered that the main ‘geopolitical research traditions’ concentrate on other aspects of the relation between ‘geo’ and ‘politics’, it now becomes possible to develop a theoretical overview. A first step is to make an inventory of the different hypothetical influences which the ‘existing geopolitical research traditions’ try to describe between ‘geo’ & ‘politics’, and vice versa. The figure beneath offers a mere inventory:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INFLUENCE of ‘GEO’ on ‘POLITICS’</th>
<th>INFLUENCE of ‘POLITICS’ on ‘GEO’</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Influence of the ‘psycho-milieu’ on the ‘foreign policy decisions’</td>
<td>b. Influence of the ‘foreign policy outcomes’ (the results of foreign policy-decisions) on the ‘operational milieu’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Influence of the ‘operational environment’ on the ‘foreign policy outcomes’ (the results of foreign policy-decisions)</td>
<td>d. Influence of the ‘foreign policy discourse’ on the way in which the ‘milieu’ is being attributed a(nother) meaning within the broader society (cf. political discourse as “power structure”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Influence of the “process of giving meaning to the ‘milieu’ within the broader society” on the ‘foreign policy discourse’</td>
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**Figure 7: Inventory of the influence of ‘geo’ on ‘politics’, and of ‘politics’ on ‘geo’**

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11 Also the ‘New Geopolitics’-school of Harvey Starr suggested a (theoretical) influence of the tangible ‘foreign policy outcomes’ on the ‘operational milieu’ (see: Papadakis & Starr, 1987).
The figure above offers a first tentative insight of the way in which various interpretations of \textit{`geo' relate to various dimensions of `foreign policy'}. Critics could put forward that some relations of influence were forgotten. For instance, does there not exist a theoretical influence of (earlier) foreign policy-decisions upon the \textit{`psycho-milieu'} of a decision-maker? This seems indeed to be the case, but rather in an indirect way. Before a change in the \textit{`psycho-milieu'} of a decision-maker can manifest itself, first his/her foreign policy-decisions have to be implemented on the ground. An example: one could for instance claim that the decision of the American president George W. Bush to topple Saddam Hussein in March 2003, was inspired by his neo-conservative world vision (\textit{`psycho milieu'}) (see relationship \textit{a}). Only when the consequences of this foreign policy-action was realized on the ground (including the fatal decision to dismantle the Iraqi security apparatus of the Ba'ath-regime), it became clear that the complex situation on the ground inhibited an acceptable outcome to materialize (see relationship \textit{c}). Thus, an adaptation on the psycho-milieu of the president could not stay behind, to be sure only via minimal changes (in which the core of his \textit{`world vision'} remained standing). This set a process of \textit{`correcting'} decisions in motion, as a result of which the whole cycle was reactived once more ...

How can the elements mentioned be integrated into one dynamic overview of the potential relations of influence between \textit{`geo' & `politics'}, and vice versa? This figure offers a synopsis:

According to the philosopher of science Larry Laudan, there exist two ways in which different research traditions can be integrated. First, in some cases a research tradition can be grafted upon another, without it being necessary to strongly re-adjust the basic assumptions. Second, it is possible that the fusion of two or more research traditions necessitate the rejection of a number of basic assumptions within each of the original research traditions. Most \textit{`scientific revolutions'} take place, not so much by the articulation of a research tradition whose \textit{`ingredients'} are new
and revolutionary, but rather by the development of a new research tradition whose old ‘ingredients’ are combined in a new way (Laudan 1978: 103-104). According to Laudan, one can talk about ‘scientific progress’ in the event a research tradition succeeds in realizing a better ‘problem solution’, while at the same time limiting the number of anomalies and conceptual problems (Laudan 1978: 124-125). However, the formulation of a new geopolitical research tradition constitutes a highly ambitious undertaking, beyond the scope of this paper. What does become clear from our analysis, is how much a number of geopolitical research traditions are complementary to one another. The road towards a ‘more comprehensive’ geopolitical model or framework of analysis could therefore be one which entails several aspects of the interaction between ‘territoriality’ and ‘politics’. In this respect, the political geographer John Agnew offers some points of departure. In his article ‘Disputing the nature of the international in political geography’ he for instance states that all to often (within ‘Critical Geopolitics’) it is forgotten that some representations of territories within the geopolitical discourse did not originate within a ‘material vacuum’ (zie: Agnew 2001: 11). In this context, he discusses the existence of an impasse between Realistic versus Constructivist inspired analytical frameworks. Apart from that, Agnew perhaps forgot to mention the Cognitive-behavioralist paradigm... The dilemma which Agnewroughs out with regard to the multi-dimensional character of the concept ‘territoriality’, reminds a bit to the idea which Albert Einstein proposed in 1905; that ‘light’ did not simply existed out of waves (the then generally accepted vision), but that one could also view it as ‘quantum-parts’. A similar dilemma arises with the study of ‘territoriality’: at one particular moment, it can assume only one specific shape – material, cognitive or inter-subjective. Nevertheless, each of these aspects of ‘territoriality’ offer interesting insights into their relationship vis-a-vis (certain interpretations of) ‘foreign policy’. The solution which Agnew seems to suggest, is to shift our attention to the processes in which these different manifestations of ‘territoriality’ are active in relation to ‘politics’ (Agnew 2001: 11-12). According to our opinion, a ‘more comprehensive’ geopolitical model (or framework) of analysis for foreign policy, could therefore consist of several phases:

