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Neoclassical geopolitics: Preliminary theoretical principles and methodological guidelines

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Abstract: The paper is aimed at making geopolitical studies and *neoclassical geopolitics* equivalent. In this sense, the objectives are conceptual and operational, comprising an original definition of geopolitical studies, and the explanation of the neoclassical geopolitics model and its variables: systemic stimuli, the geopolitical agent's perceptions and capacities, and foreign policy outcomes (primarily the geopolitical design). Therefore, the problem at stake is to tie up several theoretical and methodological contributions into a solid new geopolitical model, in the limits of the phenomenological and soft positivist sphere. Two sections constituted the structure of this qualitative paper: 1) formulation of a chain of theoretical fundamentals in geopolitical studies, and 2) description of a group of methodological steps that a geopolitical study can use. The research advances a) a new definition of geopolitical studies, b) explains the concept of *geomisguidance*, c) frames and unwraps Ratzel's concept of *Raumsinn*, and d) ultimately systematises and assesses geopolitical studies' literature of different languages with respect to theory and methodology. All these findings were oriented to the practical aspect of the operationalisation of geopolitical studies, presenting the compact conclusion that the analysis of location is not enough for a grand vision of geopolitical studies as an international relations approach.

Keywords: geopolitical studies, methodology, potential, geopolitical agent, geopolitical design, foreign policy.

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Often recycled and used as an adjective – e.g. “geopolitical interests”, “geopolitical conflict”, “geopolitical area”, “geopolitical disruption” – the word *geopolitics* might be at risk of becoming nothing more than a fancy word, empty of meaning in what refers to the use of the scientific method. Phil Kelly already alerted to this situation too.² To counter this, the paper sets forth a delimitation of geopolitical studies as the scientific domain, i.e., as *neoclassical geopolitics*, through three tasks: a) introducing an innovative definition, b) revisiting theoretical principles, and c) providing methodological guidelines, dialectically overpassing *classical* and *critical* geopolitics.³

The paper comprises two sections. Section 1 includes the author’s definition of geopolitical studies and sets out a chain of selected theoretical principles in geopolitical studies: 1) Geography remains the bedrock of geopolitical studies, 2) Territorial imperative, 3) Potential of conflict, 4) Possibilism, 5) Multidisciplinarity, 6) Geopolitical continuities, 7) Predictions, 8) Unit of analysis, and 9) Epistemology in geopolitical studies. Section 2 not only lists a group of methodological guidelines (variables, methods, techniques, and so forth) that compose the geopolitical approach but also analyses that group, providing details on operationalisation. Section 2 ends by offering the most recent version of the neoclassical geopolitics model since the author’s latest improvement.⁴ Both sections converge to the major objective of creating an unambiguous framework for the understating of nature and goals of geopolitical studies, which will also allow its operationalisation as a scholarship or research program. Moreover, those two sections, deductively connected, target to break down the new definition of geopolitical studies that will be given.

Although the literature about specific methodological steps in geopolitical studies is relatively vast (e.g., Vives, Brill, Castro, Thual, Chauprade, Sicker and Kelly), an effort for the systematisation and unification of those contributions has been

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² Phil Kelly, *Classical Geopolitics – A New Analytical Model*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2016, p. vii.

³ For an additional reading of one of the most recent (and one of the best) critiques of *critical geopolitics*, it is recommended Terrence W. Haverluk et al., “The Three Critical Flaws of Critical Geopolitics: Towards a Neo-Classical Geopolitics”, *Geopolitics*, Vol. 19, No. 1, 2014, pp. 19–39.

⁴ Nuno Morgado, “The role of *élites* in geopolitical studies”, in: *5th International Multidisciplinary Scientific Conference on Social Sciences and Arts*, Vol. 5, Issue 1.1., SGEM International Multidisciplinary Scientific Conference on Social Sciences & Arts, Sofia, 2018.

missing. That gap is perhaps explained by the fact that such literature has not been translated into other languages, remaining isolated in Castellano [Spanish], German, Portuguese, French, and English. This article attempts to fill in that gap, working transversely with that literature in the English language, therefore, introducing it to a larger group of scholars.

Defining geopolitical studies and naming their theoretical fundamentals

At first glance, the definition of *geopolitics* by Saul B. Cohen as the study about “the relation of international political power to the geographical setting” can be accepted to briefly define geopolitical studies understood as *neoclassical geopolitics*.⁵ However, and in order to avoid multiple meanings of geopolitics, as Heinz Brill among others alerted to⁶, several ideas must be put aside: geopolitical studies are not synonymous with international relations, they do not concern international conflicts alone, and geopolitical studies are even less an approach devoted only to the great powers.

As Fouberg et al. pointed out referring to political geography, geopolitical studies are about “the spatial assumptions and structures underlying politics (...) the role territory plays in politics, and the problems that result from changing political and territorial circumstances”.⁷ A substantial difference between political geography and geopolitical studies is, nonetheless, that the latter must be delimited to the realm of international relations. Besides emphasising this aspect, this paper gives to geopolitical studies a set of specific theoretical principles, methodological guidelines and techniques that help in solidifying the research agenda. Moreover, the paper proposes the following original definition:

A geopolitical study is a descriptive-analytical approach that aims to explain the impact of the geographical setting and other elements of potential, filtered by the geopolitical agent’s perceptions and capacities, on foreign policy and, by extension, on international politics.

⁵ Saul B. Cohen, *Geography and Politics in a World Divided*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1973, p. 29.

⁶ Heinz Brill, *Geopolitik Heute – Deutschland’s Chance?*, Ullstein, Frankfurt-am-Main, 1994, p. 21.

⁷ Erin H. Fouberg et al., *Human Geography: People, Place, and Culture* (10th Edition), John Wiley and Sons, Hoboken, 2012, p. 252.

This definition shares its centre with Kelly's definition of "classical geopolitics", although two notes must be made.⁸ First, the author places Kelly's recent works under the label of neoclassical geopolitics or geopolitical studies, not under "classical geopolitics", whose theoretical weaknesses have been already analysed.⁹ Second, Kelly's definition of geopolitics expressively excludes a reference to decision-makers, which constitute the substance of the intervening variables of the neoclassical geopolitics model, and thus one of the innovative aspects of this research piece.¹⁰ Chauprade and Thual identified territorial and identity dynamics as the primary object of the geopolitical science, which is to be studied through the analysis of motives and intentions of the geopolitical agent.¹¹ Further considerations of this issue will be given in section 2.

Elaborating a list of nine theoretical principles helps in providing a better understanding of what geopolitical studies are indeed based on. This list is an ongoing work to be updated and completed by future research.

Geography remains the bedrock of geopolitical studies

This first theoretical principle – the significance of geography in the study of international relations – is widely supported by the literature.¹² In fact, and although changes in geographical aspects are acknowledged, Gray's words endure.¹³ Nevertheless, there can be no place left for either determinism or mechanist approaches. This subject will be recaptured in the formulation of the theoretical principle of *possibilism*.

⁸ Phil Kelly, *Classical Geopolitics – A New Analytical Model*, op. cit., p. ix.

⁹ E.g. Nuno Morgado, "Vindicating Neoclassical Geopolitics, Challenging Postmodernism: A New Look at an Old Problem", *Central European Journal of International and Security Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 4, 2014, pp. 222–250.

¹⁰ Phil Kelly, *Classical Geopolitics – A New Analytical Model*, op. cit., p. 23

¹¹ Aymeric Chauprade and François Thual, *Dictionnaire de Géopolitique – États, Concepts, Auteurs*, Ellipses, Paris, 1998, p. 496.

¹² Colin S. Gray, "Inescapable Geography", *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 22, Nos. 2–3, 1999, p. 43; Harm de Blij, *Why Geography Matters – More Than Ever*, Oxford University Press, London, 2012; Jakub J. Grygiel, *Great powers and geopolitical change*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 2006; Martin Sicker, *Geography and Politics among Nations: An Introduction to Geopolitics*, iUniverse, New York, 2010; Phil Kelly, *Classical Geopolitics – A New Analytical Model*, op. cit.

¹³ Colin S. Gray, *The Geopolitics of Super Power*, The University Press of Kentucky, Kentucky, 1988, p. 43.

Territorial imperative

As argued elsewhere¹⁴, the literature of the science of Ethology provides concepts and assumptions with the highest interest for geopolitical studies. The (i) concept of territoriality, i.e., the (innate) behavior that expresses intentions, by an individual or group, of controlling and defending a certain space (this means the territorial instinct), and (ii) the concept of hierarchy, i.e., in human societies, like other animal societies, there is a natural necessity for a minority of individuals that rules over the majority, are certainly among the most important. If the first concept re-legitimizes the first theoretical principle, the second one helps in understanding one of the pillars of geopolitical studies, *i.e.*, the hierarchy of powers.

Admitting that in all human societies subsists a numerically inferior group that constitutes the ruling class (*élite*), if this group is equipped with power (one understands power in the general geopolitical framework, in the limits of the territorial state as the unit of analysis), then the group can be identified as a geopolitical agent (GA). The geopolitical agent is in charge of the supreme administration (greater focus on the foreign affairs), control and defense of the national territory. This subject will be brought again in section 2.

Potential of conflict

If geopolitical studies comprise the analysis of strategic modalities of action – as they actually do – then “potential of conflict” is an object for geopolitical studies. Chauprade and Thual mentioned geostrategic areas (e.g. “areas of friction” located between two geohistorical borders – and so did Castro),¹⁵ the struggle for resources, or identity conflicts as examples of sources of conflict within the logic of a causal chain.¹⁶ Therefore, the potential of conflict is understood as “essence of geopolitics”,¹⁷ having an explanatory capacity of the balance of power and of the prediction about what is possible or likely to happen.¹⁸

¹⁴ Nuno Morgado, “The role of *élites* in geopolitical studies”, *op. cit.*

¹⁵ Therezinha de Castro, *Geopolítica – Princípios, Meios e Fins*, Biblioteca do Exército, Rio de Janeiro, 1999, p. 47.

¹⁶ Aymeric Chauprade and François Thual, *Dictionnaire de Géopolitique – États, Concepts, Auteurs*, *op. cit.*, pp. 481–482.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 480.

¹⁸ See also: António M. Bessa, and Carlos M. Dias, *O Salto do Tigre – Geopolítica Aplicada*, Prefácio, Lisboa, 2007, p. 50.

At the same time, there is no contradiction in acknowledging that international ways of action outside the strategic sphere are also an object of geopolitical studies. Alongside this latter aspect, the realist theoretical tradition also recognizes the importance of studying both cooperative and non-cooperative states' behavior. Related to this aspect, the concept of "geoconjunctive maneuver" was created and applied.¹⁹

Possibilism

Geopolitical studies are under the general methodological procedures of social sciences. In these terms, possibilism is primarily nothing but the refusal of determinism, as specified by Vaus among others.²⁰ Geographical determinism is an ancient approach, especially in common sense. One may find references to it in the Bible, for example. Nathanael questioned: "From Nazareth? Can anything good come from that place?" (Jo 1: 46), or the Pharisees who replied to Nicodemus "Are you a Galilean too? Go into the matter, and see for yourself: prophets do not arise in Galilee" (Jo 7: 52).

Rooted in French geographers, possibilism sustains the argument that Nature offers possibilities that Man may or may not use, and while using, with better or worse results.²¹ Within this process, several factors (e.g. location, characteristics of the geographical setting, culture, identity, perceptions, political and military structures) must be taken into consideration. Therefore – and on the contrary of Bonaparte's adage – state politics are not contained in geography exclusively (see subsection *Multidisciplinary* below).

For instance, location is a pre-disposition by Nature. Having a large coastline, or being an island, may lead to thalassopolitics, i.e., the circumstances in which the power of the state relies on geostrategic structures connected to the Oceans. Still, that (or any other) condition is neither compulsory nor a determinant in terms of outputs. A geopolitical study may identify a trend, a vocation, but any accomplishments can only be reached by the choices of an administration (political,

¹⁹ Nuno Morgado, *Towards the New World Order? A Geopolitical Study of Neo-Eurasianism and Meridionalism*, Ph.D. Thesis, Charles University, Prague, 2017.

²⁰ David A. Vaus, *Research Design in Social Research*, SAGE, London, 2001, p. 5.

²¹ Lucien Febvre, *La Terre et l'évolution humaine* [The Earth and the human evolution], Renaissance du livre, Paris, 1927.

Paul V. Blache, *Principes de géographie humaine publiés d'après les manuscrits de l'auteur*, Archives Karéline, Paris, 2008.

diplomatic, military). The choices of that administration depend on the geopolitical agent itself and his perceptions, motivations, and intentions. At this point, the matter crosses the path of the neoclassical realist theory of international politics and its profound influence on the variables of *geopolitical agents' perceptions* and *capacities* in the neoclassical geopolitics model (cf. Figure 3).

Among others, Vives is an important reference as to the concerns of possibilism. His “geohistorical method” is an essential instrument in geopolitical studies.²² To understand the geohistorical method is required to dissect the work of the British historian Arnold Toynbee. From the study of rise and fall of 26 civilizations, Toynbee sustained that from a “challenge-and-response dynamics” (that means from the interaction between Man and the (geographical, social, etc.) environment, in which it is not possible to determine laws about how Man will respond to those challenges) one can infer that as greater as the challenge (e.g. physical, social) has been, the greater the response has been too – acknowledging that the challenge fits in the golden measure.²³

In this frame, it is most relevant to emphasise that 1) such response is a result of the actions of the ruling class, so the response depends on its behavior or actions (this means, consequently, that the ruling class – not the masses – are the one responsible for a vibrant or decant society or even extinction of a civilization); and 2) in that response psychological/spiritual forces find their place (Cline’s concept of *will* or Vives’ concept of *energías culturales creadoras*).²⁴ These are then the columns of the Vives’ possibilist geohistorical method.²⁵ In the interaction between Man and the [geographical, social, etc.] environment, key variables for geopolitical studies are certainly the geopolitical agent’s perceptions and capacities. Once again, as stated above, it is the geopolitical agent that is in charge of steering entire populations.