The analyst first has to develop an inventory of the territorial, material power basis of a political entity. It involves a classical-geopolitical analysis like in the work of Strausz-Hupé and Morgenthau, in other words one which is based upon a possibilistic epistemology. One develops a so-called virtual ‘capacity analysis’ of the (future) relative power position of a region in relation to the predetermined objectives in the foreign policy. In short, one develops an initial inventory of the territorially embedded, material (power)factors which offer the foreign policy of an “actor of geopolitics” –a country, region, city or macro-region– certain opportunities and/or restrictions. In many ways, such a possibilistic analysis is similar to ‘Classical Geopolitics’, though she has much less “to suffer” under the “heavy” ontological and epistemological assumptions of this last tradition. Who develops such a ‘geopolitical inventory’, can develop a sound and advanced insight into the material basis in which central political decision-makers operate. This approach forms one of the most ‘tried and tested’ geopolitical methods of analysis. For example, one can find a guide for such descriptive geopolitical analyses of regions in the book ‘Introduction à l’analyse géopolitique’ of the French scientist Aymeric Chauprade (see: Chauprade 1999). The next question which then announces itself, and which some ‘geopolitical scientists’ sometimes neglect, is this one; how do central foreign policy-decisionmakers deal with this ‘given’ material world in their ‘foreign policy’? Or to put it differently; what relationship between the different manifestations of ‘geo’ and the dimensions of ‘foreign policy’, and vice versa?

Although classical-possibilistic geopolitical analyses generate interesting insights, they offer according to our opinion insufficient possibilities to obtain an insight into the conducted foreign policy. From a methodological perspective, such analyses do not succeed in developing a linking between (geopolitical) environmental variables on the one hand and the actual foreign policy (decisions/implementation of these decisions/rhetoric) on the other hand, and vice versa. In order
to achieve this from an analytical point of view, the deployment of other approaches is necessary.

In 3.1., we identified ‘Cognitive Geopolitics’ (today a part of Foreign Policy Analysis) as one of the most important ‘anti-theses’ from International Relations to ‘Classical Geopolitics’. ‘Cognitive Geopolitics’ is founded on the epistemological position of ‘cognitive behavioralism’, which states that a central political decision-maker reacts to his/her environment as he/she perceives & interprets it in light of previous experiences. Parallel to this, we also claim that the current Anglo-American literature of ‘Critical Geopolitics’ can be considered as the most important ‘anti-thesis’ developed from Political Geography to ‘Classical Geopolitics’. In essence, it is based upon ‘social-constructivism’, which in an epistemological sense means that there does not exist something like a ‘pre-discursive perception’; the spatial environment is being constructed within a broader societal and political context via the discourse as “power structure”. Well then, in our opinion both ‘Cognitive’ and ‘Critical Geopolitics’ offer interesting possibilities to develop links between the (geopolitical) environmental factors on the one hand and the actual foreign policy (decisions/implementation of these decisions/rhetoric) on the other hand. Moreover, ‘Cognitive’ and ‘Critical Geopolitics’ are to a large extent complementary to one another (to be sure, only if one makes abstraction of those of their respective ontological & epistemological assumptions which ‘conflict’ with one another):

- First, both study a fundamentally different level of analysis, in which their insights do not necessarily have to exclude one another, but can also work to reinforce each other mutually. ‘Cognitive Geopolitics’ conducts an analysis of foreign policy at the micro-level of the decision-maker, whereas ‘Critical Geopolitics’ tries to analyze the meso-level of the (territorial and environmental assumptions) within the foreign policy discourse.
- Second, between both there exists a difference in the way in which they have attention for the relation between ‘geo’ on the one hand and ‘politics’ on the other hand. ‘Cognitive Geopolitics’ especially has attention for the way in which ‘geo-factors’ influence (the ideas of) the decision-maker. ‘Critical Geopolitics’ rather has attention for the way in which ‘politics’, via a discourse, tries to ascribe a certain meaning to ‘geo-variables’; the ‘construction’ of a ‘meaning’ to the territorial environment, and this with certain political objectives in mind.