It logically follows that possibilism opens the space for the existence of ignorance (or lack of interest and forth) of the geopolitical agent about the incentives provided by the geographical setting. This phenomenon was designated in the author’s previous work as *geomisguidance* and added in this domain as a new concept. The quotation “(...) all countries exhibit apparently deviant behavior

²² Jaume V. Vives, *Tratado General de Geopolítica. El factor geográfico y el proceso histórico* [General treaty of Geopolitics. The geographical factor in the historical process], Editorial vicens-vives, Barcelona, 1972, pp. 72–76.

²³ Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History - Volume I*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1987, p. 140.

²⁴ Jaume V. Vives, *Tratado General de Geopolítica. El factor geográfico y el proceso histórico*, op. cit., p. 76.

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 72–76.

from time to time (...)” supports the new concept.²⁶ Elsewhere *geomisguidance* was incipiently designated as “geopolitical blindness” by the author.²⁷ The concept will be explained below.

Chauprade’s position deserves also a short reference. In his *magnum opus*, this author contended about a deterministic track, stating that although Man is free to make his choices, Man is always conditioned by the environment.²⁸ This research agrees with Chauprade as far as the debate is concerned with the limitations imposed by the geographical setting, not the incentives or possibilities. Together with this environmental constraint – and because geopolitical studies deal with power – power general rule²⁹ could be also taken as the only law in geopolitical studies: “there is no vacuum of power”, i.e., spaces empty of a certain power will necessarily attract another power. Thus, this assumption contests Kelly’s idea that “geopolitics simply lacks any totally predictable ‘laws’”.³⁰ Still, with respect to possibilism/determinism, Freire Nogueira tried to solve the problem by designating a “probabilistic determinism” for the geopolitical approach, an idea that can be accepted.³¹

Multidisciplinarity

Although geography constitutes their bedrock, geopolitical studies do not exclude other factors such as: circulation, identity (culture, intentions, perceptions), economy (attached to resources), or technology.³² The geographical setting itself, as a set of complex factors that help in explaining patterns of states’ international

²⁶ Colin S. Gray, *The Geopolitics of Super Power*, op. cit., p. 42.

²⁷ Nuno Morgado, “Vindicating Neoclassical Geopolitics, Challenging Postmodernism. A New Look at an Old Problem”, op. cit., p. 245.

²⁸ Aymeric Chauprade, *Géopolitique. Constantes et changements dans l’histoire*, Éllipses, Paris, 2007, p. 202.

²⁹ Políbio V. de Almeida, *Do Poder do Pequeno Estado (Enquadramento geopolítico da hierarquia das potências)*, Instituto Superior de Ciências Sociais e Políticas, Lisboa, 2012, p. 142.

³⁰ Phil Kelly, *Classical Geopolitics – A New Analytical Model*, op. cit., p. 19.

³¹ José F. Nogueira, *O Método Geopolítico Alargado – Persistências e Contingências em Portugal e no Mundo*, Instituto de Estudos Superiores Militares, Lisboa, 211, p. 155.

³² Mackubin T. Owens, “In Defense of Classical Geopolitics”, www.badgleyb.net/geopolitics/docs/theory/defenseofclassicalgeop.htm; A.M. Prates, “Geohistória na concepção de Vicens Vives”, *Geosul*, No. 2, 1986, pp. 99–100; Golbery do Couto e Silva, *Conjuntura Política Nacional, o Poder Executivo & Geopolítica do Brasil*, Livraria José Olympio editora, Rio de Janeiro, 1980, p. 107; Carlos Meira Mattos, *Uma Geopolítica Pan-Amazônica*, Biblioteca do Exército Editora, Rio de Janeiro, 1980, p. 147.

behavior shaping the world order, is inserted in the historical time, in a certain technological context, in the lines of national potential, it is interconnected with states' strategies and tactics, and so on.³³ At this point, there is a bridge to strategic studies formulated in section 2.

The criticism that accuses geopolitical studies of ignoring subjects beyond geography is, therefore, misguided. As a matter of fact, even in the domain of classical geopolitics, Mackinder introduced the concept/theory of *Heartland* connected to the construction of railways as the technological development of that time. Moreover, Mackinder needed to change his theory several times due to the dynamic nature of geopolitics.

Coordinated apprehension, i.e., an integrated perception of the reality using specific conceptions of time and space – that means interconnections between History and Geography (that will be recovered below too) – is a technique proposed by Chauprade and Thual, which is attached to the very theoretical fundament of *multidisciplinarity*.³⁴ The study converges then to the importance of “area studies” too, in which the analysis focus on regional dynamics. Naturally, the perspective is elastic and diachronic too, unveiling *geopolitical continuities*.

Geopolitical continuities

Geopolitical continuities are “dynamics of continuity”, which help explaining the facts of the international political reality. A fact or event cannot explain itself *per se*.³⁵ The persistence of the “potential of conflict” in straits and other areas, the struggle for resources, or a geoconjunctive maneuver are examples of geopolitical continuities. Vives listed other examples: the tendency to unify river basins, the tendency to get access to the sea, the tendency to expand seashores, the tendency to re-conquest, and the relevance of routes in the development of a state.³⁶ Successful foreign policy outcomes – i.e., foreign policy outcomes shaped by a geopolitical agent that perceives accurately the environment and is capable

³³ Colin S. Gray, *The Geopolitics of Super Power*, op. cit., p. 45.

³⁴ Aymeric Chauprade and François Thual, *Dictionnaire de Géopolitique – États, Concepts, Auteurs*, op. cit., p. 483; Aymeric Chauprade, *Introduction à l'analyse géopolitique*, Ellipses, Paris, 1999, pp. 284–285.

³⁵ Aymeric Chauprade and François Thual, *Dictionnaire de Géopolitique – États, Concepts, Auteurs*, op. cit., p. 499.

³⁶ Jaime V. Vives, *Tratado General de Geopolítica. El factor geográfico y el proceso histórico*, op. cit., pp. 135–154.

to take action, given a strong potential and provided opportunities in the international system – would then be created considering geopolitical continuities that would serve the national interests. The case of a *geomisguided* geopolitical agent disturbs these ideal conditions.

In this way, once the system of representations (which emanates from the identity) of the geopolitical agent is kept constant, foreign policy outcomes and geopolitical designs remain stable to some extent, even if ideological arguments keep varying.³⁷ Vives indeed asked about a “geohistorical law” – apart from ideological barriers – that would permanently guide strategic and diplomatic state action. Possibilism does not allow the existence of such “law”. Nevertheless, tangible geopolitical continuities do exist while the mentioned conditions subsist.

In this line, Brill argued that geopolitical studies have to pay attention to *Kontinuität und Neubildungen, Konstanten und Variablen und deren gegenseitiges Verhältnis*.³⁸ Recapturing Renovin and Duroselle’s *forces profondes*, Nogueira identified as profound forces: History, National Identity, Ethnicity/Nation, Language, Religion and, of course, Geography.³⁹ Roughly, all of those are comprised of geopolitical studies’ factors, variables, or methodological framework in general.

Predictions

From the theoretical core of “geopolitical continuities” deductively follows the possibility of predictions. For Kelly, the possibility of prediction is already included in the choice of a specific theory “if-then”.⁴⁰ This paper suggests the neoclassical geopolitics model (cf. Figure 3) as a tool for prediction, i.e., the study of the sub-variable relative material state potential, accomplished through the tasks of state’s potential analysis, together with the manipulation of the variable systemic stimuli, and the intervening variables of geopolitical agent’s perceptions and capacities can give the direction of foreign policy outcomes. At the same time, the formulation of scenarios with the help of intelligence techniques is also a useful tool.

³⁷ Aymeric Chauprade and François Thual, *Dictionnaire de Géopolitique – États, Concepts, Auteurs*, op. cit., p. 514; Martin Sicker, *Geography and Politics among Nations: An Introduction to Geopolitics*, op. cit., pp. 75–76.

³⁸ Heinz Brill, *Geopolitik Heute – Deutschlands Chance?*, op. cit., p. 31.

³⁹ José F. Nogueira, *O Método Geopolítico Alargado – Persistências e Contingências em Portugal e no Mundo*, op. cit., pp. 73–117, 146–219.

⁴⁰ Phil Kelly, *Classical Geopolitics – A New Analytical Model*, op. cit.

Unit of analysis – the State, Ruling Class or Geopolitical Agent

Whereas Toynbee chose “civilizations” as the unit of analysis for his study of history, and Vives contended that the state is not the main agent in History, identifying “cultural societies” as the unity of analysis for his geohistorical method, this paper follows the realist theoretical tradition in general, and Chauprade’s and Kelly’s preference in geopolitical studies in particular, naming the state as the unit of analysis *par excellence* in this kind of approach.

Although states are no longer the only actors in international relations, it is also true that states – as geographically located entities – endure as the essential unit of analysis of geopolitical studies.⁴¹ For instrumental and methodological purposes, the research goes further and assumes the “state” is understood as the “top officials” or the ruling class, i.e., a minor *élite*, the “foreign policy executive” or the geopolitical agent.⁴²

Epistemology in geopolitical studies

In geopolitical studies, scholarly knowledge is achieved using reason and scientific methods. Geopolitical studies intend to describe situations and objectives (what?), to highlight actors (who?), to identify the motivations and intentions (why?), and to ascertain the causes, means, and modalities of action (how?). As Chauprade, Thual and Kelly asserted that geopolitical studies could not be reduced to a simple “science of representations” or purely subjective field.⁴³

In this context, the problem of maps arises. There is, in fact, an ambiguity with maps: scientific study vs. propaganda instrument.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, that ambiguity is not invincible, since the removal of ideological goals, together with the commitment of the researcher to look for the essence of reality, would result in

⁴¹ Aymeric Chauprade and François Thual, *Dictionnaire de Géopolitique – États, Concepts, Auteurs*, op. cit., pp. 496–497; Aymeric Chauprade, *Introduction à l’analyse géopolitique*, op. cit., pp. 297, 305–306; Phil Kelly, *Classical Geopolitics – A New Analytical Model*, op. cit., p. 13.

⁴² Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, “State Building for Future Wars: Neoclassical Realism and the Resource-Extractive State”, *Security Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 3, 2006, p. 470; Golbery do Couto e Silva, *Conjuntura Política Nacional, o Poder Executivo & Geopolítica do Brasil*, op. cit., p. 10; Aymeric Chauprade and François Thual, *Dictionnaire de Géopolitique – États, Concepts, Auteurs*, op. cit., p. 498.

⁴³ Aymeric Chauprade, and François Thual, *Dictionnaire de Géopolitique – États, Concepts, Auteurs*, op. cit., p. 495; Phil Kelly, *Classical Geopolitics – A New Analytical Model*, op. cit., p. xiii.

⁴⁴ Aymeric Chauprade, *Introduction à l’analyse géopolitique*, op. cit., p. 283.

the map being pedagogic, instead of having political purposes.⁴⁵ There must be ethics in the research and the relevance of facts/documents as sources will remove the chances of supporting any unreal narrative. Kelly, whom the author of this article considers a major authority in the field of geopolitical studies, has been pursuing his research in this frame too.

After a positive description of selected theoretical principles of geopolitical studies, it seems pertinent to elaborate a negative list of theoretical issues. In this context, the scientific work in geopolitical studies requires a list of subjects that should remain excluded from its theoretical framework: a) the belief that state *is* a living organism; b) determinism (naturally eliminated while possibilism is accepted); c) single and unitary causes in general; d) mysticism; e) “manichean” Land-Sea opposition (e.g. Dugin’s Neo-Eurasianism, and it can sometimes appear in geostrategy too, e.g. Gray);⁴⁶ f) the idea that geography does not change since it is empirically verified that, although slowly, geography may change in some circumstances (e.g. melting of ice on the Arctic Ocean); g) the tendency for the homogenization of the territory, as Ó Tuathail criticized about classical geopolitics;⁴⁷ and h) geopolitical studies or neoclassical geopolitics cannot be labeled and divided under “national schools” anymore (e.g. British School, American School, German School, Brazilian School), but understood as comprising a universally accepted theoretical framework, and a group of methodological guidelines applied to study the same object.

Moreover, still regarding the settlement of the negative list of theoretical cores, it is suggested: (i) to refuse a multi-level approach concerning the dependent variables since geopolitical studies should focus on international relations only (other domains – intrastate, state in internal perspective – would be covered by other specific fields as Kelly also stated;⁴⁸ (j) to refuse any normative perspective - this means geopolitical studies cannot be politically engaged, addressing prescriptions for political activity (although it may be deduced from geopolitical studies that the task does not concern *strictu sensu* to the University and the scholars); (k) to avoid the compartmentalization of the study as Prates correctly pointed out.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Aymeric Chauprade and François Thuail, *Dictionnaire de Géopolitique – États, Concepts, Auteurs*, op. cit., p. 479.

⁴⁶ Colin S. Gray, *The Geopolitics of Super Power*, op. cit., p. 195.

⁴⁷ Geróid Ó Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1996, pp. 21–55.

⁴⁸ Phil Kelly, *Classical Geopolitics – A New Analytical Model*, op. cit., p. 8.

⁴⁹ A.M. Prates, “Geohistória na concepção de Vicens Vives”, op. cit., p. 97.

Hence, delimitating these theoretical principles for constituting its basis, geopolitical studies will certainly be on the right path to becoming high ranking academic studies. At the same time, they will avoid the mistakes of classical geopolitics. The next section will put forward detailed explanations about how to accomplish those kinds of studies.

Methodological guidelines in geopolitical studies

The paper proceeds now deductively, from the definition of geopolitical studies and its theoretical principles to specific methodological guidelines in tangible terms of operationalisation. In fact, outlining the methodology constitutes an essential step in the general assignment of delimiting geopolitical studies as a scientific field, as “methodology” is the very foundations of science.

Since geopolitical studies are located, as said, in the sphere of social sciences, it is opportune to keep in mind four crucial methodological topics in the field. Firstly, a geopolitical study must fully respect all the six rules of qualitative research. Silverman is a good choice to get acquainted with all the rules.⁵⁰ Rule no. 3 (impossibility of full understanding of the phenomenon) and the rule no. 5 (to refuse the single cause) are particularly significant in the light of what has been affirmed above. Secondly, procedures of inquiry, “comparison” and “causation” are decisive axes to achieve the explanation and understanding of geopolitical phenomena.⁵¹ Thirdly, the usefulness of case studies and process tracing is also assured for geopolitical studies.⁵² Fourthly, Kelly’s four questions linking the event with the theory are synthetic but extraordinarily useful.⁵³

At this level, the main question regarding methodological guidelines arises: what kind of steps should a geopolitical study follow, that means, what is the specific methodological path that a geopolitical study should follow in order to make a scientific contribution? As an answer, this paper suggests the model of neoclassical geopolitics with its three sets of variables: the relative material state

⁵⁰ David Silverman, *Interpreting Qualitative Data – Methods for analyzing Talk, Text and Interaction*, SAGE, London, 2000, pp. 196–211.