From a purely meta-theoretical perspective, one should recognize that the perception of individual decisionmakers cannot do without the ‘giving of meaning’ within the broader society, and vice versa. Possibly, the geopolitical ‘giving of meaning’ about certain ‘far away’ territories via the mass media, influences the perception of decision-makers (as ‘Critical Geopolitics asserts). Conversely, one can doubt the assumption of ‘Critical Geopolitics’ that there does not exist anything like a ‘pre-discursive perception’. From a theoretical point of view, it should be possible that a decision-maker independently develops a new ‘geopolitical vision’, which he/she will try to convert into actual reality via his foreign policy-decisions and discourse. From this angle, the tension which exists between ‘Cognitive’ and ‘Critical Geopolitics’ starts to sound more and more like the old tale of who came first; the chicken or the egg? In our opinion, both the ‘environmental perception’ of individual (or homogeneous groups of) decision-maker(s) and the attention to the ‘geopolitical’ giving of meaning, can have a place within a geopolitical analysis. In view of our plea for a definition of Geopolitics which devotes attention to the interaction between ‘geo’ and ‘politics’, it seems useful to combine elements of the research traditions of ‘Cognitive’ and ‘Critical Geopolitics’. Earlier, we already referred to a contribution from Vincent Legrand, who made a plea for a kind of ‘Reflexive-Cognitive Geopolitics’. Nevertheless, there is a need for more research to further explore this idea, both from a theoretical-operational angle as from the perspective of the practical feasibility. After all, ‘Cognitive’ and ‘Critical Geopolitics’ remain in any case ‘unique’ research traditions, each founded upon separate
ontological and epistemological assumptions. Irrespective of whether a real “fusion” of these approaches would be desirable or possible, the researcher can always keep in mind that both approaches are complementary; they each study different dynamics between the dimensions of territoriality and politics, and vice versa.

Next to these remarks, also Agnew’s earlier comment is valid: one should not forget that there also exists a material, ‘operational’ reality. Fundamental changes within it (e.g. changes which were not caused by people) irrevocably generate (in the medium to long term) certain consequences for both the ‘individual perception of policy-makers’ as for ‘the geopolitical giving of meaning of certain distant areas within the broader society, via the mass media’. An example: the tsunami-disaster the day after Christmas 2004 in the area of South Asia, was caused by a massive seaquake near the island of Aceh in Indonesia. It had a destructive effect upon the material environment (both in a physical and in a human sense) of at least ten countries in this vast area (Indonesia, Thailand, Sri Lanka, India, Somalia, etc.). This event was the ‘independent variabele’ which generated consequences both in the area of the perception as in the ‘giving of meaning’ in terms of discourse. These developments resulted in a situation in which central political decision-makers from the “West” (also under pressure from their constituents and public opinion) started to perceive the region of South Asia in other geopolitical terms (for instance; “more important”) than had been the case traditionally in their foreign policy. At a certain moment, even a certain short race for ‘geopolitical spheres of influence’ started, in which the United States of America and Australia initially declared themselves to be the ‘co-ordinators over the disaster area’, without talking to the rest of the international community (e.g. with the European Union). Seen from another angle, the (Western) mass media created an altered ‘geopolitical giving of meaning’, which placed this region within a totally different context. A similar reasoning could have been developed about global warming and the North Pole, which opens up new naval trade routes and natural resources in the North. At the same time, this has caused a new perception by key Kremlin-decisionmakers about the importance of that area, while at the same time the mass media have created a new ‘meaning’ for the North, through their coverage of the Russian “scientific” mission in August 2008 to prove that the Lomonosov-ridge is actually an under water-part of the Russian mainland.

From the insights of our analysis above, we can draw two conclusions:

1. in geopolitical analyses, one should never lose sight of the material territoriality; after all, this forms the ‘basis’ from which each practical-geopolitical analysis should start

2. a combination of ‘Cognitive’ and ‘Critical Geopolitics’ could potentially contribute to a more comprehensive assessment of the interaction between (the components of) ‘geo’ & ‘politics’.

The ‘more comprehensive’ geopolitical model or framework of analysis which we here suggest, thus in other words makes a plea for a more pragmatic & sequential combination of the most important ‘geopolitical research traditions':
Figure 9: ‘Rosetta Stone’?: combining Classical, Possibilist, Cognitive & Critical Geopolitics

Of course, a geopolitical analysis shouldn’t always have to comprise each of these approaches. In first instance, the approach of a practical-geopolitical analysis will be influence by the phrasing of the research question of the researcher involved. An analysis can thus also perfectly be ‘geopolitical’ if/when it only examines parts of the full relation between ‘geo’ and ‘politics’. Yet, if one aims to develop the most complete overview of the interaction between ‘geo’ and ‘politics’ (cf. our definition of Geopolitics), then the framework suggested above can offer a potential route.