⁵¹ R. Murray Thomas, *Blending Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods in Theses and Dissertations*, Corwin Press, London, 2003, pp. 84–89.

⁵² Andrew Bennett and Jeffrey Checkel (eds), *Process Tracing – From Metaphor to Analytic Tool*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2015.

⁵³ Phil Kelly, *Classical Geopolitics – A New Analytical Model*, op. cit., pp. 136–137.

potential and systemic stimuli as independent variable, the geopolitical agent's perceptions and capacities as intervening variables, and the group of short-medium term foreign policy outcomes (e.g. grand strategy, geopolitical design) as dependent variables (*cf.* Figure 3).

*Guidelines for the assessment of the relative state potential
(Independent (sub)Variable)*

Theoretical formulations about the wide domain of strategic studies (e.g. theory of strategy, *grand* strategy, strategic planning) are easy to find in the extensive amount of literature about the object.⁵⁴ For this research piece, strategic studies are important in the specific cross point of the theoretical fundament of *multidisciplinarity*. That is the point in which strategic studies impact on geopolitical studies. Therefore, it is the point at which the former assists in the methodological approach of the latter. The synchronization of the problem can be resumed in the questions: what from strategic studies is to be included in geopolitical studies and what is to be excluded? And which are the justifications for those choices? Consequently, the problem is both theoretical and methodological.

The answer can be broken down into three levels:

- Chauprade's variables in geopolitical studies help in making methodological choices;⁵⁵
- The concrete ways on how to proceed can be assisted by intelligence techniques (among others: STRATFOR; Federal Bureau of Investigation; McDowell; Davis; Collins; Lowenthal, and Johnson);⁵⁶ and

⁵⁴ J. Boone Bartholomees (ed.), *The U.S. Army War College Guide to National Security Issues Volume I: Theory of War and Strategy*, Strategic Studies Institute, Carlisle, 2010; André Beaufre, *An introduction to strategy: With particular reference to problems of defense, politics, economics, and diplomacy in the nuclear age*, Frederick A. Praeger, New York, 1965; Richard K. Betts, "Should Strategic Studies Survive?", *World Politics*, Vol. 50, No. 1, 1997, pp. 7–33; Bernard Brodie, "Strategy as a Science", *World Politics*, Vol. 1, No. 4, 1949, pp. 467–488; Hedley Bull, "Strategic Studies and Its Critics", *World Politics*, Vol. 20, No. 4, 1968, pp. 593–605; António S. Ribeiro, *Teoria Geral da Estratégia*, Almedina, Lisboa, 2009.

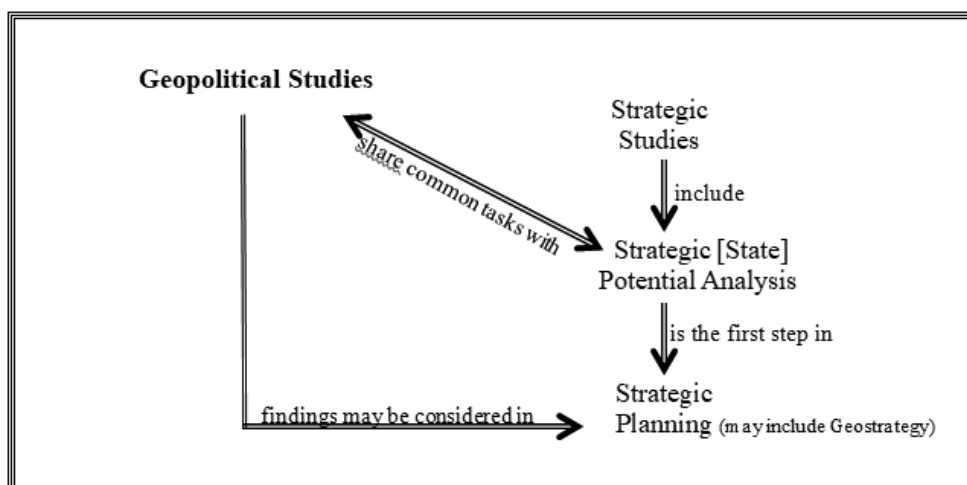
⁵⁵ Aymeric Chauprade, *Géopolitique. Constantes et changements dans l'histoire*, Éllipses, Paris, 2007.

⁵⁶ "Methodology", STRATFOR, www.stratfor.com/about/methodology; "Intelligence Analysts", U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation, <https://www.fbijobs.gov/121.asp>; D. McDowell, *Strategic Intelligence – A handbook for Practitioners, Managers and Users*, The Scarecrow Press, Lanham (MD), 2009, pp. 18–20; Jack Davis, "Improving Intelligence Analysis at CIA: Dick Heuer's Contribution to Intelligence Analysis", 2 January 2016, www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/psych-intel/art3.html#ft1; J. M. Collins, *Grand Strategy – Principles and Practice*, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, 1974, p. 12;

- The assignment of the state’s potential analysis will provide comprehensive methodological steps. For comprehensive readings on the state’s potential analysis is recommended Couto, Couto e Silva, Cline, and Fucks.⁵⁷

For this paper, the state’s potential analysis is the crucial contribution of strategic studies to geopolitical studies (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Diagram of strategic studies and geopolitical studies



Despite its complexities and limitations, the state’s potential analysis has the goal of listing and assessing the capabilities, means, and resources owned by a state. Those capabilities, means, resources constitute the basis for any political action, or state behavior, which includes foreign policy. Rationality as a pattern, by its side, implies that the state shall not act beyond those capabilities, means, and resources. In this way, it is possible to infer the usefulness of this exercise to geopolitical studies, since the findings of the state’s potential analysis will report about the *status* of the state (and that will have relations to foreign policy, once

M. M. Lowenthal, *Intelligence – From Secrets to Policy*, SAGE, Los Angeles, 2015, p. 175; L. K. Johnson (ed.), *Handbook of Intelligence Studies*, Routledge, London, 2007, p. 24.

⁵⁷ Abel C. Couto, *Elementos de Estratégia*, Vol. I, Instituto Altos Estudos Militares, Lisboa, 1988. Golbery do Couto e Silva, *Conjuntura Política Nacional, o Poder Executivo & Geopolítica do Brasil*, op. cit; Ray Cline, *World power assessment: A calculus of strategic drift*, Westview Press, Boulder, 1977; W. Fucks, *Formeln zur Macht – Prognosen über Völker, Wirtschaft, Pontentiale*, Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, Stuttgart, 1965.

again), without which geopolitical studies are impossible to get done. Still, the fields remain distinct due to theoretical issues and to finalities. In fact, whereas geopolitical studies are mainly focused on investigating inter-state relations, strategic studies are prone to include political guidelines or prescriptions. Beaufre defined Strategy as “(...) the art of the dialectic of two opposing wills using force to resolve their dispute”.⁵⁸

Summing up, the strategic potential analysis located at the beginning of strategic planning (politics and strategy), is able to offer certain steps to geopolitical studies if the *strategic* potential analysis is understood as the *state's* potential analysis. The relative material state potential becomes the first independent (sub-)variable in geopolitical studies. Once that finding is stated, the matter now is how to operationalise the analysis of the state's potential for geopolitical studies?

I have considered Cabral Couto's cataloguing as one of the most pertinent models to deal with in the state's potential analysis. Nonetheless, dealing with the operationalisation of a geopolitical study, Cabral Couto's work seems too confusing and does not adapt well. In these circumstances, a new typology of methodological procedures based on six geopolitical factors is proposed. The primary objective is then to assess the state's relative material potential through the investigation of: 1) geographical space (*Raum*), 2) geographical position (*Lage*), 3) circulation, 4) resources, 5) psychosocial projection on the territory, 6) politico-military structures.⁵⁹

Guidelines for the examination of systemic stimuli (Independent Variable)

Alike the neoclassical realist theory of international politics, *systemic stimuli* can be the designation of the independent variable in the neoclassical geopolitics model too. For investigating those stimuli, reclaiming the principles and permanent objectives of Geography would definitely help in consolidating the methodological structure of geopolitical studies. The permanent objectives of geography could be systematised as such: 1) to locate the phenomena geographically (where?); 2) to describe the phenomena (what? who? with what? which intentions?); 3) to explain and contextualize the phenomena (how? how so?); and 4) to establish the relations of the phenomena, i.e., long-term perspective (which connections? which advantages?).

⁵⁸ André Beaufre, *An introduction to strategy: With particular reference to problems of defense, politics, economics, and diplomacy in the nuclear age*, op. cit., p. 22.

⁵⁹ The extensive model is available in: Nuno Morgado, *Towards the New World Order? A Geopolitical Study of Neo-Eurasianism and Meridionalism*, op. cit.

However, since Geography is an eminently descriptive science, it is required to add a more dynamic approach. The contribution of Brill turns out to be critical.

Despite the book subtitle (which may confuse the reader by thinking that the work is devoted to geostrategy), Brill accomplished an excellent geopolitical study.⁶⁰ Brill's concern regarding scenario analysis in security terms establishes, furthermore, connections with intelligence analysis. The methodological hints given by Brill in the mentioned book, together with the successful systematisation in its appendix 3, make a convincing case for including this author as a precursor of the stream of neoclassical geopolitics. Yet, it is not ignored that Brill positioned himself in the geostrategic field.⁶¹ That positioning is unsurprising if taken into account that Brill started by defining geopolitics using Kjellén's words. Understandably, nothing better than to create a distance between his work and the Swedish author's delimitation of the field.

En résumé, Brill's methodological procedures include studying: 1) the position of the country (in concrete terms of Space-Power-Constellation); 2) the geopolitical [i.e., geostrategic or geoconjunctive] position as a determinant in the decision-making process; 3) classification of international conflicts, 4) criticism to unique cause and determinism.⁶² Consequently, there is a full logical compatibility between such concepts and methodological operations, and methods across the board from other authors in the geopolitical studies' domain (e.g. refusal of mechanism, determinism and single cause, the existence of the potential of conflict, geopolitical continuities, etc.). At this point, methodological guidelines start to give a concrete mental scheme for operationalising geopolitical studies. The relative state potential together with *systemic stimuli* would constitute the independent variable in geopolitical studies (cf. Figure 3).

Guidelines for the study of the geopolitical agent's perceptions and capacities (Intervening Variables)

As it was introduced in the theoretical principle *territorial imperative*, one of the crucial tasks in geopolitical studies is the identification and characterisation of the geopolitical agent. The theoretical principle *unit of analysis* also mentioned this matter. In this line, the argument that the behavior of the state is understood

⁶⁰ Heinz Brill, *Geopolitik Heute – Deutschland's Chance?*, op. cit.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 180.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 179.

as the result of the choices of flesh and blood geopolitical agents was already examined and validated elsewhere.⁶³ This is a vital aspect in terms of innovation, taking into account that other authorities in the field, like Kelly, “bypass decision-makers”.⁶⁴ The identification is the easiest part: Heads of State, Heads of Government, Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Ministers of National Defense constitute the geopolitical agent in every state’s structure. Depending on the circumstances of the caliber of the geopolitical agent, the staff and teams of institutions’ technocrats, clusters of experts in foreign affairs, defense, intelligence, which provide reports and advice, can be influential or not in the decision-making process. With respect to the characterisation of the geopolitical agent, the task is twofold: to assess the geopolitical agent’s perceptions and capacities.

The measurement of these variables requires research on topics such as coherence in the discourse, ideology (statist or anti-statist), “consciousness horizon” (a concept authored by Carvalho),⁶⁵ intentions and personality, and the network of relations.⁶⁶ It further includes the investigation about the geopolitical agent’s perception of space or sense of space, the *Raumsinn*. The *Raumsinn* is a concept originally formulated by Ratzel with ambiguities and somehow subjective.⁶⁷ In geopolitical studies, the concept of *Raumsinn* assumes a precise, empirical and thus falsifiable definition. The point is to study the conscience, or the sense, or the perception of space in which the geopolitical agent has concerned his own country, i.e., how far can the geopolitical agent discern or ignore the implication of geographical settings incentives in the foreign policy conduct. In this context, geopolitical studies’ approach should be also based on the hypothesized causal relation that the geopolitical agent’s perceptions and capacities are, in certain circumstances, fundamental in explaining states’ international successes or failures (dependent variables). It is believed that those successes or failures (in the medium-to-longer term) are often dependent on the accurate or inaccurate perceptions of space of the geopolitical agent.

The study of the *Raumsinn* should start with the geohistorical approach examining the past, and the geopolitical design studying the present and the future

⁶³ Nuno Morgado, “The role of *élites* in geopolitical studies”, op. cit.

⁶⁴ Phil Kelly, *Classical Geopolitics – A New Analytical Model*, op. cit., pp. 14, 25, 167.