The approach which we have suggested makes –after the spirit of Larry Laudan– a plea for a pragmatic approach to scientific questions regarding the relationship between ‘territoriality’ and ‘politics’. Notwithstanding the irrefutable fact that the existing ‘geopolitical research traditions’ each assume of their own, cardinal assumptions, the ‘geopolitical analyst’ should in our opinion try to be flexible. He/she should also recognize that ‘territoriality’ in its many manifestations (material, cognitive & inter-subjective) generates an impact upon different aspects of ‘foreign policy’, and vice versa. Through such a more pragmatic position it should in time become possible to transcend the ‘partitions’ which exist within our scientific mental frameworks & which perhaps still prevent us ‘to understand’ the ‘geopolitical’ reality in its full proportions.

According to our paper, it would be possible to develop a ‘Best of Both Worlds’-approach in which the insights of Traditional, Cognitive and Critical Geopolitics are combined so as to provide a way out to the seemingly contradictory trend of a simultaneous weakening and strengthening of the role of space and territoriality in the international system. Territoriality is active in many different forms at many different times. The challenge for the future is perhaps to develop an “instrument of measurement” which is able to detect these shape-shifts, rather than to be locked into a certain frame of mind pushed on by a specific research tradition.
4. ‘Geopolitics’; towards a new ‘geographical consciousness’ of foreign policy?

‘Geopolitical scientists’ underline that although we may perhaps today mainly live in a social world, this not necessarily means that ‘environmental variables’ have lost all their explanatory power – they still generate an influence upon today’s ‘foreign policy’ & ‘international relations’. From our comfortable position in the ‘North’, in the ‘West’, or more neutrally: in the developed world, we sometimes seem to forget this. But as we already mentioned in the beginning of this paper, territorially embedded explanatory factors often form the beginning of an answer to very acute questions regarding development, or even to (partially) explain the difficult political relations within countries. The most important and potentially most dangerous conflicts in the world are often exactly those in which ‘territoriality’ plays a crucial role (the disintegration of the Balkan, the tensions between the Israeli’s and Palestinians, the question of Kashmir, etc.) (van Staden 1999: 615). Even in the 21st century, physical-geographical obstacles such as mountains or deserts can explain why certain, relatively speaking ‘nearby’ peoples throughout their history and today barely maintained contact, or could not be integrated within ‘nation-states’. The American IR-specialist Adam Garfinkle employs an interesting saying to summarize all this; “we become where we are” (Garfinkle 2003). Both local social patterns and the human-political interaction between peoples, are unmistakably also influenced by ‘territoriality’ (both in its physical-geographical, in its human-geographical, as in its spatial dimensions).

Some areas are more ‘endowed’ by nature than others, as a result of which they have more opportunities for development. From this stems —according to ‘Geopolitics’— also a relative power balance within and between societies, which can be ‘translated’ by politicians and policy-makers into a vague, yet at least implicitly recognized ‘geopolitical influence’ emanating from states, regions or cities. In our opinion, ‘Geopolitics’ as a field of research could also in the current juncture play an important scientific research role and societal sensibilization-role in developing the awareness that the many global-ecological challenges which announce themselves today, can/will generate forceful consequences for foreign policy & for the global political relations. After some decades of being totally ignored, it seems as though environmental variables are back with a vengeance within the study of Geopolitics. A simple enumeration is already revealing; increasing water scarcity in high populated areas (worsened by global warming), increasing scarcity of oil and natural gas, which causes a politicization of these issues, the endangering of global biodiversity, etc. In each of these dossiers, ‘territoriality’ & foreign policy interact. These are crucial geopolitical questions; their outcome could literally influence the future of humanity. The problem is however that politicians do not always appreciate the level of interdependence which exists between & within these dossiers. Foreign policy-elites will in first instance always defend their own ‘national interest’. Only when offered more insight into the complex relationship between ‘nature’ and ‘society’ (Matthew 1999: 298), will politicians be inclined to re-formulate their own ‘national interest’ in another, more creative way (e.g. by agreeing to a scheme in which emission rights are sold — cf. the [post-]‘Kyoto-process’). For foreign policy-elites, it is crucial to gain a better insight into the dependence of societies to the ‘changing’ environmental variables; to include them into their political ‘calculations’ in order to better understand the viewpoints they have to defend in their foreign policy ‘the day after tomorrow’. In our opinion, it is exactly here where there still lies a partly yet to be explored terrain for ‘Geopolitics’ – to grow into a ‘geographical consciousness’ of foreign policy, but then in a whole different way compared to what the German geopolitical thinker Karl Haushofer had in mind during the inter-war years of last century… Central in this endeavour stands the issue how the questions mentioned above could best be ‘politicized’ in the arena of international relations. By analogy with Ellsworth Huntington one could state that man can only become really politically free if he is conscious on the limitations which nature has imposed and the finiteness of what is possible on this earth.
Bibliography