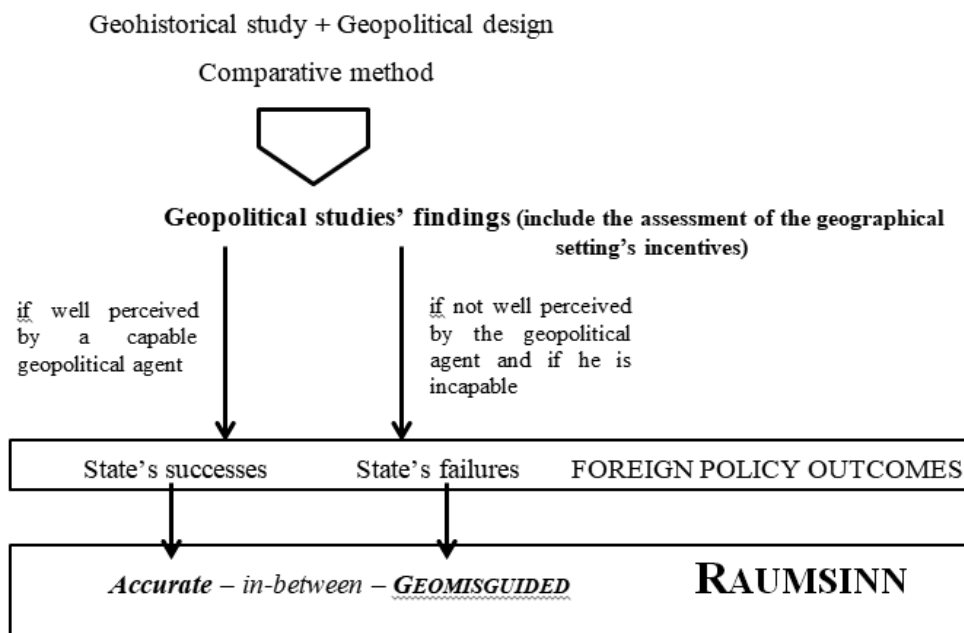
⁶⁵ Olavo de Carvalho, “Aula 1”, Curso Política e Cultura no Brasil, Seminário de Filosofia, 20 February 2018, www.seminariodefilosofia.org/politica-e-cultura-ao-vivo/; Nuno Morgado, “The role of *élites* in geopolitical studies”, op. cit.

⁶⁶ Nuno Morgado, “The role of *élites* in geopolitical studies”, op. cit.

⁶⁷ See: Friedrich Ratzel, *Géographie Politique*, Éditions Régionales Européennes S.A., Paris, 1988, p. 290.

scenario, using the comparative method to refine the conclusions. These are the geopolitical studies' findings. Then, while observing empirical foreign policy outcomes (their successes or failures), which include revisiting the geopolitical design, the researcher can finally evaluate the *Raumsinn*, in the sense that if the researcher is analyzing a successful foreign policy, most likely no *geomisguidance* is to be identified. That means that the geopolitical agent perceives the geographical settings incentives well and is moreover capable of managing the potential available in a permissive international system. Summing up, the assessment of the *Raumsinn* respects to which extent the geographical settings incentives with impact on foreign policy are being explored (and for that, accurately perceived) or neglected or ignored (i.e., *geomisguidance/incapacities*) by the geopolitical agent.

Figure 2: Analysing the Raumsinn



Regarding the geopolitical agent's capacities, it seems that they depend not only on the power structure but also on the geopolitical agent's perceptions themselves. In fact, concerning the latter aspect, in the circumstances in which the geopolitical agent cannot perceive accurately, he will also not act accurately, even

if he is capable of doing so out of the limitations of an inaccurate perception. This assumption can be tested in future works.

Notwithstanding the relevance of everything discussed thus far, it may be logically inferred that the assessment of “location” (*Lage*) is not enough for a geopolitical study in its totality. That is a solid conclusion for now. Therefore, geopolitical studies cannot merely be reduced to the analysis of the implications of “location”. Space (e.g. extension, shape, borders), circulation (e.g. routes), resources (e.g. oil, gas, water), psychosocial projection on the territory (e.g. identity, demography, welfare), politico-military structures (e.g. quality of diplomacy, political stability, capacity of the armed forces) are also crucial factors to be analysed in a geopolitical study.

This subsection concludes by affirming that the geopolitical agent’s perceptions and capacities shape both the evaluation or assessment of the systemic stimuli (opportunities, threats, alliances, comparison of capabilities) and the process of extraction and management of the available relative potential.

Guidelines for the description of the geopolitical design and foreign policy outcomes (Dependent Variables)

Another core task of a geopolitical study is the thoughtful exploration of the geopolitical design (*dispositif géopolitique* in the original French language).⁶⁸ That task is accomplished by two operations: 1) identification of the group of geopolitical goals, and 2) identification of the hierarchy of those goals. The research is expected to proceed, therefore, from the real intentions to appearances. Regarding sources, the analysis must cover diplomatic, military, and intelligence and secret services’ documentation.⁶⁹

As for other foreign policy outcomes connected to the field, using again the neoclassical realist theory of international politics, they can be categorized as short-term crisis decision-making, medium-term strategic planning and grand strategies, or long-term systemic outcomes.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ François Thual, *Méthodes de la géopolitique – apprendre à déchiffrer l’actualité*, Éditions Ellipses, Paris, 1996.

⁶⁹ Aymeric Chauprade and François Thual, *Dictionnaire de Géopolitique – États, Concepts, Auteurs*, op. cit., pp. 486–487.

⁷⁰ Norrin Ripsman, Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, and Steven E. Lobell, *Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2016, pp. 80–90.

Additional elements of the geopolitical approach

At the top of Figure 2, the first subject is the geohistorical study. That constitutes an extraordinarily useful tool for geopolitical studies, briefly explained in the theoretical fundament of *possibilism*. Vives' geohistorical method, a mental procedure resulting from the interconnection between History and Geography, is considered a pure substance of geopolitical studies.⁷¹

The geohistorical method traces the cores of historical foreign policy. Among other techniques, it points out “geohistorical deductions” (which can be considered somehow synonymous with the theoretical principle of *geopolitical continuities*) and it makes use of maps with arrow icons and other symbolic representations.⁷² Examining History in this manner is an exercise that constitutes an auxiliary tool to understand the crucial problems of geopolitical studies. That is so because intentions and goals investigated by geopolitical studies are generally identifiable via a long-term perspective.⁷³ “Coordinated apprehension” gives a hand here too. As mentioned above, a coordinated apprehension of the geopolitical reality requires a differentiated apprehension in time and space. As Chauprade and Thual put it, “geopolitics considers the importance of the fact in relative terms and includes that fact in durable dynamics”, i.e., *geopolitical continuities*.⁷⁴ That means that both spatial and time analyses need to be broken down. The former, in local, regional, continental or intercontinental dimensions, and the latter, in events, context, short-term, medium-term, and long-term perspectives.

To operationalise geopolitical studies better with the assistance of the geohistorical method, Chauprade and Thual advanced further methodological steps, comprised in the outline of states' territorial morphogenesis divided into two phases:

- Territorial appraisal: steps of territorial foundation, identification of core/s of impulse, consolidated expansion areas, gained/lost areas, definitely lost areas;

⁷¹ Heinz Brill, *Geopolitik Heute – Deutschland's Chance?*, op. cit., p. 149; Karl Haushofer, *An English Translation and Analysis of Major General Karl Ernst Haushofer's – Geopolitics of the Pacific Ocean: Studies on the Relationship between Geography and History*, The Edwin Mellen Press, Lewiston, 2002; Jaume V. Vives, *Tratado General de Geopolítica. El factor geográfico y el proceso histórico*, op. cit., pp. 25–27.

⁷² Jaume V. Vives, *Tratado General de Geopolítica. El factor geográfico y el proceso histórico*, op. cit., pp. 13, 27.

⁷³ François Thual, *Méthodes de la géopolitique – apprendre à déchiffrer l'actualité*, op. cit., p. 22.

⁷⁴ Aymeric Chauprade and François Thual, *Dictionnaire de Géopolitique – États, Concepts, Auteurs*, op. cit., pp. 50–53.

- Threats to territorial integrity: claims, secessionism, their motivations, ambitions (Cohen too covered these topics), and further observations concerning questions of identity (minorities, religion, language).⁷⁵

Considerations on area studies

It is noteworthy that qualitative methodology is applicable in geopolitical studies through a “regional approach” – Area Studies. In this way, one may differ with Brill, who attached geopolitical studies to the context of *Weltpolitik* [World politics], rather than to regional contexts. Area studies and regional approaches are extremely important instruments, although they must be ultimately integrated into the World System (systemic constraints) – the “microscope” and “telescope” as Chauprade put it.⁷⁶ From the strategic studies’ point of view, area studies are an ideal approach in terms of *multidisciplinary*. Area studies are also more than appropriate in the frame of traditionalist qualitative methodology, as they avoid the problem of rational-choice models as the determinant explanation of political behavior, living space for “plastic control” as Almond and Genco suggested.⁷⁷

In this vein, the Italian-Chinese review on geopolitics *Heartland* wisely observed that “specific cases, not theories” constitute the core of geopolitical reasoning. Naturally, that does not mean that the theoretical cores, concepts, and so forth formulated above are irrelevant. Clearly, they are not irrelevant since geopolitical studies use theories and concepts extensively. Instead, the point is that geopolitical studies, although a non-experimental science (like Astronomy), are an empirical science, thus deeply connected to the material reality in the case-to-case study.⁷⁸

From this point on, making use of this theoretical basis and group of methodological guidelines, geopolitical studies may be strengthened in terms of a structured approach. Despite that, one must be reminded that reality does not fit entirely inside any formula, model, or equation. The text insists that geopolitical studies constitute an empirical science that studies complex realities. Alongside this, the debate about methodology in the study of International Relations has

⁷⁵ Aymeric Chauprade and François Thual, *Dictionnaire de Géopolitique – États, Concepts, Auteurs*, op. cit., pp. 567; Saul B. Cohen, *Geopolitics – The Geography of International Relations*, op. cit., p. 153.

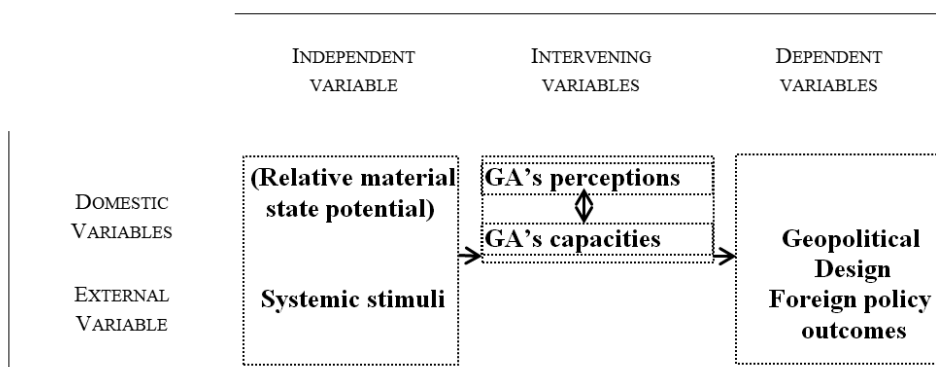
⁷⁶ Aymeric Chauprade, *Introduction à l’analyse géopolitique*, op. cit., p. 284.

⁷⁷ Gabriel Almond and S.J. Genco, “Clouds, Clocks, and the Study of Politics”, *World Politics*, Vol. 29, No. 4, 1977, p. 501.

⁷⁸ Aymeric Chauprade, *Géopolitique. Constantes et changements dans l’histoire*, op. cit., p. 500.

been radical, namely from the side of reflectivist approaches. This paper aimed to be very careful with respect to methodological guidelines so that in the future facts may not be ignored in favor of “narratives”. Thus the criterion of verification through facts, i.e., the relevance of empirical tests should prevail, and for their accomplishment, the evaluation of data and sources, as well as the refusal of deterministic unique mechanic causes, should be always kept in mind.

Figure 3: Systematisation of the variables in the neoclassical geopolitics model⁷⁹



Conclusion

This article sought to establish geopolitical studies, or neoclassical geopolitics, as a descriptive-analytical approach that has the primary finality of explaining the impact of the geographical setting, filtered by the geopolitical agent’s perceptions and capacities, on foreign policy and, by extension, on international politics. In this context, the paper aimed to deal with geopolitical studies exclusively in the scientific domain. While doing so, the research set forth a wealthy group of theoretical principles and methodological procedures essential for the production of a geopolitical study.

Nine theoretical fundaments were identified and explained in section 1, and six methodological guidelines were analysed in section 2. Both sections covered

⁷⁹ Adapted from: Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, “State Building for Future Wars: Neoclassical Realism and the Resource-Extractive State”, *op. cit.*, p. 486; Norrin Ripsman, Jeffrey W. Taliaferro and Steven E. Lobell, *Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics*, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

researchable questions, problems, and techniques, which were raised in order to create a set of tangible guidelines on how to frame and operationalise a geopolitical study.

Moreover, the model of neoclassical geopolitics with its three sets of variables – independent variable systemic stimuli, intervening variables geopolitical agent’s perceptions and capacities, and dependent variables geopolitical design and other foreign policy outcomes – was updated and better systematised, with the objective of helping to understand the reasoning in the geopolitical approach.

Having achieved the conceptual and operational objectives, particularly filling in the gap in the literature by joining disperse works and contributions, one hopes now that geopolitical studies may proliferate in the Academia, following these methodological guidelines, assessing them, or adding new developments.

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**NEOKLASIČNA GEOPOLITIKA:
PRELIMINARNI TEORIJSKI PRINCIPI I METODOLOŠKE SMERNICE**

Apstrakt: Rad nastoji da izjednači geopolitičke studije i neoklasičnu geopolitiku. Shodno tome, ciljevi ovog rada su prevashodno konceptualni i operacionalni, i usmereni su na predstavljanje novih originalnih definicija geopolitičkih studija, te na objašnjenje neoklasičnog geopolitičkog modela i njegovih varijabli: sistemskih podstreka, percepcije i sposobnosti geopolitičkih delatnika i ishoda spoljne politike (prevashodno geopolitičkog dizajna). Autor smatra da centralni problem leži u povezivanju nekoliko teorijskih i metodoloških doprinosa ka koherentnom i novom geopolitičkom modelu, u okviru ograničenja fenomenološke sfere i sfere mekog pozitivizma. Struktura ovog kvalitativnog rada podeljena je na dve celine koje: 1) formulišu lanac teorijskih osnova geopolitičkih studija, i 2) opisuju metodološke korake koje geopolitičke studije mogu upotrebljavati. Autor pruža: a) novu definiciju geopolitičkih studija; b) objašnjenje pojma geomisguidence; c) razlaganje i uokviravanje Racelovog pojma „osećaja prostora” (Raumsinn); i d) sistematizuje i procenjuje literaturu geopolitičkih studija na različitim jezicima, iz perspektive teorije i metodologije. Navedeni nalazi okrenuti su ka praktičnim aspektima operacionalizacije geopolitičkih studija, sa zaključkom da analiza lokacije države nije dovoljan konstitutivni element geopolitičkih studija kao pristupa proučavanja međunarodnih odnosa.

Ključne reči: geopolitičke studije, metodologija, potencijal, geopolitički delatnik, geopolitički dizajn, spoljna politika.